



TEACHING IN THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY: EXPLORING  
THE EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS USING MIXED METHODS AND  
INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

A Thesis submitted by

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is an exploration of the experiences of teachers in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). It aims to determine what may lead to decreased job satisfaction or motivation, to better understand potential drivers of teacher attrition. Teacher attrition and retention, and what drives the phenomenon, have been areas of focus internationally in countries such as the United States of America (USA) (Ingersoll, 2003; Ingersoll, May, & Collins, 2017), the United Kingdom (UK) (Chambers, Hobson, & Tracey, 2010; Hobson, 2009), Greenland (Brincker & Pedersen, 2020), Alaska (Kaden, Patterson, Healy, & Adams, 2016) and Australia (Gallant & Riley, 2017; Mason & Matas, 2015; Weldon, 2018) for many years. Retention is economically cheaper than recruitment (Borman & Dowling, 2017), furthermore, retaining teachers maintains higher levels of experience and intellectual capital within the profession (Gallant & Riley, 2017; Ingersoll et al., 2017). Having high quality teachers leads to high quality outcomes for students (Young, 2018), and this is another reason why schools and education systems are eager to attract, grow and retain the best quality teachers possible. There are a wide range of factors discussed in this thesis, which have been linked with attrition of teachers, but there is still a need for further development and exploration of the phenomenon from a theoretical perspective (Mason & Matas, 2015).

There are frequent reports in the literature (Cox & Connell., 2016; Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Manuel & Carter, 2016) and in the media (Brennan, 2016; McKinnon & Walker, 2016) which suggest that up to 50% of beginning teachers leave the profession within their first three to five years of teaching. Recently it has been suggested that these numbers are not as high as once thought (Weldon, 2018), and therefore, this thesis attempts to explore whether attrition risks (through job satisfaction and intent to leave data) are as high in beginning teachers as in more experienced teachers. The study also attempts to determine if other demographics, such as school or employment type or gender have differences in attrition risks.

A Mixed Methods Research (MMR) methodology (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), with a quantitative survey and a qualitative interview strand, was selected to allow an exploration of these statistics whilst also delving deeper into the experiences of teacher which potentially impact on attrition. It then culminates in an exploration of teacher experiences through a qualitative interview strand which

utilises an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) lens to bring to life the rich experiences that the participants have gone through.

The first strand of this study utilised a quantitative survey of teachers within the ACT Education sector ( $n = 134$ ). A chi-squared analysis was used to explore the data for trends which could be further investigated through the qualitative interview strand. There was a suggestion in the data that beginning teachers had significantly higher intentions to leave, compared with more experienced teachers and that there was a weak suggestion that teachers who were employed on a casual basis also had higher intents to leave. Overall, it was found that there was a significant difference between the intent to leave across beginning and experienced teachers, but only some differences across different demographic groups. As the survey suggested that different groups may be having different experiences, this was something that was determined as warranting further exploration through the interviews and in future research.

In the interview strand of the study, teachers were recruited from the survey and each of their experiences were discussed through a semi-structured interview ( $n = 8$ ). This strand utilised IPA as an underpinning framework to allow me, as a researcher who works as an Executive teacher in the ACT Education system, to include my own interpretation of the teachers' experiences as part of the study. This strand found that there were three major emergent trends in the analysis of the teachers' experiences which could impact on teacher attrition. The first theme was the initial reason or motivation that the teacher had for choosing the profession. Teachers chose the profession with a desire to impart either their content or their social and emotional (SE) knowledge. Each group viewed similar experiences in different ways, with the content imparters being extremely challenged by student behaviours compared with the SE group. Conversely, the SE group reported compliance, standardised testing / curriculums or compliance and paperwork type issues as possible demotivators more than the content imparters, who often saw these tasks as very important in their role. The second theme which emerged was the different needs of beginning teachers, who needed support, compared to the experienced teachers, who needed recognition. Both groups reported that they felt they were treated conversely, and this was a major source of a decrease in their overall job satisfaction and increased their intent to leave. The final theme was the relationships that they had in their workplace. Whilst relationships with students and

parents were mentioned, it was the relationship (either good or bad) with their supervisors (or school leaders) which emerged as the most impactful on their experiences in the teaching profession.

These findings are connected with the existing Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent & Brown, 2006a; Lent & Brown, 2013; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002), to allow an explanation of the importance of each of these themes, along with the differences found in the survey strand, from a theoretical perspective. This thesis has suggested that the importance of the relationship between teachers and their school leaders be included in the SCCT models as it is not currently a component of any of the four models of the theory.

This thesis then makes suggestions for policy, practice and research. The major suggestions of this study are the inclusion of the importance of relationships in the SCCT and the need expand the focus on teacher standards and growth to better include stronger models of growth for school leaders. This includes, in the practice component, a greater emphasis on building the leadership skills and theoretical understanding of school leaders across the educational sector. The link with SCCT allows the suggestion to be made that this could be true for many professions and this could be further explored in future research. There is also a suggestion that a model for exploring teacher motivation (sometimes called career choice or interest) should be included as part of teacher recruitment or induction and models could be used.

### **Certification of Thesis**

I, *Stacey Ann Griffiths*, certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported in this thesis are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Student and supervisors' signatures of endorsement are held at USQ.

Professor Karen Trimmer  
Principal Supervisor

Doctor Janice K Jones  
Associate Supervisor

Doctor Brad McLennan  
Associate Supervisor

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The level of support I have received from my supervisors has been exemplary and life changing. I would firstly like to acknowledge the support of my Principal Supervisor, Professor Karen Trimmer, who has guided and challenged me every step of this long journey. Her feedback, motivation and suggestions have shaped my research and opened doors to areas I would have never thought to explore. Secondly, Doctor Janice Jones, who as my Associate Supervisor has made me not only question my research choices but also my whole philosophical underpinnings to help me grow as a researcher and as a person. Both of these supervisors have been part of this journey with me through multiple major life events and challenges. Without their understanding, guidance and willingness to challenge me I would not have completed this thesis. Thirdly, I would also like to acknowledge Doctor Brad McLennan who joined my journey as my Associate Supervisor in the later stages and whose feedback and support has helped shape my thesis significantly. I would also like to thank Professor Peter McIlveen who graciously gave his time to provide feedback on the thesis draft. I would like to thank the Australian Commonwealth Government for the contribution through the Research Training Program (RTP) Fees Offset scheme. Finally, I would like to thank the participants in this study who gave not only their time, but also a glimpse into their lives which has guided this study and also my own professional outlook and approach as a school leader.

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### Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AEU	Australian Education Union
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
ITQ	Improving Teacher Quality
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Qld	Queensland
SA	South Australia
SCCT	Social Cognitive Career Theory
SiAS	Staff in Australia's Schools
Tas	Tasmania
USQ	University of Southern Queensland
Vic	Victoria
WA	Western Australia

### Definitions

Attrition	The loss of a teacher from the profession. Can be used in the context of them leaving a specific school or system.
Beginning teacher	A teacher with less than 3 years' experience
Early Career teacher	A teacher with less than 3 years' experience
Resignation	The cessation of employment as instigated by the employee.
Retention	The attempt to retain (keep) a teacher working in the profession. Can be used in the context of them remaining in a specific school or system.
Retirement	The cessation of permanent employment from the workforce, usually after 60 years of age in Australia.
Separation	A point at which the employee is no longer retained by the employer. Includes resignations, retirements and terminations.
Termination	The cessation of employment as instigated by the employer.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a complex and diverse profession with teachers working in different educational settings across the world. The teaching workforce is comprised of individuals who come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. An aspect that has been of interest across the spheres of global research and policy is teacher attrition and retention. This field of study has grown internationally, including in Australia, since the late 1990's with attrition rates being measured with different levels. In the Australian context it is currently suggested that attrition rates of teachers could be anywhere from 8 to 50% for beginning teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2016; Gallant & Riley, 2017; Skilbeck & Connell, 2004; Weldon, 2018). However, there are limitations that must be placed on these figures, as they vary widely and often have different measurement techniques (Ewing & Manuel, 2005). Another major consideration is that much of the focus around attrition and retention is on beginning teachers rather than more experienced teachers' or school leaders (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2016). As the research field has expanded it has become evident that in many situations what has been measured in attrition studies is actually a teacher's intent to leave, or their retention in the face of difficult circumstances (Weldon, 2018). Therefore, there has been a shift in the field to consider what experiences may impact on attrition, with job satisfaction being a major component of this complex topic, and to build a theoretical understanding of the phenomenon (Mason & Matas, 2015).

This study explores the experiences of teachers, beyond beginning teachers as many studies have focused on, to understand what aspects of their working life they felt led to them considering leaving teaching. This provides a means to explore potential reasons for the attrition rates in Australia. The qualitative interview strand used Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and in this strand of the study it was important for me to shift from the *distant scientific observer* that is seen in the other sections of this thesis. As an executive teacher, who works in the setting in which the study is being conducted, I have a connection with the subject matter which lent itself to the use of IPA (Reiners, 2012). The selection of this IPA allowed me to delve into the experiences of teachers in an interview component of the study,

whilst analysing and exploring the emergent themes in the strand through the lens of my own lived experiences and background. In Chapter 3 I have given an in-depth exploration of my background to give clarity to the different aspects and experiences of my life which will underpin and influence the analysis of the interviews and, therefore, the final drawing together of the two strands. This includes my demographic background as a Wiradjuri woman, who is outwardly white and has been previously displaced geographically and culturally. I grew up with both parents, in a mid-level socioeconomic background, and they held education in high regard. My parents made personal financial sacrifices to send myself (and my two brothers) to private schools which they believed would provide us with the best education possible. Whilst I did not plan to become a teacher in my younger years, I made the decision to enter the profession after completing a science degree and working with young people in a science communication position. I made the choice to teach in public schools, and now send my own children to public schools in the ACT. At the start of this study I had been teaching for four years, and by its completion it will be twelve. At multiple points in my career I have considered leaving for a different career, however, I have, for many different reasons, chosen to remain. One major *turning point* in my intent to leave was when I undertook a Master of Education program which supported me in addressing my own pedagogical growth and positively impacted on my intent to remain in teaching. This then spurred an interest in better understanding why other teachers made the decision to leave, when I had chosen to stay. The findings of this thesis have then impacted on my career, as I am now an executive teacher and I am able to apply the findings of my study to build workplace settings which improve the experiences of my teachers to reduce the risk of them leaving the profession. This interconnection between my growth as a researcher and as a teacher is evident in my analysis and interpretation of the interview participants and in my connection between their experiences and the quantitative survey.

In this chapter of the thesis the contextual setting of the Australian Education system is presented to allow an understanding of the nature of the teaching profession in the Australian Capital Territory where the study is located. The chapter then explores the current positioning of attrition data in the context, subsequently followed by the current understanding of the different variables which have

contributed internationally and in Australia to attrition, intent to leave and job satisfaction.

### **1.1. Contextual Information - About Australia and its Education System**

The unique and diverse nature of Australia's political, geographical, environmental and historical background have all played a role in influencing education. Each state or territory faces its own specific challenges in the field of teacher attraction and retention. For example, South Australia has a large centralised population around the capital city, Adelaide, and its surrounding regions (see Figure 2.1, on page 40). However, it also has large Indigenous, rural and remote populations outside of these areas (South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services, 2009). The challenges this state faces in attracting and retaining teachers must surely be different when compared to some other states or territories such as the ACT (ACT Education Directorate, 2010a, 2018a). As this study is being conducted in the ACT Education setting, in particular the ACT public education system, it is important to understand the specific context of this educational environment, and how its structure has been shaped by the Australian landscape and history. A summary of the Australian environment, history and subsequent shaping of the education system is presented in Chapter 2. This will allow future studies to compare or contrast their findings against the outcomes from this study, as different school structures and cultures makes it difficult to compare findings across international settings without an understanding of the context in which they were completed (Weldon, 2018).

### **1.2. Attrition and Retention in the Australian Education Sector**

The Australian education system can be viewed as two separate sections, the federal education system and the state and territory education systems. However, it has long been a goal in Australia to have a greater focus on cohesion across all levels of government and educational settings to provide the best educational outcomes for all Australian students (Barr et al., 2008; COAG Reform Council, 2012). In the specific area of attrition and retention both levels of government have reported it as a problem they aim to address for a significant amount of time (ACT Education Directorate, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016a, 2017, 2018a; COAG Reform Council, 2012; DEEWR, 2009; New South Wales Department of Education,

2011, 2018; New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 2010; Northern Territory Department of Education, 2018; Northern Territory Department of Education and Training, 2010; Queensland Department of Education, 2013, 2018; South Australian Department for Education, 2015, 2018; South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services, 2009; Western Australian Department of Education, 2012, 2018). The issues regarding attrition and retention differ in each state and territory as previously reported. Therefore, the approach and focus of the Federal Department of Education and each state and territory education department also differs.

The actual attrition rates of teachers have long been reported across the literature as extremely difficult to measure (Australian Dept. of Employment, 2001, 2005; Weldon, 2018; Willett, Segal, & Walford, 2014). Moreover, there are trends which appear to suggest that the attrition rate, especially amongst beginning teachers is not as high as once reported (Weldon, 2018; Willett et al., 2014). Weldon (2018) has reported that the actual attrition rate, whilst being almost impossible to generate in research, is likely much lower than the “up to 50%” that is frequently reported in the media (Brennan, 2016; Cox & Connell., 2016). The lowered attrition and intention to leave rates being recently reported in the literature may be due to improved data analysis and collection techniques, however, it may also be a by-product of a range of state, territory and federal initiatives designed to address the issue which has been widely reported for such a long time in research (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2016; Buchanan et al., 2013; Weldon, 2018), policy (ACT Education Directorate, 2017, 2018a; COAG Reform Council, 2012) and the media (Adoniou, 2013b; Brennan, 2016; Cox & Connell., 2016; K. Marshall, 2013; McKinnon & Walker, 2016; Milburn, 2011). These strategies are discussed in the following section where an in-depth synthesis of the attrition rates and specific strategies to address this over the past ten years in the ACT will also be presented.

### **1.2.1. Federal Government initiatives**

In 2008 the Melbourne Declaration (Barr et al., 2008) was signed by every Australian Education Minister with the goal to move towards a “greater coherence in education policy” which had been reported as a national priority since the early 90s onwards (Skilbeck & Connell, 2003). This was supported through the instigation of

various joint programs aimed at creating a more country wide approach to education. The most important of these initiatives were the creation of the National Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality (DEEWR, 2009), the creation of the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) (Barr et al., 2008) and the creation of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) in 2005. In 2018 it was announced that the goals outlined in the original Melbourne Declaration would be updated to reflect the ongoing needs of the Australian Educational sector in the report, *Through Growth to Achievement: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools* (Department of Education, 2018).

The National Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) was a partnership between the Commonwealth of Australia and the States and Territories which aimed “to improve the quality of the Australian teaching workforce” (DEEWR, 2011, p. 1) . The ITQ partnership encompassed six outcomes which included (p.7):

- a) attracting the best entrants to teaching, including mid-career entrants,
- b) more effectively training principals, teachers and school leaders for their roles and the school environment,
- c) placing teachers and principals to minimise skill shortages and enhance retention,
- d) developing teachers and school leaders to enhance their skills and knowledge throughout their careers,
- e) retaining and rewarding quality principals, teachers and school leaders;
- f) and improving the quality and availability of teacher workforce data.

To achieve these outcomes a range of strategies were implemented across Australia. One well reported strategy was the introduction of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) which aimed to ensure that all teachers in Australian public schools are registered and reach set standards for teaching (DEEWR, 2011). From the instigation of this process all ACT teachers are required

to undergo a registration process, as prior to this they were the only state or territory which had not previously had teacher registration (Ingvarson, Elliott, Kleinhenz, & McKenzie, 2006). At the introduction of the process it was interesting to note that research in overseas contexts has shown that issues in dealing with registration organisations had been a factor which led to staff resignations in the past (Tapper, 1995). There was the possibility that the introduction of these national teaching standards would increase teacher attrition rates, however, the data would suggest that attrition rates have dropped (Willett et al., 2014), although no correlations have yet to appear in the literature (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2016).

The MCEECDYA was formed in 2009 by the combination of two previous councils the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) and the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education (MCVTE) (Barr et al., 2008). The MCEECDYA's role was to oversee and make recommendations regarding all aspects of schooling up to higher (tertiary and vocational (VET)) education (Australian Curriculum, 2011). In 2012, the goals of the MCEECDYA were moved to the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) (Australian Curriculum, 2012). The 2008 *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals* states that there are two major goals for Australian education from 2008 to 2018.

Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence.

Goal 2: All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens. (Barr et al., 2008, p. 7).

In 2018 it was reported that the Melbourne Declaration had shown some progress in Australian education, however, it needed to be updated and modified to reflect not only the progress that had been made but also the rapid shifts which have been made in education in the past ten years (Australian Council for Educational Leaders, 2018). In 2019 a new declaration in Alice Springs which modified and updated the original declaration (Berry et al., 2019). This new declaration, the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*, has a focus on promoting equity in education and places the child at the centre of their learning (Berry et al., 2019). It aims to achieve this through two goals. The first is that “the Australian education

system promotes excellence and equity” and the second is that “all young Australians become: confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners [and] active and informed members of the community.” This will have impacts across the education sector in Australia, and it is possible it will influence staffing profiles and attrition or job satisfaction rates in the sector. However, as the research strands were conducted prior to the announcement of these new goals, the original Melbourne Declaration goals are more relevant to this study. Future studies may be able to assess what, if any, changes on the rate of teacher retention are driven by the 2019 Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration.

In order to continue to improve the outcomes for Australian youth it is of course necessary to attract, and then retain, teachers who can improve student outcomes. The council recognised the importance of keeping quality teaching staff through the specific inclusion of “supporting quality teaching and school leadership” (Barr et al., 2008, p. 11). They aimed to achieve this commitment by working with all schools to “attract, develop, support and retain a high-quality teaching... workforce in Australian schools” (Barr et al., 2008, p. 11). How they aimed to achieve this was outlined in a four-year plan and has been updated as the plan progressed. The aims included:

- new professional standards,
- recognition and reward for quality teaching,
- national consistency in the registration of teachers,
- improved mobility of the Australian teaching workforce across Australia,
- joint engagement with higher education to provide improved pre-service teacher education; new pathways into teaching; and research and data collection to inform continuing reform action and workforce planning,
- improved performance management and continuous improvement in schools
- improved in school support for teachers and leaders, particularly in disadvantaged Indigenous, rural/remote and hard-to-staff schools,
- improved pay dispersion to reward quality teaching, including improved reward structures for teachers and leaders who work in disadvantaged Indigenous, rural/remote and hard-to-staff schools. (Barr et al., 2008, p. 7)



In 2018, the *Through Growth and Achievement: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools* report was released (Department of Education, 2018). Known in the education sector as the *Gonski Report* it measured, where possible, the quality of student outcomes and school performance in the preceding ten years. It then made recommendations for practice, funding and policy to update the needs of Australian Education from 2019 onwards. In this report there were specific recommendations regarding teacher retention which included:

- Undertaking better workforce planning through a comprehensive national workforce strategy.
- Further embedding recent reforms to initial teacher education (ITE) to produce better trained, classroom ready teaching graduates.
- Better induction for early career teachers to improve their transition into the profession and promote retention and professional growth.
- Better cultivation, recognition and utilisation of expert teachers.
- Greater recognition and higher esteem for the teaching profession.

(Department of Education, 2018, p. 69)

The importance of retaining teachers is seen from both economic and educational perspectives. It has been discussed that the costs are lower to retain a staff member than to recruit a new one across many industries, including teaching (Borman & Dowling, 2017) and hospitality (Chang & Busser, 2019). From the perspective of the *Gonski Report* the goal of improved student outcomes and school performance is linked with retention of teachers as it has been shown that high quality teachers improve student outcomes (Young, 2018) and that by retaining and training teachers to improve their practice the Australian Education system will improve its performance overall (Nilsen & Gustafsson, 2016).

Another important milestone in the Australian Educational sector, which has potentially impacted on the overall attrition or retention of teachers, has been the introduction of the AITSL and the standards (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2018a). This body was created as a means to generate a more cohesive approach to the cultivation of the highest standards of educational practices in the Australian Educational setting (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2014). The AITSL has the following vision and mission statement which guides their policies and aims.

Vision: Australia has a high-quality education system in which teachers and leaders have the greatest impact on the educational growth and achievement of every learner.

Mission: Promoting excellence so that teachers and leaders have the maximum impact on learning in all Australian schools and early childhood settings. (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2019, p. 1)

These standards allow teachers and school leaders a framework to address teacher growth and expectations and, in the ACT Public Education system, allow teachers to progress through incremental pay stages linked with their years of service and experience (ACT Government, 2014). It also provides school leaders a framework to address teacher standards when they are not in line with the expectations of the educational system (ACT Education Directorate, 2018a; ACT Government, 2014).

In the Australian education system, the responsibility for management and implementation of policies sits with the state and territory governments (ACT Education Directorate, 2018a). This, along with the geographical differences previously discussed, has created systems which can address the retention of teachers in different ways, dependant on the issues being faced by the teachers, schools and governments themselves. In the ACT independent schools can recruit their own teachers, and in the public system teachers can apply for specific schools or for a *pool* of teachers within the directorate (ACT Education Directorate, 2018b). The ACT allows teachers to transfer schools at different points in their career, based on the needs of the teacher and the school. This is in contrast to systems such as in New South Wales (NSW), where the challenge to recruit teachers into rural and remote schools has led to a *points* system where teachers can gain points by choosing to work in schools in rural and remote communities (New South Wales Department of Education, 2020). These points lead to financial benefits, rental supports and a fast track to permanency in the government system. The different strategies, and the available data around the attrition rates (where known) are presented for some of the states and territories in the proceeding sections. This gives a wider picture of the similarities and differences in the education systems across Australia as well as the

different ways in which they have decided to address these issues in line with the national policies discussed previously.

### 1.2.2. Attrition and retention data available for the ACT

#### 1.2.2.1. ACT Education Directorate information

From 2005 to 2010 the Australian Capital Territory published data in their annual report each year which specifically presented the number of teachers at each band of service (ACT Education Directorate, 2010b, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016a, 2017, 2018a). This allowed a basic representation of the data which showed possible attrition rates across different years of service. This data should not be considered as a strong statistical representation however, it gives some information about possible trends which could be further explored.

The importance of teacher retention in the ACT Education Directorate was shown in their annual reports and strategic plans which, since 2014, have all included data pertaining to teacher attrition rates. In table 1.1 below, the rates since 2014 are shown.

Table 1.1 *Recruitment and separation rates of teachers and school leaders in the ACT Education Directorate from 2014 to 2018. Data from ACT Education Directorate Annual Reports (ACT Education Directorate, 2015, 2016a, 2017, 2018a).*

Employment Classification		Financial Year			
		2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
<b>Teachers</b>	Recruitment rate	8.5	8.5	8.4	9.7
	Separation rate	6.0	6.0	7.1	4.8
<b>School Leaders (A, B and C)</b>	Recruitment rate	0.7	0.7	0.4	0.3
	Separation rate	4.1	4.1	5.1	5.3

Table 1.1 shows that the proportion of teachers who are leaving the ACT Education Directorate has decreased, however the rate of attrition for school leaders has increased slightly. There is no exploration of this in the annual reports (ACT Education Directorate, 2015, 2016a, 2017, 2018a), however, it is possible the

decrease in attrition is due to the increased focus on strategies designed to retain teachers. It is also unknown if the teachers who account for the attrition data have left the profession entirely, or have moved to other teaching settings, such as the private school sector. The increased school leader attrition rate may be due to an overall shift in the workforce profile of the teaching profession which, in line with the Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018), is showing an increase in the number of teachers who are approaching retirement. This would account for a gradual increase in the separation rate in this group, which has a higher number of older members, who would have a potentially higher rate of teachers retiring. Retirement, in this data, is included as a separation. However, it is possible that this group is showing a higher rate of attrition prior to retirement, which could be further explored.

#### *1.2.2.2. Australian Education Union: State of Our Schools survey*

The Australian Education Union (AEU) conducts an annual State of Our Schools (SOS) survey (Australian Education Union, 2017). This survey is currently released as media reports and articles through the AEU member's publication "Australian Educator" (Australian Education Union Federal, 2017), in the media (Ballantyne, 2017), and in press releases on their website (Australian Education Union, 2018, 2019), which does not allow for any further consideration of the data from a state or territory specific viewpoint. However, up until 2010 this data was published on the AEU ACT website with the ACT specific data being available separate to the Australia wide information (Australian Education Union, 2004, 2010). In the ACT, the survey frequently had over 10,000 teachers participating, giving a strong understanding of the specific needs of teachers in the ACT (Australian Education Union, 2010). Up until 2010 in the AEU State of Our Schools survey for the ACT (Australian Education Union, 2010) it was shown that:

- Teachers in the ACT viewed the retention of teachers as a significant issue (88%), which was even higher than the national results (68%).
- Beginning teachers thought they would remain in the profession for more than 10 years (42%) more than those who thought they would leave in the next 1-3 years (3%). Interestingly, there was also a trend in which a number of teachers were unsure of how long they would remain teaching (17% in the ACT, 22% nationally).

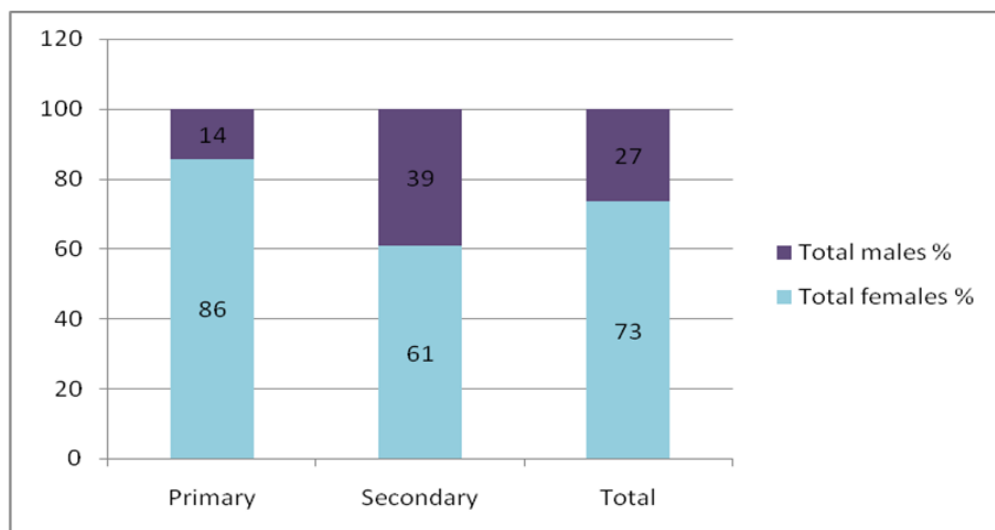
- The two most important factors which teachers believed would retain staff were reduced workloads (44%) and fewer student management issues (27%).
- In the ACT teachers felt more strongly about reducing workload but less strongly about management issues than other Australian teachers.
- ACT teachers would prefer higher remuneration levels (compared to the National results) but were less concerned about their class sizes.
- Overall, all staff in Australia did not see bonuses or professional development as an area which could entice teachers to stay. Financial incentives have shown to have mixed results internationally when used. Some studies have found that they are effective (Clotfelter, Glennie, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2008), others have found limited impacts on retaining or attracting teachers (Clotfelter, Glennie, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2005) and some have found that financial incentives could be linked to higher attrition rates (Fowler, 2003).

The results from the ACT annual reports data would suggest that the ACT has mirrored the early teacher attrition rates of other countries. Ewing and Manuel (2005) found that up to 40% of beginning teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years. Whilst this data needs to be treated with caution (see limitations below) it can be still therefore be assumed that the ACT Education Department should be concerned over the significantly higher attrition rates amongst new teachers.

The AEU survey raises some points of interest in regard to what ACT teachers perceive are the biggest factors in staff leaving. The most important factors which ACT staff reported as a factor in staff attrition and retention were the workload and student management issues. This is similar to the findings of earlier studies, which also showed workload and student behaviour as major factors in teachers' decisions to leave in Australia (Ewing & Smith, 2003) and in the United States of America (USA) (Gordon & Maxey, 2000; A. Mitchell & Arnold, 2004). Furthermore, the survey by the Australian Education Union (2010) found that lack of support is one of the biggest factors which had caused staff to leave; it even suggested that the majority of other complaints tend to be by-products of this issue. In the case of the ACT, it would seem that the staff do not feel supported in either managing their workload or in dealing with unruly students (Australian Education Union, 2010). It has also been shown that ACT teachers believe that performance-

based pay may also be one strategy which could be employed to retain quality teachers in the department (Australian Education Union, 2010). This supports the findings of (Hendricks, 2015) and previous research by (Clotfelter et al., 2008) who also found that salaries could be used to attract staff, however, it has also been shown that using bonuses to keep staff is not as effective as providing a quality workplace (Fowler, 2003).

It has been suggested in the past that attrition rates may not be equal across genders. The Australian Education Union (2010) suggested that males in the ACT had higher intent to leave rates than females, and importantly saw a substantial rise in this rate between 6 to 10 years of service. It was also shown in the ACT annual reports that the average age of male teachers in secondary schools was older than their female counterparts in both sectors and their male counterparts in primary schools (ACT Education Directorate, 2010a). That information, coupled with the data from the ACT Education Directorate, suggest that in the future there may be a severe shortage of male teachers in this area in particular.



*Figure 1.1* Proportion of FTE male to female staff in the ACT Department of Education and Training, by school type, 2009/10. Data from (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010)

In Figure 1.1 it can be seen that the proportion of males to females is significantly different across educational settings (primary versus secondary schools). These differences have not been measured consistently enough throughout more recent times; however, they do raise questions and concerns around treating

teachers as a homogenous group. This would suggest that potential differences across genders and school settings should be further explored.

The AEU survey found that within the ACT 42% of teaching staff thought they would remain in the profession beyond 10 years (Australian Education Union, 2010). It has also revealed that 21% thought they would leave within the first 5 years. This figure is lower than reported in some previous studies (Boser, 2000), however, it is similar to others in Australia (Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Ewing & Smith, 2003). In the ACT a much larger proportion of beginning teachers, those with less than 5 years' experience, thought they would leave within the next 4-5 years than compared with the overall national data (Australian Education Union, 2010). This could suggest that the ACT teachers are less happy within their positions, though it would seem more likely that they would leave sooner (1-3) if that was the case. Another commonly repeated suggestion in the literature is that the younger generation of employees are less likely to remain in a single position long term (AbouAssi, McGinnis Johnson, & Holt, 2019; Campione, 2015; Culpin et al., 2015). This has also been found in the teaching career where younger employees show higher patterns of job mobility than their older teaching colleagues in the USA (Lovely, 2012). Ewing and Smith (2003) had previously suggested that education systems need to focus on making it easier to return to teaching or shift the thinking that all teachers should be remaining in the profession long term. This has also been a focus in an international context, where teachers are being supported in returning to the profession in an attempt to increase teacher numbers in Hong Kong (Harfitt, 2015). The AEU survey has suggested that ACT teachers are more likely to stay in the profession in the short term (1-3 years) but are more eager to leave after 4-10 years. It is also surprising that they are less eager to remain in teaching beyond 10 years when compared to the rest of Australia (Australian Education Union, 2010). This is another consideration which could be further explored in more details.

It is difficult to compare the actual results from the annual reports with the findings of the AEU survey as both have the data presented in different formats. For example, the annual report data is given in 2-year bands, finishing at 12+, whereas the AEU survey was broken up into 3-year bands, ending at 10 years or more. Despite this we can make some broad observations, firstly that the annual reports would suggest that the attrition rate for staff in the first year was as high as 25% (ACT Education Directorate, 2010a, 2011) but the AEU report suggests that most of

the beginning teachers would stay for at least 4 to 5 years (Australian Education Union, 2010). There is then a rapid peak in the percentage that said they would leave at that point. If we assume that the respondents would by then be in the 6-8 or 8-10 years of service band (as they would currently be in the 0-2 or 2-4 categories) we should see a spike at this point in the overall staff attrition rates however, this is not true for all staff. It is, however, interesting that the annual report attrition rate for males across years of service 6-10 corresponds with the expected trends the AEU survey suggests. This raises issues surrounding the validity of using “expectations to leave” as solid evidence on what will occur.

Overall, the biggest issue that research in the ACT has faced has been the inability to compare different data sets against each other to generate a cohesive and complete picture of what attrition and retention look like in the ACT. As discussed, there has been some suggestions in the data that different demographic groups, such as males versus females, show different attrition patterns there has not been any in depth considerations on the different attrition rates across the territory (or across Australia). This is an area which warrants further exploration to better understand who in the ACT leaves the profession and why specific groups leave. It is also important to better understand what is occurring in the ACT since the introduction of the Melbourne Declaration and the widespread National initiatives aimed at addressing attrition and retaining high quality teachers in the profession. The data which is specific to the ACT exists prior to the 2008 signing of the Declaration so it is hoped that many of these issues will have been addressed in the proceeding years.

### **1.2.3. Australian Capital Territory initiatives to retain and attract teachers**

The attrition and retention of teachers in the ACT has been documented in research (Adoniou, 2012, 2013a, 2015), in the media (Adoniou, 2013b), as well as in policy (ACT Education Directorate, 2010a, 2017, 2018a, 2018b). The public education system, the ACT Education Directorate, utilises Strategic Plans which outline the priorities and processes which will guide the operations of schools, the policies and processes across the directorate and the strategic directions which impact on classroom practices and teacher training and development for four years (ACT Education Directorate, 2018b). These plans have, since 2014, expressly focused on strategies designed to attract and then retain quality teachers. A summary



of the effectiveness of these strategies is then published annually in the form of annual reports, which present data pertaining to the workforce structure of the organisation as well as key focuses and strategies that have been implemented in the preceding years. Since 2014, there has been a strong focus in these reports around attracting and retaining quality teachers into the organisation (ACT Education Directorate, 2015, 2016a, 2017, 2018a). The key strategies that have been a focus in the ACT have included:

- A reduction in the face-to face teaching hours for beginning teachers to allow for coaching and mentoring (ACT Education Directorate, 2018a).
- Early offers of permanency to high achieving university graduates (ACT Education Directorate, 2018a).
- Salary progression linked to teacher professional standards (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2018a) and accelerated salary increases for high achieving teachers (ACT Education Directorate, 2018a).
- Workload reductions (ACT Education Directorate, 2016a).
- School leader C Career Development processes (ACT Education Directorate, 2016a).
- *Annual Professional Program* to “to support all teachers continually develop their professional knowledge, practice and engagement” (ACT Education Directorate, 2016a, p. 90).
- Induction programs (ACT Education Directorate, 2018a).
- Specific Attraction and Retention Incentives (ARIns) and Special Employment Arrangements (SEAs) (Australian Education Union, 2019).
  - The number of ARIns increased from 5 in 2016 (ACT Education Directorate, 2016a) to 90 in 2017 (ACT Education Directorate, 2017).

It is clear that the ACT Education Directorate is well aware of the need to attract and retain quality teachers into the profession, as well as the current understanding in research which shows how to achieve this.

However, there are still questions that need to be considered such as:

1. How effective these strategies in the ACT are?
2. What effect they are having?
3. Do teachers know they exist; do they see benefits in them? and
4. Do they actually access them?

Data specific to the ACT has been presented in this chapter which would suggest that attrition rates have been dropping, although the consistent messaging around the complexity of measuring this data is important to note once again (McKenzie, Kos, Walker, Hong, & Owen, 2008). The data is also not provided in a way which can be explored as a construct of different groups, this includes the potential higher rates across different genders, school settings, or years of experience. Therefore, this study will explore the experiences and potential retention or attrition rates with a consideration that these groups are not homogenous and therefore, their experiences may differ, and this may lead to different causes for attrition across different groups.

#### **1.2.4. State and Territory initiatives to retain and attract teachers**

Due to the size, geography, cultural and population size differences across each of the states and territories each has its own issues regarding staffing as this report has shown. Therefore, each has its own ways to address any problems they have in attracting and retaining staff.

In WA there are staffing issues in certain schools and subject areas such as Mathematics, Design and Technology and Science (Western Australian Department of Education, 2012, 2018). The state has trouble getting teachers to apply to schools in regional and remote areas. In order to attract teachers into these positions the department has, in the past, offered support funding to staff teaching in regional schools and they ran programs aimed at getting overseas and graduate teachers into those positions (Western Australian Department of Education, 2012). The department also offered education scholarships to teachers in university courses relevant to the subject's areas in need. There is not a lot of focus in the retention of staff in any of these areas other than the Government Regional Officers' Housing (GROH) which provides subsidised accommodation in regional areas (Western Australian Department of Education, 2010). WA is a large, geographically and socially diverse state, which makes the introduction of policies difficult to create at a state level. Policies which could attract teachers to major cities would not be relevant to remote community schools. This has been shown to create a gap between policies and practices, with suggestions that in states as large and diverse as WA there should be a greater focus on autonomy of schools to be able to devise policies and processes that best suit their needs (Trimmer, 2012). This is an issue which is likely faced by

many of the states and territories of Australia, and internationally, as school settings are not homogenous much like the students and teachers within them.

NSW has a well-rounded approach to teacher attraction and retention, with many of their strategies implemented appearing on the list of recommendations from the literature. The NSW Department of Education reported on working towards stronger links with universities offering preservice programs and created accomplished teacher categories which provided high achieving teachers with an increased salary and recognition (New South Wales Department of Education, 2018; New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 2010). One retention strategy NSW schools employed included support for beginning teachers in their first year in the form of time allocated to the school (New South Wales Department of Education, 2011) though it is not mentioned how this time is used, whether it is for the creation of a mentor or as an hour free for the beginning teacher.

Both Queensland and Victoria have mentioned that attracting staff is a priority however, they have also discussed the retention of current staff as equally important in the past (Queensland Department of Education, 2013, 2018; Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2010). Some of the strategies they have used included the placement of trained mentors in schools, more professional development opportunities and employing more skill specific staff such as literacy and numeracy officers in school (Queensland Department of Education, 2013; Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2010). Victoria however, is the only state or territory which has specifically mentioned a focus on supporting those teachers who are returning to the workforce by assisting in the upgrading of skills (Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2010). There is no mention in more recent reports as to how effective this strategy was in the long term.

There is not currently information regarding the strategies utilised by all states and territories to attract and retain staff in schools; however, it can be seen that most Australian education departments are attempting to address this issue. It is concerning to this author that those states and territories which are placing some of the greatest amounts of resources, including financial, are those for which there is the least amount of information available regarding their attrition and retention rates. It would seem logical that the states, territories and Commonwealth would not be willing to place such large amounts of resources into a problem that does not exist,

however, if there is some sort of analysis being performed on the staffing data at each state and territory it is not being presented. This is concerning as there have historically been complaints in the education sector that there is a de-intellectualisation of the field with less and less emphasis being placed on the role of research in informing practice (Ball, 2001). Therefore, it is vital that government policies and procedures are supported by peer-reviewed literature and that the use of generalised data regarding all Australian schools as a means of determining what best practice for each state and territory is avoided where possible. General trends and assumptions may be drawn; however, it has been shown that teaching across Australian settings, and in particular the public systems where this data has been drawn from, are varied and should be treated as such. It is also important to note that the data available in annual reports which have been presented in this chapter are wholly from public education settings as there is no requirement that schools from the Catholic Education or Independent school present information to the public in the same way.

### **1.3. Conclusion**

The reasons attributed to teachers leaving the profession are often complex and multifaceted rather than one dimensional (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009). This chapter has presented the current data on attrition as well as the specific strategies employed by education systems and schools to address this. In section 2.1 in the following chapter the underpinning reasons that teachers leave the profession is presented. Manuel (2003b) found that of the teachers who remained in the profession many had a single positive experience which validated their choice to teach and in turn encouraged them to stay. Teachers who left however, stated that it was a combination of many of the factors discussed which ultimately lead to them submitting their resignation. Of the teachers' reasons cited as influencing their decision to leave, lack of support appears to be the most significant. Many of the other factors discussed in this thesis can be considered as a direct outcome of a lack of support or respect in some way. For example, many teachers report feeling stressed, but that stress is often due to unsupportive environments or staff members. Even low salaries could be viewed as a society not supporting and valuing the work that teachers are undertaking. Therefore, if schools and education departments create supportive teaching environments that address numerous aspects of support it may

be that many of the other factors discussed will naturally be dealt with in the process. Another major variable which appears to link across a number of other factors which teachers are reporting as driving attrition is self-efficacy. This was mentioned briefly in this section but will be explored in more depth in the following chapter as a possible explanation behind many of the negative experiences that teachers are reporting overall. There still needs to be further exploration of how self-efficacy underpins, or influences, the other variables which have been presented in this section.

It is important to mention that the increase in beginning teacher attrition may not be due to negative factors. It may be due to a shifting in the attitudes and values of the generation of teachers that are progressing through pre-service programs. Studies report that many staff are content in their positions, yet they still intend to leave teaching within the next 10 years (Australian Education Union, 2010; Ewing & Smith, 2003; Mason & Matas, 2015). This would suggest that teachers may be moving away from the traditional notions of remaining in the same career for life, instead seeing teaching as a *pit stop* or a chance to learn new skills that they can transfer into a diversity of alternate positions (Martinez, 2004; Peske, Liu, Johnson, Kauffman, & Kardos, 2001). It would be advantageous to compare beginning teacher attrition rates to those in other professions to better explore this proposition, or to continue to study the reasons and demographics behind those teachers who do, or intend to, leave.

Since the late 1990's there has been an interest in understanding teacher attrition and retention (Macdonald, 1999). However, there is still conjecture around what the actual attrition rates are and there is a lack of data on teachers outside the beginning years in the profession (Weldon, 2018). Many of the studies centred on attrition are actually measuring intent to leave, motivation or job satisfaction as a measure of attrition, therefore, the focus needs to shift in understanding satisfaction as a possible cause of attrition rather than as a direct measure (Weldon, 2018). There is still little known as to whether different demographic groups have different rates of, or reasons for, attrition. There is some suggestion that there is higher rates of attrition in teachers from minority backgrounds (Ingersoll et al., 2017) and across genders (Maliki, 2013), however, there is still a reported lack of research into the potential differences in attrition across different demographic groups (Moses, Admiraal, & Berry, 2016), especially in Australia (Weldon, 2018).

There has been a call to have a theoretical underpinning to explain teacher attrition, as it is well known to be a complex and multifaceted concept (Mason & Matas, 2015). A model to understand teacher attrition and retention needs to be able to encompass the different variables that have been shown to play a role, as well as components such as self-efficacy to better understand the interplay between them. It also needs to consider that job satisfaction may provide a link with attrition, but it cannot be used as a direct measure.

#### **1.4. The aims of this study**

It has been evidenced that there is still further information required in the context of teacher attrition and retention, especially in the context of the Australian Educational sector, and the specific geographical context of the ACT. Since there is a suggestion that there may be differences in the attrition rate of teachers who have different demographic backgrounds, or at different points in their careers (years of service) the study first used a quantitative survey to determine if there is any difference in the rates across varying groups. However, in order to better understand the experiences of teachers in the time frame since the introduction of specific strategies designed to promote retention and lower attrition, an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of in-depth interviews was then conducted with the same participants from the initial study.

A Mixed Methods (MM) methodology was chosen to allow a merging of a small quantitative (quan) survey with a larger interview strand (QUAL). This bringing together of two different and linked sources of information (from the same group of participants, as the interview participants were selected through the surveys) allows a richer and more broad response to the research question to better explore the experiences of teachers which may lead to attrition from the profession.

##### **1.4.1. Research questions**

This study addressed the following research questions and sub questions.

1. What experiences impact teachers' job satisfaction and influence their decision to leave the profession?

*Sub questions:*

- a. Are there higher attrition rates for teachers across different years of service?
- b. Are there demographic groups which indicate a higher rate of teacher attrition?
- c. What are the experiences of teachers which impact on them positively or negatively with regard to attrition?
- d. What are the implications for improved support of teachers in order to reduce attrition?

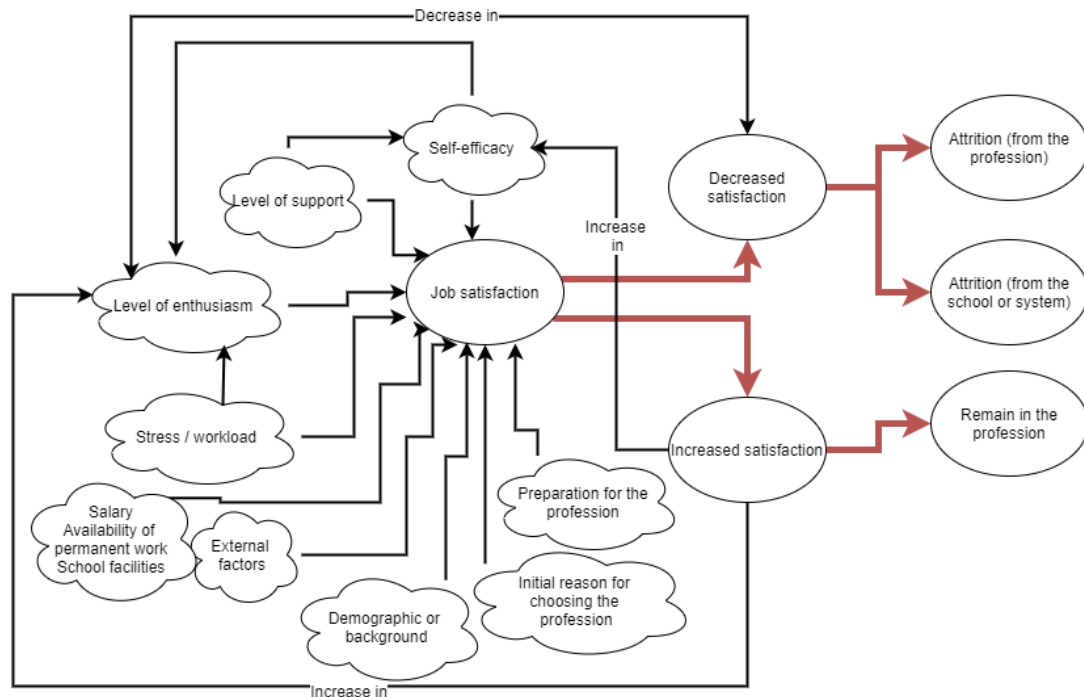
The qualitative interviews addressed the sub question "are there demographic groups which have a higher rate of teacher attrition?" through the use of one-on-one interviews and IPA analysis. This allowed me as the researcher to delve into teachers' experiences to identify factors which respondents believe has led to their, or others', decision to leave the profession.

This study aims to address the main research question holistically, to not only present a profile of which teachers are more likely to leave, but also what experiences teachers have which make them want to stay (or leave) the profession at different points in their careers. This, in turn, can have implications for educational practice, educational policies and for research into teacher attrition and retention in the ACT, Australia and across the world.

In this study, the term attrition is intended to mean leaving the teaching profession, school or system completely without an intent to return. The measurement for this was questions designed to measure intent to leave, which in turn was connected with a potential attrition rate. The demographic groupings which have been included are included, with deeper explanations, on page 121. They include gender, school type and employment type (part / full time and contract / permanent / casual). This study will explore whether there are any differences in the rates of these groups. There is no existing data which would allow potential expectations to be generated for these analyses.

Figure 1.2 presents a visual summary of different interplays between variables discussed in Chapter one and two. It also includes the connection between job satisfaction and attrition or retention through an increase or decrease in satisfaction. In this study, the reasons for potential decreases or increase in job

satisfaction are explored. The surrounding (bubble shaped) variables have been presented as possible influences on job satisfaction, however, there is a possibility that other themes may also emerge.



*Figure 1.2* A summary diagram of the potential interplay between different variables which impact on job satisfaction, and it's potential to lead to teacher attrition, which will be explored in this study.

There is a need to continue to explore what variables impact on teacher job satisfaction and their intent to leave. Each of the potential reasons that have been given previously as potential attrition reasons can be linked with job satisfaction. In Figure 1.2 an interplay between previously reported variables that have been linked with teacher attrition and job satisfaction can be observed. Each of the variables could be impacting directly on job satisfaction, which in turn impacts on teacher attrition. Therefore, there could be an indirect link on attrition by some, or all, of the variables presented in this chapter which have been linked to attrition in the past. Through understanding what is decreasing a teacher's satisfaction this study can draw potential links with attrition, without directly measuring attrition rates. Accurately measuring attrition rates and linking them across past studies has been shown in this chapter to be problematic, if not impossible. This is why this study



aims to determine what experiences are impacting on a teacher's job satisfaction to make potential links with attrition. It is unknown which, if any, of these variables will be found in the research process in teachers in the ACT. There is also, as described previously, potential differences between teachers with different years of service or demographic backgrounds. Therefore, this study will also be attempting to explore whether these variables are impacting on all teachers, or if different variables are important to different groups of teachers. This will create a more in-depth and cohesive picture of the experiences that teachers perceive as impacting on their job satisfaction through the understanding of their shared or different experiences. It will also link with, or generate a, theory to explain these experiences and their links with attrition and job satisfaction.

### **1.5. Underpinning Philosophical Viewpoints**

In the methodology sections the underpinning philosophical viewpoints are presented in depth. In this study a post-positivist stance has been taken as a whole, with the quantitative survey reflecting this. In the interview component the limitations of quantitative research in understanding human experience and the personal interpretations of experience are better understood through an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) lens.

Since the choice of mixed methods has been driven by a want to fully explore the experience of teachers both standpoints are valid. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) stated that in a mixed methods research (MMR) approach different strands or phases (dependant on the research design type) can be underpinned by different philosophical viewpoints. In some MMR studies the overarching philosophical viewpoint is pragmatism which has been explained in the context of mixed methods research as "when judging ideas we should consider their empirical and practical consequence" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17). Other theorists have suggested that scepticism allows a researcher to better explain the selection of mixed methods research through the underpinning assumption that all knowledge is fallible (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). However, in this research post-positivism is appropriate, as the choice of a second, qualitative linked, philosophy is guided by the belief that how a teacher experiences their world is personal and based on their own background and experiences. In this study my experiences and background are linked with the participants of the interviews and play an important role in the

interpretation of their experiences as I analyse them through my own personal lens that has been shaped by my own experiences and background.

### 1.5.1. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

In this study a mixed methods approach has been selected to better address the research question in depth. The quantitative survey focused on the collection of data to better understand which demographic group/s of teacher may be leaving the profession in higher numbers, however, the qualitative interviews were needed to understand what experiences teachers have which make them want to leave, or remain, in the profession.

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was chosen as it allows me to delve into the topic without the need to bracket or put aside my own experiences. Instead, the use of IPA allows me to acknowledge the role my own experiences have on the interpretation I place on the participants' experiences in the interview strand of the study. As a school leader within the ACT Education system I could not perceive how I would be able to fully put aside my own interpretations or experiences when analysing the interview data. Therefore, IPA, rather than other forms of qualitative or specific phenomenological analysis was chosen. This is explored in more depth in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

## 1.6. The Structure of the Thesis

*Table 1.2* Summary of the chapters that are presented in this thesis to demonstrate the design for this study.

Chapter	Heading	Constituents
1	Introduction	The contextual setting Current data in the field Current policies in the field The problem to be addressed This chapter will move between a scientific observer voice and the situated researcher at different points as required.
2	Literature review	In this review of the literature the theoretical underpinnings that explain teacher experiences in the context of attrition and retention are presented. Social Cognitive Career Theory is

- 
- determined to be the best fit for a theoretical framework, with the addition of a greater understanding of the role that Mastery Learning theories and the importance of relationships in the workplace play in teacher experiences.
- 3      Methodology      In this chapter the philosophical underpinnings are presented and the rationales behind the mixed methods and IPA approaches are given. The background of the researcher is also provided as a context for the IPA analysis. This chapter will move between a scientific observer voice and the situated researcher at different points as required.
- 4      Method              The overall method, quantitative survey and the interview methods are provided in this chapter. This chapter is presented with a removed scientific observer voice.
- 5      Results, findings and discussions      In this chapter each section presents the findings for each strand, along with the discussion for that strand. It includes:
- quantitative survey data,
  - discussion of the survey data,
  - interview,
  - interview findings,
  - discussion of the interview findings.
- 6      Discussion            In this chapter a link between the two strands (survey and interview) is explored to provide a discussion chapter which links both strands together in a cohesive response to the main research question. The implications of these findings on research, policy and practice are presented and the limitations and suggestions for future research are given.
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## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter commences with a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings relevant to teacher experiences of attrition and retention. It then considers Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent & Brown, 2006a; Lent et al., 1994) and its relevance to the study's theoretical framework, and considers theories relevant to Mastery Learning. It concludes with a discussion of other theories which play a role in teachers' experiences including the theory-practice gap, the importance of relationships in the workplace, the motivation a teacher has when they join the profession and the role that an individual and an organisation's value play in the retention of staff. The links between these theories and the emergent themes from this study are interwoven and presented throughout the chapter.

Previous studies have shown that teacher attrition is not the converse of retention (Mason & Matas, 2015). Looking at why teachers stay in the profession is not the same as understanding why they leave (Mason & Matas, 2015). In this study, the number of participants in the quantitative strand were not high enough to allow for a statistically significant analysis, therefore, it was used to show possible trends which in the later chapters will be discussed as areas for further research and as to support or challenge some of the themes that emerged in the interviews.

### 2.1. Why Do Teachers Leave the Profession?

In Section 1.2, the initiatives put in place in Australian schools to support the retention of teachers was presented. There was a number of strategies and policies designed to improve the retention rates of teachers. In this section the underpinning reasons for teacher attrition presented.

Teacher attrition and retention is relevant in education settings across the world (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005) with it being reported that the recruitment of new teachers is more costly (in time and money) than retaining existing ones (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). It is well reported that beginning teachers show high rates of attrition (Arnup & Bowles, 2016; Buchanan et al., 2013; Goddard & Goddard, 2003; Kim, Youngs, & Frank, 2017; Manuel & Carter, 2016) but the rates are not well known outside this group. The focus for many years has been on determining attrition and retention rates (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2016; Weldon, 2018) as

well as factors which are causing the phenomenon (Gallant & Riley, 2017; McKenzie et al., 2008). However, as discussed in this chapter, Weldon (2018) reports a concern that either attrition rates may not be as high as first thought or alternatively that they are extremely difficult to measure accurately. One major reason for this is that there is often an occurrence that a teacher may have left a school or education system (such as the public system) but may have moved schools or jurisdictions. This move is still costly to the school or system and is an occurrence that they would seek to understand and minimise, however, a focus entirely on attrition statistics could mask this. The different competing interests between individual schools, systems, research fields and even across states and territories makes it so that different publications may all use the term attrition but mean it in very different contexts. Some may mean a teacher who has left teaching and never returns whilst other studies report attrition based on teacher responses to intent to leave questions (Ingersoll, 2001; Weldon, 2018). Therefore, there is a need to understand the experiences of teachers that may increase their intent to leave, with a greater focus moving towards understanding the underpinning reasons that teachers leave the profession. A greater focus on understanding teachers overall job satisfaction, and how to build this, is emerging in the field and is becoming an underpinning for better understanding attrition without the limitations of measuring attrition rates.

Generally, the key variables which have been reported as being linked to a decreased job satisfaction, increased intent to leave rates or in some cases actual attrition of teachers can be broken up into factors which are either external to the setting and those which are internal to the school setting. External factors are those factors over which schools have little to no control (Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2004). Internal factors are the most widely discussed in the literature as they are those factors which are created by, and can therefore, be controlled by the school. Despite there being a wide range of internal factors that could impact on attrition, most can be grouped into the following categories; stress, lack of support or unsupportive environments, lack of preparation during preservice programs, loss of enthusiasm or disillusionment, a low level of self-efficacy and other mixed factors.

Another component of research into teacher job satisfaction is better linking the field to other professions. Mason and Matas (2015) reported that there is a need to have a theoretical underpinning to understand the phenomenon that is being

measured and explored when looking at teacher attrition and retention. This would allow links to be made across fields, and to determine whether the teaching profession experiences attrition causes that are shared or unique. If they are shared, then links across retention strategies in different fields could potentially be utilised in the teaching field.

Therefore, this study seeks to understand what the underpinning experiences are that teachers believe contribute to their overall job satisfaction, in particular those experiences which they feel could lead to attrition. These experiences will then be linked, where possible, with existing theories in teaching (or other career) models to better explore how each of the different variables presented in this chapter might be contributing to attrition through a decrease in job satisfaction or an increase in intent to leave.

### **2.1.1. External factors**

In the past the most commonly listed external factors included family reasons, pregnancy, struggling with the balance between work and their own children and health problems (Buckley et al., 2004). Smithers and Robinson (2003) reported that of their five main factors which would affect an individual's choice to leave the profession only two can be considered to be external; "new challenges" and "personal circumstances" (Smithers & Robinson, 2003, p. i). It has been suggested that these can be assumed to be similar reasons for people leaving any other profession (Ingersoll et al., 2017). However, it was suggested that further research is required to determine the validity of this assumption.

### **2.1.2. Internal factors**

#### *2.1.2.1. Stress and workload*

Stress is continually cited by beginning teachers as a factor involved in their decision to leave teaching in Australia (Ewing & Smith, 2003; Goddard & Goddard, 2006; Goddard, O'Brien, & Goddard, 2006; Manuel, 2003a, 2003b), the Netherlands (Harmsen, Helms-Lorenz, Maulana, & van Veen, 2018; Harmsen, Helms-Lorenz, Maulana, & van Veen, 2019), the UK (Kyriacou, 2001) and in the United States of America (Fitchett, McCarthy, Lambert, & Boyle, 2018). Ewing and Smith (2003) reported that beginning teachers listed "adjusting to the demands of teaching full time" (p. 17) as one of their major concerns.

Classroom management is a recurrent issue which many beginning teachers cite as a major stressor (McNally, Tanson, Whewell, & Wilson, 2005; A. Mitchell & Arnold, 2004; Moore, 2003; Peters, 2012), which has also been reported as having a negative effect on student outcomes as well as on the teachers themselves (Thomson, De Bortoli, & Underwood, 2017). Studies have shown that how a school deals with problem students and how it supports all staff in dealing with these students plays a major role in staff cohesion and retention (Buckley et al., 2004). However, in the past teachers reported that they had limited training and support from the school's behaviour management policies to assist in dealing with troubled or unruly students (Ingersoll, 2001; Macdonald, 1999).

The increasing demands being placed on beginning teachers is also another issue which creates stress. Most beginning teachers are treated as though they have been teaching for many years, with one study even reporting a case where a principal hid a beginning teacher's inexperience from parents (Ewing & Smith, 2003). This mentality leads to situations in which beginning teachers are being asked to deal with unknown environments without any kind of 'safety net' of being a recognised student themselves. Beginning teachers are also being placed into leadership roles very early on, some even in their first year (Manuel, 2003b), and are often expected to handle events that in the past would have been the domain of social or youth workers (Martinez, 2004; O'Brien, Goddard, & Keeffe, 2008). When you add in the complexity of many new programs being implemented and an increase in accountability (Tye & O'Brien, 2002) it can be understood why many new teachers have ranked their workload as a factor which is pushing them towards leaving the profession (Green, 2018; Richardson, Goodman, Flight, & Richards, 2018; Scott, 2019; Smithers & Robinson, 2003; Whelan, 2018).

#### *2.1.2.2. Level of support and social environment*

School situation (Smithers & Robinson, 2003), lack of support and the failure of schools to create and maintain supportive environments is a consistent problem raised by beginning teachers (Boser, 2000; Green, 2018; Watt & Richardson, 2008). In an ideal world staff rooms would be warm and inviting locations, where new staff members are welcomed with open arms, their ideas and contributions valued, and their differences celebrated. Whilst some beginning teachers may find this kind of environment at their first placement in many staff rooms the opposite exists

(Goddard et al., 2006). Some qualitative studies have painted a sad picture of a culture where unsupportive “old girl/boy” mentalities abound (Ewing & Smith, 2003) or where bullying by senior staff is actively accepted (Adoniou, 2015; Hobson, 2009). This is a trend which appears to have continued, rather than been addressed in recent reports (Orange, 2018; Schuck, Aubusson, Buchanan, Varadharajan, & Burke, 2018). There has been some suggestion in the past that it is *just luck* as to whether beginning teachers find a quality support team in the staff members around them (Ewing & Smith, 2003; Manuel, 2003b). Manuel (2003b) also found that beginning teachers listed not being supported, not having a voice, not having their ideas put into practice, rigid programs and open resentment from other staff regarding their skills as major issues which contributed to their decision to leave the profession. It has been found that this continues to be true in modern education settings in some Australian schools (Schuck et al., 2018).

In countries and states which have teacher registration mandated, some staff reported that issues arising from this process and the need to deal with administration contribute to their feelings of being unsupported (Tapper, 1995). Whilst this issue is not as widely studied, or as recent, it is interesting to consider as Australia introduced teacher registration in 2005 across all states and territories (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2019). This move was, at the time questioned for its potential benefit and impact on teacher attrition rates (Ingvarson et al., 2006). It is still unknown as to whether this has positively or negatively impacted teacher experiences, and further research is required to investigate whether teachers who do not have any formal registration process find that this is an issue in the same way that their registered counterparts do. The past findings of Tapper (1995) would have suggested that national registration could lead to an increase, rather than a decrease, in teacher attrition rates. More recently it has been reported that teachers are finding that the increase New Public Management (NPM) with a decrease in the level of autonomy and shifts in management approaches have in turn increased attrition in beginning teachers (Gallant & Riley, 2017) and in more experienced teachers (Keogh & Roan, 2016). This could be linked with the introduction of the teacher registration system, as many teachers have reported an increase in required attendance at professional learning and a feeling of being over regulated and monitored which could be considered aspects of the teacher standards and registration process (Gallant & Riley, 2017).



It can be observed that schools should be aware that they need to create environments where their staff feel welcome and supported, by other staff and administration, and provide a solid and consistent school-wide behaviour management plan. Otherwise schools will ultimately become the proverbial *leaky buckets* which lose quality staff the education departments are working so hard to recruit.

#### 2.1.2.3. *Level of preparation*

Past research has found that the majority of beginning teachers report that they feel prepared by their preservice program (Ewing & Smith, 2003), however, others have reported gaps in some teacher preparation programs which may be contributing to an increase in teacher attrition rates (O'Neill & Stephenson, 2011; O'Neill & Stephenson, 2012; Zee & Koomen, 2016) which has been suggested an ongoing issue in the field of teacher attrition (Hobson, Malderez, Johnson, & Tracey, 2006; Hobson et al., 2008; Malderez, Hobson, Tracey, & Kerr, 2007). It has long been reported in Australia, as well as overseas, that there needs to be greater links between universities offering preservice programs, schools' and education directorates or policy makers (Australian Dept. of Employment, 2001, 2005; Ewing & Smith, 2003; Kelly & Fogarty, 2015; Mockler, 2018). However, the practicalities of establishing these relationships, the responsibilities for maintaining them, and the underpinning purpose for having them is not given or further explored. The complexities in establishing and maintaining these relationships, even at a small scale, have been shown to be challenging for educators as well as university staff and researchers (Janice K. Jones, 2008).

Many preservice teachers enter the profession without a realistic idea of what their daily work life will entail (Adoniou, 2013a) and have reported that the gaps between theory in preservice courses and eventual practice are significant (Rose & Rogers, 2012; Teaching, Policy, Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001). This may be because mentor teachers in preservice programs are hesitant to put preservice teachers into high-risk situations. This could be to protect the preservice teacher, or it may be to protect the students from any potentially negative teaching episodes (Malderez et al., 2007). Ewing and Smith (2003) has previously suggested that it may not have been a lack of negative classroom experiences, but instead a gap in the teaching of newer pedagogical or theoretical practices and ideas during university

courses that may have left beginning teachers feeling unprepared. More recent findings support this, with many beginning teachers calling for a greater focus on practical skills, particularly in specific areas such as behaviour management, over content (O'Neill & Stephenson, 2012, Putman, 2009; Reupert & Woodcock, 2010; Siebert, 2005).

Whilst there is a call for more practical aspects of teaching to be covered in greater depth in pre-service courses, there is the risk that there will not be an adequate amount of other vital components of the educational field covered in courses. Some examples have included the need to have a greater focus on differentiation (Arthur-Kelly, Sutherland, Lyons, Macfarlane, & Foreman, 2013), Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) (Albion, Jamieson-Proctor, & Finger, 2010; Romeo, Lloyd, & Downes, 2012), play based learning (Janice K Jones, 2012) or even personal creativity skills (Janice K Jones, 2010) in pre-service education programs to create well rounded, reflective and resilient teachers who can cater to the diverse needs of their students.

There has also been a greater focus in recent years on the different strategies that can be used to create improved links between universities and education sectors (Ingvarson et al., 2006; Tigchelaar, Brouwer, & Korthagen, 2008; Weldon, 2018) as well as how to enhance the outcomes of courses in building student teacher skills and self-efficacy in different areas (McLennan, McIlveen, & Perera, 2017). Duck (2007) reported that pre-service education programs need to provide pre-service teachers with a greater contextual understanding of the classroom and a stronger focus on key skills such as behaviour management. It has also been suggested that a greater focus in preservice education programs should be placed on the development of teacher self-efficacy as this potentially impacts on so many other aspects of a teachers job satisfaction (McLennan et al., 2017). The links between pre-service education programs need to continue to include a balance between more abstract or theoretical concepts and practical applications of these concepts (Cevher-Kalburan, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2009; Tarman, 2012; Zeichner, 2006; Zeichner, McDonald, Cohan, & Honigsfeld, 2011).

With the introduction of more complex and reportable teaching practices and assessment many beginning teachers are feeling swamped by their workload and lack of understanding (Hobson, 2009), which has already been discussed as a potential area that may have worsened with the introduction of the Australian

Teacher Professional Standards in 2005. This is of particular concern as in the past it has been shown that if teachers are not prepared for the everyday classroom routines and expectations they will face in their role, they are more likely to exit the profession altogether (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Ramsey, 2000).

#### *2.1.2.4. Loss of enthusiasm or disillusionment*

In Australia the majority of new teachers and preservice teachers report consistently that they want to be involved in the profession for altruistic and optimistic reasons, such as making a positive contribution to the student's lives (Buckley et al., 2004), which is similar in some countries (Hennessy & Lynch, 2017; Moses, Berry, Saab, & Admiraal, 2017; Nesje, Brandmo, & Berger, 2018), but is not true in Tanzania (Towse, Kent, Osaki, & Kirua, 2002). In 2003 it was found that amongst Australian teachers the most common reasons for entering into the teaching profession were “satisfying career (97%), to promote student learning (97%), contribute to society (94%), helping others (93%) and working with young people (86%)” (Ewing & Smith, 2003, p. 22). This was similar to the findings of research in the UK and Norway, around the same time, which found that teachers rated personal enjoyment and wanting to make a difference as their driving force behind choosing education as a career (Kyriacou, Kunc, Stephens, & Hultgren, 2003).

More recent studies have also shown that teachers continue to choose teaching for these positive reasons across the world (Hennessy & Lynch, 2017; Moses et al., 2017; Nesje et al., 2018). Despite starting their employment with such high ideals and images about how their contributions will affect their students, many become disillusioned with either their school or the education system as a whole (Manuel, 2003b) or experience burnout (Buchanan et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2017). There are many driving forces that have been proposed to explain this rapid satisfaction burnout including; media and community attitudes towards teachers as a whole (Mockler, 2018), fighting against the 9 until 3- and 12-weeks holiday ‘stigma,’ overall job dissatisfaction (Buckley et al., 2004; Dinham, 2013; Mockler, 2018) and being forced to follow set curriculums (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003).

It is pleasing to note however, that despite these feelings most teachers still wanted to achieve the best possible outcomes for their students (Manuel, 2003b) and that the profile of education in Australia was rising, with more teachers than ever

coming from successful careers in other fields (Martinez, 2004). This trend has continued internationally (Hunter-Johnson, 2015; Tigchelaar et al., 2008; Troesch & Bauer, 2017) but there is not as much evidence to ensure that that same phenomena is still occurring in Australia.

#### *2.1.2.5. Other factors*

Smithers and Robinson (2003) revealed that salary was one of the five most important factors that affected their decision to leave teaching, although it should be mentioned that it was found to be the least important of the five. Tye and O'Brien (2002) found that teachers in the United States of America (USA) perceived their salary as a reason to leave teaching, with Dolton and Klaauw (1995) reporting similar findings in the United Kingdom (UK). This is somewhat surprising as numerous other studies have found that bonus programs, increasing salaries and performance-based pay did not improve attrition rates in the USA (Clotfelter et al., 2005; Prince, 2003). In some cases, it actually created higher rates of teacher attrition (Fowler, 2003). It has been reported that teachers would like to be paid more but they would prefer to have their working conditions improved first (Hanushek & Luque, 2000; Hendricks, 2015). The OCED placed Australian teaching salaries within the top 5 of OECD countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019b), however, alternate studies suggest that salary remains an issue for some teachers in Australia (Australian Education Union, 2012). Hendricks (2015) has suggested that there is an optimal salary amount that teachers need to be attracted and then remain in the profession. It is interesting to note that many of the countries which have reported positive impacts by bonus programs are amongst the lower paid (comparatively) (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019b). Therefore, salaries should not be fully discounted as a means to improve teachers' job satisfaction, teachers need to be paid at a level which recognises their importance and skill level, but beyond that point there are more important factors which should be addressed to improve job satisfaction.

A significant issue which has arisen in education is the casualisation of the teaching workforce (Bamberry, 2011; Mercieca, 2017; Nicholas & Wells, 2017). In Australia there seems to be a shift towards hiring teachers on casual or contract positions, especially in their early years in the profession (Adoniou, 2016). This is known to be a significant issue in retaining staff in higher education settings (Percy

& Beaumont, 2008). A concern with increasing the number of casual and contract positions is that it is likely to decrease the level of support, induction and mentoring that a beginning teacher receives in their first few years in the profession. This has been discussed in this chapter as significant in attracting and retaining high quality staff into teaching. Beginning teachers who enter the profession but remain as casuals or on contract report significantly higher intents to leave, and lower overall job satisfaction (Bamerry, 2011; Mercieca, 2017). If the decrease in permanent positions in the teaching field continues it will be of interest to determine what impact this has on the attrition and retention rates in Australia, and whether this correlates with international findings as well.

The quality of school facilities has long been shown as a major factor in teachers' job satisfaction and student outcomes (Buckley et al., 2004). Buckley et al. (2004) reported that poor air quality leads to poor test scores through high absenteeism and thermal comfort has been shown to play a major role in student performance (Heschong, 1999). This is an ongoing issue in teaching, with it being well reported that a student's physical environment plays a significant role in their academic outcomes (De Nobile, Lyons, & Arthur-Kelly, 2017; Howell, 2014).

All of these factors combine to either give or remove a teacher's sense of control over their student's outcomes. This is important to teachers that it has consistently been found that improved school facilities actually has a greater impact on improving staff retention than increasing salaries (Buckley et al., 2004; Kaden et al., 2016; Maku & Begi, 2017). This would suggest that investing funds into school wide physical improvements is important even in an Australian context, but it requires further exploration.

### **2.1.3. Self-efficacy**

A significant psychological construct which has been evident across various educational settings to have wide reaching impacts on attrition (Chesnut & Burley, 2015) through burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010), career optimism (McLennan et al., 2017) and job satisfaction (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006) is a teacher's self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined in the following chapter of this thesis as people's belief in their ability or capability to produce designated levels of performance or behaviour (Bandura, 1994). In teaching it has been suggested that self-efficacy is a variable which underpins many of the other potential issues

discussed in this section (Chesnut & Burley, 2015; Troesch & Bauer, 2017; Wang, Hall, & Rahimi, 2015; Zee & Koomen, 2016).

Teachers with strong senses of self-efficacy are less likely to report high levels of workplace stress and are more able to manage their workload. In particular beginning teachers who have, or build, high levels of self-efficacy report higher levels of job satisfaction. This was found across different teaching settings including in music (de Vries, 2017) and physical education teachers (Vickery & Gray, 2014).

In the public service in Saudi Arabia it has been found that an individual's level of self-efficacy, and their perceived level of supervisor support in building this, can impact on their intent to transfer rather than leave the profession (Al-Eisa, Furayyan, & Alhemoud, 2009). In the teaching profession this is a major issue which has been reported in measuring attrition rates, as teachers may leave a school and appear as an attrition point, however, they may in reality move to a different school, or educational setting (such as from a public to private school) (McKenzie, Weldon, Rowley, Murphy, & McMillan, 2014; Weldon, 2018). This finding in other contexts would suggest that an individual's self-efficacy is important across their employment setting, and that it is also relevant in teaching.

The issues of support levels for teachers as well as the level of preparedness felt after pre-service teacher programs could also be tied to a teacher's self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can be enhanced through mastery learning, positive feedback, physiological factors and through watching others have success in a similar area (Bandura, 1997). As a beginning teacher moves through the stages of learning their craft, they progress through different stages of mastery learning in the field. The level to which they perceive that their pre-service education program supported them in learning these stages could directly impact on their self-efficacy as well. This could also be found in the level of support the teacher receives from their supervisor which could increase or decrease their self-efficacy depending on the quality of the guidance through mastery learning, the quality of the environment they create, the feedback they give and by their own success in teaching.

Understanding the links between self-efficacy and other variables which may contribute to teacher attrition is an area which still warrants further exploration in the literature. It has been shown that teachers with high levels of self-efficacy have higher levels of motivation and job satisfaction (Caprara et al., 2006; Troesch & Bauer, 2017; Wang et al., 2015), lower reports of burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik,

2010) and overall lower reports of intending to leave (Chesnut & Burley, 2015; Wang et al., 2015). As the importance of self-efficacy on teachers overall work life is well documented, a better understanding of how this variable links with the other components that may contribute to teachers intending to leave or a decrease in their overall job satisfaction would allow educational settings to better understand the complex issue of attrition.

#### **2.1.4 Reason for choosing the profession**

Understanding the initial reasons that made a teacher choose the profession, and the implications these reasons then have on their experiences and attrition, is becoming more widely seen in research into teacher attrition and retention. In Australia, Watt and Richardson (2012) have proposed the use of the FIT-Choice model, which brings together research in international contexts, to explore the reasons a teacher enters the profession. Understanding why teachers enter the profession can then be used to challenge negative assumptions regarding the profession and to improve the attraction and retention rates of teachers in Australia and internationally (Watt et al., 2012). This connects with research across various fields, including teaching, which has found that the initial reason an individual enters the profession can lead to attrition if those reasons are not being supported in their role (Brincker & Pedersen, 2020). Brincker and Pedersen (2020) conducted a longitudinal study in Greenland which explored the initial reasons teachers chose to work in a difficult to staff school. They included the different motivation reasons that individuals choose certain professions which included public service motivation (PSM), sense of community (SOC), and sense of community responsibility (SOC-R), and excitement motivation (EM). They reported that the different reasons a teacher chose to work in a particular school were not independent of each other and had relevance at different points in the recruitment and retention process. Teachers who entered the profession with high levels of PSM or SOC-R could actually see higher attrition rates if the workloads were too high and “needs for community are not satisfied” (Brincker & Pedersen, 2020, p. 19). Despite having different approaches, both of these studies bring together fields of research which suggests that the initial reason a teacher chooses the profession can lead to attrition if the needs they were seeking to be filled are not addressed (or are actively challenged) in the school they are working in. It is unknown if this is a phenomenon seen only in beginning teachers, or if it extends to experienced teachers as well. The motivation or reason a

teacher chooses the profession is also explored in Chapter 2 (section 2.1.5 and section 2.5).

## **2.2. The Australian Context**

In Chapter 1, the difficulties in comparing research in the attrition and retention field was discussed. A major reason for this is due to the differences across educational settings in Australia and Internationally. Therefore, the specific setting of the ACT Education system, in which this study occurred, is presented in this section to enable future research to compare or contrast with the findings of this research. Whilst this is not a case study, this information has been included to support future researchers with connecting their findings with the outcomes of this study. Research into teacher experiences has frequently commented that comparisons or contrasts are difficult to make across studies as the contextual settings are different, or unknown (Watt & Richardson, 2007, 2012, 2014; Weldon, 2018). By providing this information it is hoped that future readers are able to better explore how their own results may connect or contrast with these findings by being able to compare or contrast the context to determine if there are variations due to the contextual setting. For example, future studies in some countries may find that financial incentives are important to teachers, but this was not true in this study. Therefore, it may be then used to explain that higher salaries are only important to those not being remunerated at a certain level. It may also be that transfer processes differ in settings, and if this is an issue it needs to be clear how this is established. In this sub section a brief summary of the key aspects of Australia's geographical, environmental, social, political and historical background are given as context to this study which was conducted in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

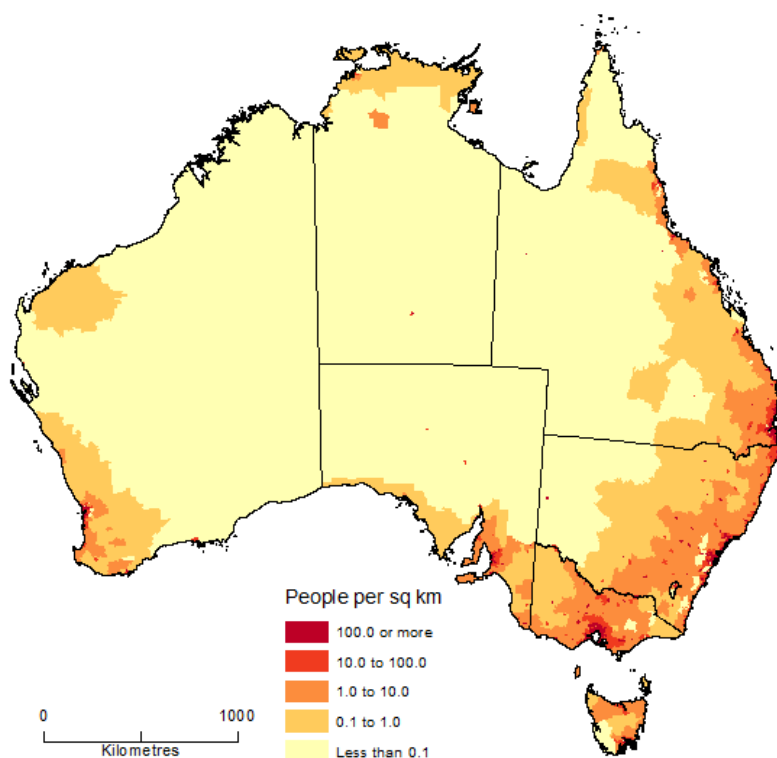
### **2.2.1. Australian geography, climate and environment**

Much of Australia's culture, policies and educational practices have been shaped and driven by its geographical and historical background. The information in this section of the thesis is presented to allow an understanding of how the Australian Education system has been shaped, and in particular give context to the setting of this study which was conducted in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

Australia is a diverse country which ranges from tropical to arid climates across different regions and covers 7.692 million square kilometres (Australian



Government, 2019). Within the Commonwealth of Australia there is the Australian continent, the island of Tasmania and eight other island territories (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011). The island territories, excluding Norfolk Island, are administered by the federal parliament, however, in many situations the education system is controlled at the state/territory level (Department of Education, 2019). Overall Australia is the largest island in the world and with 34,218 kilometres of coastline surrounding the country all states and territories, excluding the Australian Capital Territory, include a coastal aspect (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011). Most of the population of Australia can be found along these coastal regions (see Figure 2.1), with 90% of Australians living along the coast (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018c). Inland, much of the population is centred around small cities or towns, the largest of which is the national capital (Canberra) (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011).



*Figure 2.1* Representation of population density in Australia by statistical areas (SA2). Image downloaded from (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018a).

In Australia an urban area is defined as a population cluster of 1,000 or more people. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) as of 2018, 67% of

the population live in capital cities and 23% in other urban areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018c). In the 2016 census it was reported that “the Australian Capital Territory had the highest population density, at 179 people per sq km, followed by Victoria (28), New South Wales (10), and Tasmania (7.8)” (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018b). This study is set in the ACT Education system where, due to the close physical proximity and dense population, most schools have student populations with similar demographic proportions (ACT Education Directorate, 2018a). The two most distant schools, geographically, are less than 50 kilometres apart from each other. This similarity in the diversity of students across most schools has created an Education system which may have more similar educational experiences and needs for teachers when compared to schools and systems in larger and more geographically diverse and distant states or territories.

### **2.2.2. A brief history of the Australian education system**

60,000 years ago Australia was first settled by Aboriginal people (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011). Prior to first contact by Europeans, the diverse cultures and linguistic backgrounds of Australia’s Indigenous peoples were varied and rich and were passed down from generation to generation (Brady, 1997).

Australia was first colonised in January 1788 by the English who set up Australia as a penal colony to relieve overcrowding issues in English prisons (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011). From this time the European influence has impacted the formal, and much of the current, Australian education system which was designed to mirror that of the English systems of the early settlers (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011). With colonisation came the creation of Australian states and territories which were self-governed until the people of Australia voted in a referendum to become one country (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011). On the 1st of January 1901 the Federal Constitution was implemented, and it tied all the states and territories together as the Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011). Under Federation it remains that each state and territory have their own separate government and legislative powers, with the Federal Government acting to oversee the nation’s interests as a whole (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011).

Education in a formalised setting has been part of Australian life since colonisation. During the early stages of colonisation, it was the parent's responsibility to fund or provide an education for their children, therefore it can be assumed that only the wealthier children, not those of the convicts, were educated at this time (Wilkinson, Caldwell, Selleck, Harris, & Dettman, 2007). With the creation of colonies, it became the role of the Governor to arrange educational settings for the ever-growing population of children within their domain (Wilkinson et al., 2007). This was largely achieved through the supporting of Anglican run charity schools, as this was the major religion of NSW at the time (Wilkinson et al., 2007). As a wider variety of religions began to spread throughout the different states, so too followed the creation of more and more denominational schools (Wilkinson et al., 2007). This process of providing state money to private schools continued as the single government contribution to education until 1844, when a Legislative Council Select Committee decreed that National Schools should be created. In 1847 this was achieved, and two education boards were created to oversee the National and Denominational schools separately (Wilkinson et al., 2007). Towards the second half of the 19th Century the states cut their funding to non-government schools, suggesting that it was not democratic to be providing assistance to people based on their religious beliefs. Whilst this process was not uniform, it eventually led to the removal of all state funding from the private education sector and it led to the creation of the Catholic Education Office which supported all Catholic schools in Australia (Wilkinson et al., 2007). In 1964, a bill called the States Grants (Science Laboratories and Technical Training) Bill was passed which allowed the Federal Government to directly provide financial assistance to all schools, both National and Denominational. This bill opened up other grants, which allowed the Federal Government to provide financial opportunities to both private and public schools (Dowling, 2007). This is what in turn has led to the current education funding system Australia now has, with state governments providing the majority of the funding to government schools but with the Federal Government providing funding assistance to private schools.

Funding, and the structure of the education system in Australia, has both similarities and difference with international settings (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019b). This information was presented to allow an understanding of the nature of the setting in which the study has been conducted.

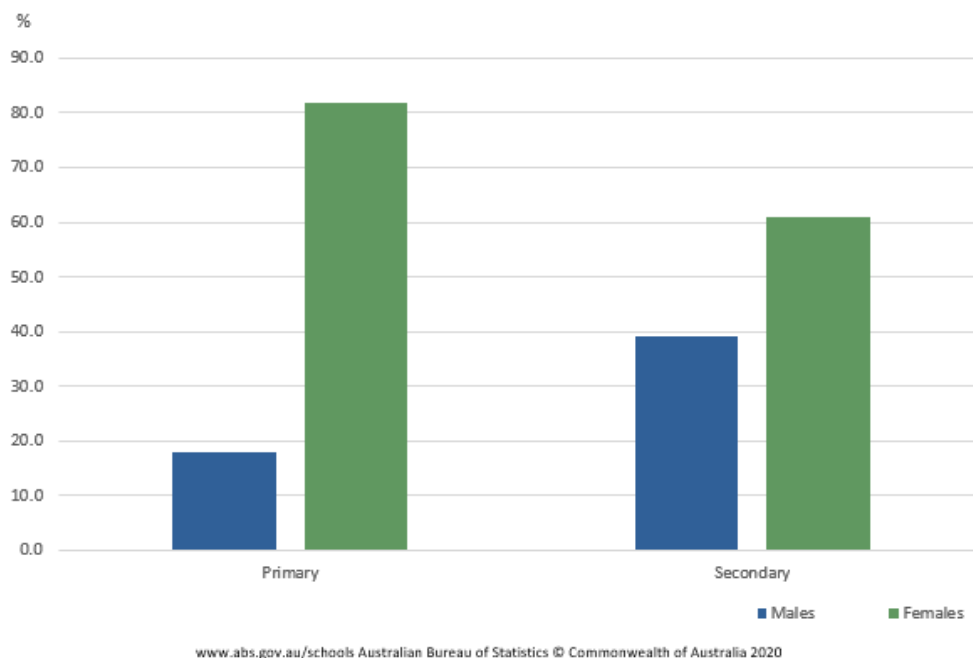
The ACT is small (in size and population) and has more homogeneous school settings, when compared to other states and territories with more geographically (or financially) distinct schools. The ACT is also a territory, which means it is more closely connected to the funding and oversight of the federal government than states (Dowling, 2007). In section 1.4 and 1.5 it is reported that many studies in the teaching profession warn against using findings from one setting to make judgements in another. For example, the teacher attrition rate in the United States of America (USA) has been reported at 50% (Ingersoll, 2001) and up to 70% in some regions (T. Carroll, 2007) but the Australian rates are thought to be much lower (Weldon, 2018). The USA has considerably lower pay rates for teachers compared to Australia (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019b) but has a similar mix of schools in metropolitan, regional and remote areas (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019b). Therefore, there may be a difference in the impact of remuneration across the two countries teaching profession, but similar issues with teachers who work in remote areas. In this study, the ACT does not have remote communities but many other similarities in other areas such as class sizes, employment structures (permanent / casual) and classroom environments. These similarities shared with many schools in Australia and internationally allow some comparisons, or potential contrasts, to be drawn across settings. In the following section of this chapter the profile of the teaching workforce in Australian schools, and in the ACT, is presented to give a fuller picture of the setting for this study as well as to give a background to the demographic constitution of the workforce. This will allow future comparisons and contrasts to potentially be made to improve the retention of teachers across varied settings.

### **2.2.3. Staffing profile of Australian schools**

The number of full-time equivalent teaching staff in Australian schools (Kindergarten to Year 12 (College)) has shown an overall increase since 1996 to a total number of 288,583 full time teachers (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018b). The total Australian population has increased from 18.42 million in 1996 to 25.18 million in 2018 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019). The training and professional growth of the teaching profession has grown in line with population.

The current National average age for Australian teachers is 43-44 years (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019b). The percentage

of staff in each age bracket is similar across primary and secondary education, except for male secondary teachers (see Figure 1.2). In this group there are fewer younger (<30 years old) males in this educational setting than females, or males in primary schools. Also, this group has a higher representation in the 51-60 age bracket. This is concerning as it would suggest that this may be a group which is most effected by retirements in the future. Overall, there is a definite increase in the number of teachers in the middle age brackets, compared with the younger and older sections. This may be due to retirements in the older (>60) age bracket. The lack of younger staff may be an due to the difference between the lower number of individuals entering the workforce compared with those leaving due to retirement (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019). It is well documented that Australia’s population is aging, an issue which is continually discussed in terms of its impact on the workforce and retirement benefits in the future (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018). This could also be evidence that a greater number of young teachers are leaving education (or not starting in the first part) than their older counterparts, which could also skew the data in this way.



*Figure 2.2* Sex distribution, by school type (primary/secondary), of teachers in Australia in 2019. Image taken from (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

Overall, Australia has more female than male teachers, a trend which appears to be increasing rather than decreasing (*Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010, 2020*). In 2020 it was reported that of the 149,462 Australian primary school teachers 18.1% were male, compared with 39.2% in secondary schools. When taken in conjunction with the previous age discussions it is relevant to consider that secondary schools may also begin to see a greater shift towards a higher female teacher percentage in the workplace, if the age profile differences are not specifically addressed.

It has been reported that there is a lack of male teachers in Australian schools (Cruickshank, 2017; Mills, Martino, & Lingard, 2004) and that the figures are continuing to decrease (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2017). However, these reports do not take differences across school settings into consideration, which is important in the ACT context. In the ACT there were more male than female teachers in colleges (years 11 and 12) (ACT Education Directorate, 2010a) although, more recent data is not available. More recently, however, there is a greater proportion of males in leadership positions in the ACT compared to the ratio of males in teaching positions (ACT Education Directorate, 2018a). These differences across gender ratios has implications for students, with some reports that there is a feminisation of education and this could have implications for young male students (Mills et al., 2004). It also links with research into gender disparities in leadership positions (Jan, Lee, & Chui, 2016; McGrath, 2019), which suggests that even in female dominated industries there is still a higher proportion of males in leadership positions (Cubillo & Brown, 2003). In this thesis, it is of relevance as there is a clear difference between the number of males choosing to work in the primary setting, especially compared to the college system. This raises questions as to whether there are experiences occurring in the primary setting which are not attracting males, or whether they are being made to leave at higher rates than their female counterparts. The experiences of women in leadership roles could also differ from males and this could also be a theme which emerges. What is clear from the current and past data in the ACT is that there is a difference in the proportion of male and female teachers in different school types and their experiences will be explored to determine whether they are also different.

The information in this thesis has so far addressed information on public education teachers, a focus which will continue throughout this paper. As discussed previously the Australian public education system can be divided into three different groups, the Government (or public) sector and the private sector which is divided

into Catholic and Independent schools. The Catholic system is overseen by the Catholic Education Office (CEO), and each independent school either oversees itself, or is part of a larger (though still comparably small) group (Independent Schools Council of Australia, 2019). In 2018 there was a total of 9,477 schools in Australia with a total number of 288,583 teachers (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018b).

Australia has many similarities with our OECD counterparts in our student to teacher ratios and in salaries. In the case of student to teacher ratios, Australia ranks as having the 7th largest classes in the OECD, with 23-25 students in primary classes and 22-23 in secondary (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019a). According to the (OECD 2019b), Australia has competitive salaries for its teachers when compared to other OECD nations. In Appendix A it can be seen that Australian primary teachers work towards a comparatively equal salary with other countries; however, lower and upper secondary teachers are paid significantly less per hour after 15 years' worth of experience. Despite this, Australian teachers are amongst the first to reach their top pay scale (9 years) (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019b). It has been long been suggested that increasing teacher pay is one way to attract and retain teachers in the profession (Leigh & Ryan, 2008; Loeb & Page, 2000; Olsen, 2007). However, there are consistent concerns raised against linking pay directly to student outcomes (Australian Education Union, 2012; Fielding, 2011). It is interesting to note that many studies have found that salary is not always a top priority which teachers consider in their choice to become teachers (Clotfelter et al., 2005), therefore, it is hard to state that pay may be contributing to the decision of teachers to either join or leave the profession.

### **2.3. Social Cognitive Career Theory**

In the previous sections the reasons why teachers leave the profession and the contextual setting for this study are presented. The following section is an exploration social cognitive career theory (SCCT; Lent et al., 1994) which is the major theory that has framed and informed this study.

Social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994) is an extension of Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. It informs all aspects of this study, both the qualitative themes and quantitative trends in each strand. This is explored fully in section 5.5, where it is connected with the emergent themes and trends. SCCT

groups together a wide range of factors and theories which underpin an individual's career processes. It includes three models, each of which explains how an individual derives a career-related interest, career choice, and performance into these “three interlocking models” (Lent et al., 1994). The three models are underpinned by three central key theoretical constructs; self-efficacy, outcome expectations and personal goals (Lent, 2013; Lent et al., 1994). Lent and Brown (2006b) proposed an addition to the theory, with a fourth model to explain job (or work) satisfaction.

SCCT brings together the work of multiple theories to build the unifying theory with four interlocking models (Lent, 2013; Lent et al., 1994). In Figure 2.3 the original work is presented. SCCT views “people as active agents in, or shapers of, their career development” (Lent et al., 1994, p. 255) with an ability to “help construct their own career outcomes; that their beliefs (for example, about themselves, their environments, and possible career paths) play key roles in this process; that we are not merely beneficiaries (or victims) of intrapsychic, temperamental, or situational forces; and that behaviour is often flexible and susceptible to change efforts” (Lent et al., 1994, p. 255).

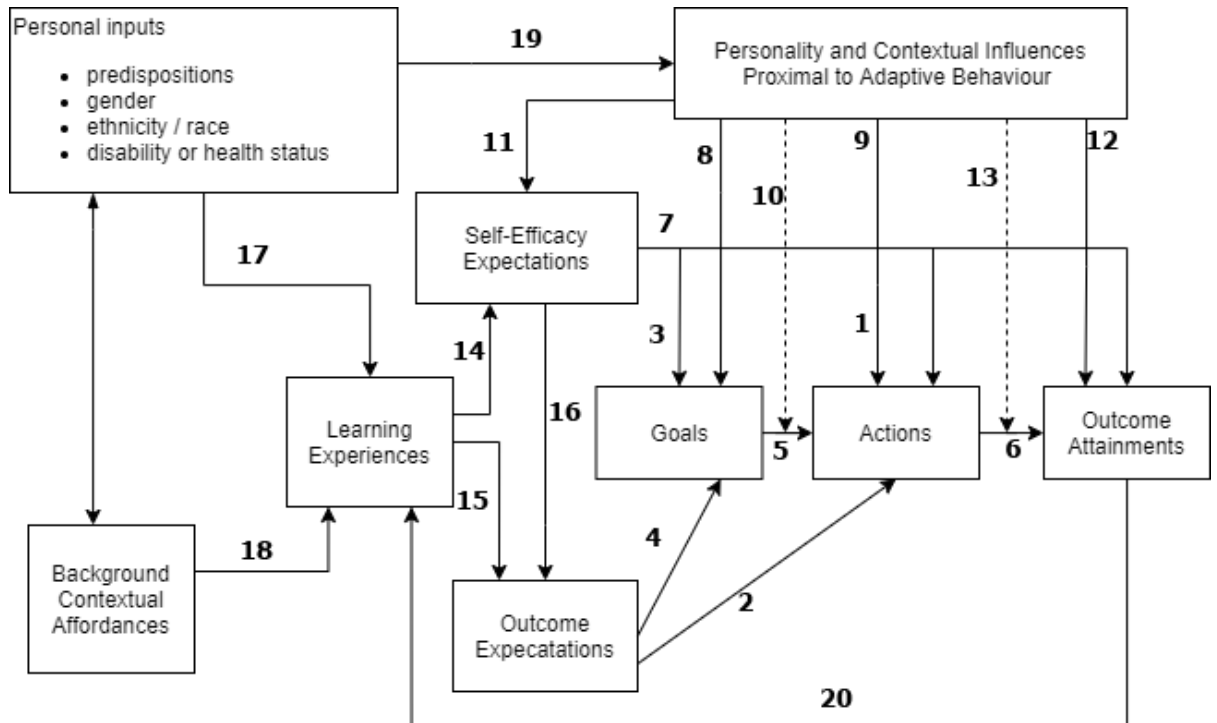


Figure 2.3 SCCT Model of career self-management (Lent et al., 1994). Reproduced with permission.



Lent et al. (1994) summarised the development of the SCCT at that point as a unification of the previous work across a wide number of fields that are connected together in Figure 2.3.

- Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986).

Bandura's key work in social cognitive theory is a major underpinning in SCCT. As discussed previously, SCCT is an expansion and adaption of this model. First coined as Social Learning Theory (SLT) Bandura and Walters (1977) explained how human learning occurs. In 1986 he presented SCT, which included self-efficacy with the previous four constructs of SLT. The four aspects which were proposed as key influences on an individual's behaviour are; reciprocal determination, behavioural capability, observational learning, reinforcements (internal or external), expectations and self-efficacy. SCCT drew on these areas and expanded them to create a theory which strives to explain career-related interest, career choice, performance and job satisfaction.

- Psychosocial domains (Bandura, 1986, 1997).

Bandura (1997) suggested that individuals with high self-efficacy experience higher quality health, are more effective and are generally more successful. In the 1997 reflection on the application of the initial SCT it was reported that individuals with high self-efficacy were shown to have higher outcomes in the fields of education, health, organisational management, and a greater ability to regulate their emotional states or responses (Bandura, 1997). This importance of self-efficacy, along with the cyclical relationships between psychosocial domains and self-efficacy, were a key component of SCT (Bandura, 1977, 1997) which is also relevant in SCCT.

- Self-efficacy (Hackett & Betz, 1981).

Self-efficacy is a significant component of SCCT, as it underpins all four models of the theory. Hackett and Betz (1981) found that self-efficacy was reported higher amongst males and females when they were reflecting on traditional gender specific careers, when compared against nontraditional careers. They proposed an extension of SCCT to include career development. Three inclusions were suggested to enhance the links between self-efficacy and career theory which included the ties between career choices, decision making and self-efficacy, the differences in self-efficacy in careers across gender and the ability to change an individual's self-efficacy. The importance of self-efficacy in this model is explored in more depth in

this chapter, as it has been studied across different countries and careers not just from the perspective of gender based differences in self-efficacy. Recent explorations of the impact and importance of self-efficacy in the career's of cotton growing (Wunsch, 2019), teaching (Lent et al., 2011; McLennan et al., 2017), engineering (Inda, Rodríguez, & Peña, 2013) and at retirement (Foley & Lytle, 2015).

- Women's and racial-ethnic minority members' career development (Hackett & Lent, 1992).

Hackett and Lent (1992) provided a comprehensive exploration and critique of the major career theories which had been in use at the time. Due to the large amount of information available on the topic they expressly stated that they could only present well-established theories at that time. A major finding of their research was that it is known that there are differences between career outcomes, choices and developments across genders and racial groups. However, they reported that this is an area which still required further exploration, whether independently or as an incorporation into existing theories (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). SCCT has incorporated gender and racial backgrounds in the "other person and contextual influences" component of the theory (Lent et al., 2002, p. 267). The impact of gender and racial backgrounds has been explored in numerous studies, which have used SCCT to explore the differences in different fields (Inda et al., 2013), in learning experiences (Williams & Subich, 2006), self-efficacy (Chung, 2002) and goal attainment (Perrone, Sedlacek, & Alexander, 2001).

SCCT encompasses a wide range of theories to present a single cohesive theory, with four models, to explain an individual's career interests, career choice, and performance as well as how the underpinning influences of self-efficacy, outcome expectations and personal goals influence each of the models. The newer model which focuses on job (or work) satisfaction is not included in the diagram but is explained in further depth in this chapter.

Lent et al. (1994) included a caveat to their findings, that whilst the SCCT is a model which is designed to explain an individual's "career development processes" it is vital that it is considered in the wider context of an individual's career pathway as well as their final career. They stated "it is useful to build stronger bridges between models of academic and career development" in the context of school to

work transitions (Blustein, Juntunen, & Worthington, 2000) and the overall career development pathways and processes (Arbona, 2000).

### 2.3.1. Self-efficacy

Bandura (1994) defined self-efficacy as people's belief in their ability or capability to produce designated levels of performance or behaviour. Self-efficacy has been shown to play a major role in teacher retention (Chesnut & Burley, 2015), attrition (Wang et al., 2015), job satisfaction (Wang et al., 2015) and burnout (Lawrence, Loi, & Gudex, 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Pendergast, Garvis, and Keogh (2011) reported that Australian pre-service teachers require guidance in building their self-efficacy across their pre-service education and as beginning teachers. They also suggested that there needs to be a better understanding by teachers, mentors and supervisors around how and when to build self-efficacy, particularly through an understanding of what teaching *looks like* and through structured mastery learning experiences.

Bandura (1997) presented four key sources that influence self-efficacy. The most significant is mastery learning which is discussed in greater depth further in this chapter. Receiving positive feedback, observing others attaining success in similar situations and physiological factors are the other three factors which are known to build an individual's self-efficacy.

In the context of the SCCT, self-efficacy can be seen across all four models of the SCCT as it is an underpinning core variable which impacts in various ways on all the other components of SCCT. This is presented in Figures 2.4 (page 52), 2.5 (page 53), 2.6 (page 56) and 2.7 (page 57). An individual with high levels of self-efficacy will more likely have higher levels of job satisfaction and they will more likely have higher levels of workplace success (performance). This in turn links with their career choice as it reinforces their career goals (choices) which subsequently increases their interest in the field they are working in or the tasks they are completing. SCCT also suggests that an individual's interests build their self-efficacy (Lent, 2013), and it is known that external variables such as dispositional optimism and other personality traits shape self-efficacy as well (Scherer, Jansen, Nilsen, Areepattamannil, & Marsh, 2016).

Multiple studies have found a correlation between a teacher's level of self-efficacy and their intent to remain or leave the teaching profession, or on their overall job satisfaction (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Caprara et al., 2006; McLennan et al., 2017; Ramakrishnan & Salleh, 2019; Scherer et al., 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010; Troesch & Bauer, 2017; Wang et al., 2015; Zee & Koomen, 2016). The SCCT states that self-efficacy is a core component of a much larger picture and should be considered in conjunction with the other variables of the four models when considering an individual's career development and job satisfaction (Lent & Brown, 2006a; Lent et al., 2011).

### **2.3.2. Outcome expectations**

Lent et al. (1994) describe outcome expectations as “personal beliefs about the consequences or outcomes of performing particular behaviors.” (p. 262). It is dissimilar to self-efficacy, which is focused on an individual's beliefs regarding their ability to complete a task, in that it is focused on the individual's “imagined consequences of performing given behaviours” (Lent et al., 1994, p. 262).

Outcome expectations have frequently been shown to have a positive impact on motivating behaviours (Ajzen, 1988; Barak, 1981; Vroom, 1964), and they are built throughout lived experiences (Lent et al., 1994). Bandura (1986) first described an interaction between self-efficacy and outcome expectations in the context of self-regulation of behaviour. This is in turn linked with goals (personal and work related) as an individual attains goals, they receive positive feedback which enhances self-efficacy.

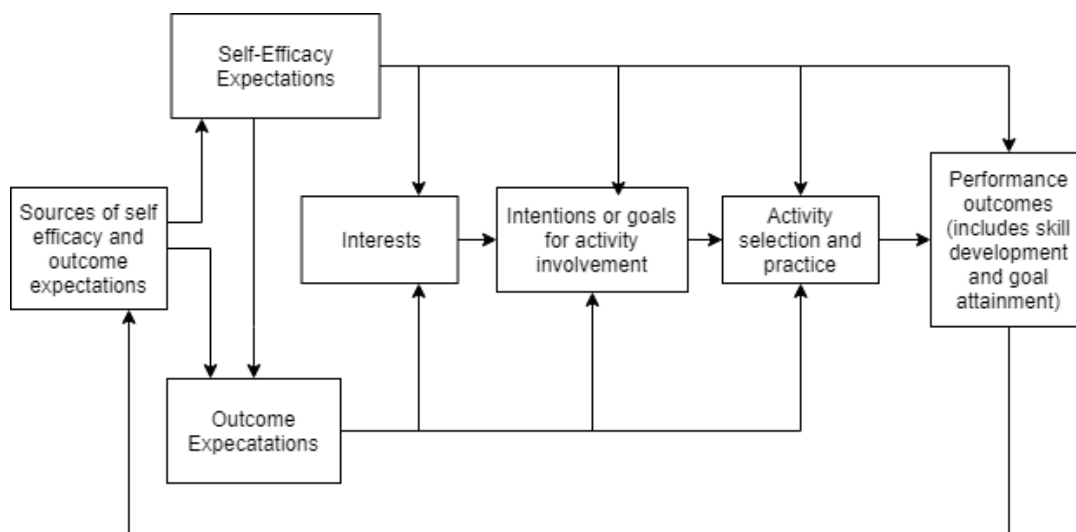
### **2.3.3. Personal goals**

As mentioned previously, goals can be work or personal and they are interlinked with self-efficacy and outcome expectations. In SCCT they play a role in weaving throughout the four models in various ways (Lent, 2013; Lent et al., 1994; Lent et al., 2002). The role of goals in SCCT is described in further detail in the next sections of this chapter.

### **2.3.4. Career-related interest**

In the SCCT an individual develops an interest in a career due to a combination of “experiential and cognitive factors” and these interests then motivate their choices and skill acquisitions (Lent et al., 1994, p. 265). Lent et al. (1994)

suggested that an individual's interest in a career is directly linked with their interests and other person and contextual influences. In Figure 2.4 these factors are presented as a SCCT model of how career interests develop over time.



*Figure 2.4* How career interests develop over time as explained by SCCT adapted from (Lent et al., 1994, p. 266)

An individual's interests are often linked with their career choices (Betsworth & Fouad, 1997). Lent et al. (1994) posited that children are exposed to a wide range of experiences and environments that begin to shape an individual's interests that can be relevant to eventual career behaviours. As a child is exposed to these tasks, they begin to develop a sense of self efficacy (as they become increasingly capable at these tasks) and outcome expectations (as they form sound beliefs about what will happen as they perform these tasks). Children can also observe these tasks being performed by others.

Individuals develop an affinity for those emerging interests they experience success in. This in turn increases the likelihood that they will continue to engage in this activity. This feedback loop leads to an interest in this area and this progresses beyond childhood into a chosen career path.

Personal interests are viewed by some literature as a subset of an individual's aptitude, values and abilities. In the SCCT, however, they are framed in the context of how they contribute to an individual's self-efficacy and outcome expectations rather than separate. This is discussed in the ensuing sections of this chapter.

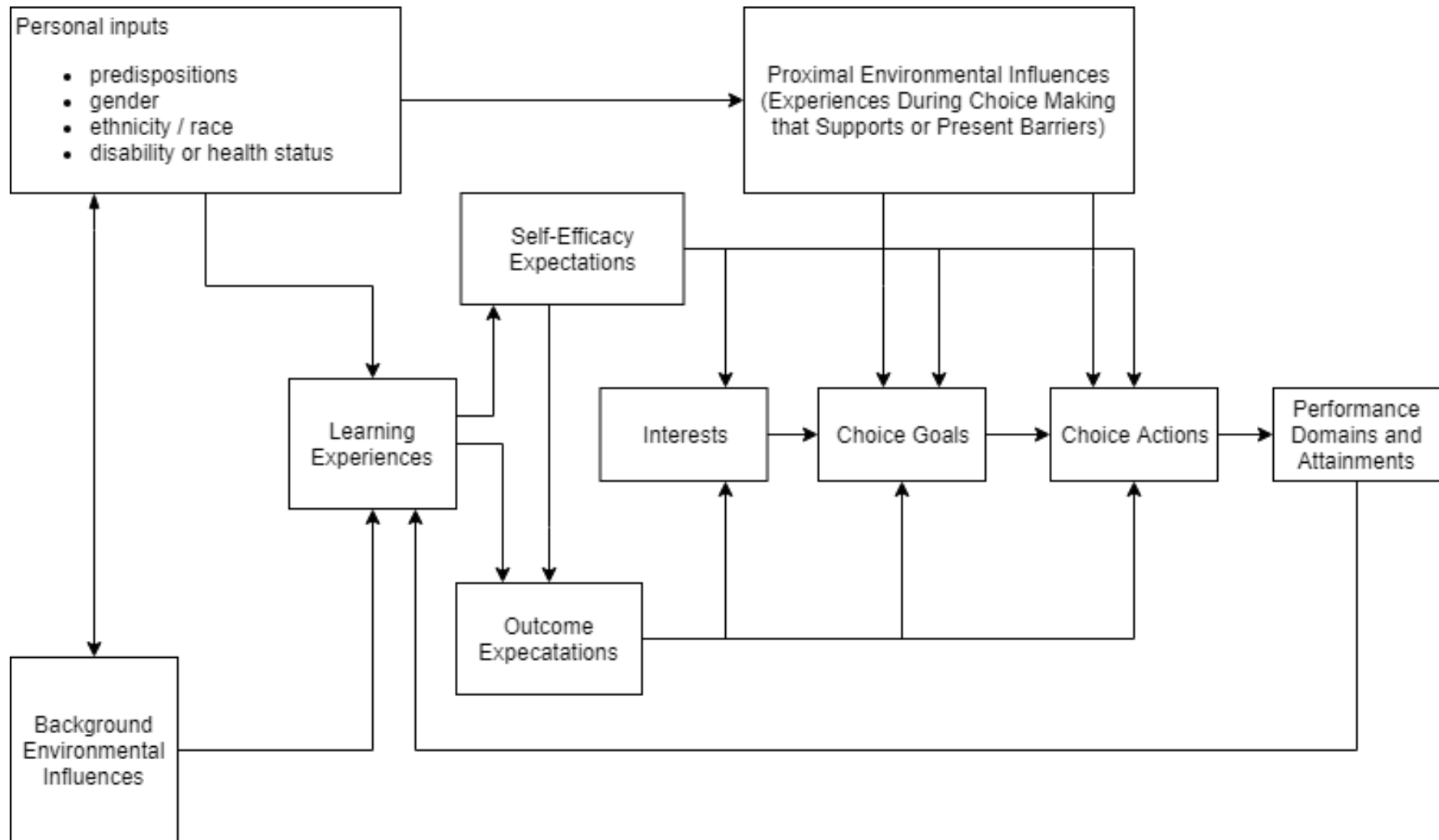


Figure 2.5 A summary of the SCCT which explains how career-related choices develop over time adapted from Lent et al. (1994, p. 269).

### 2.3.5. Career choice

The linked aspect of career choice is presented by Lent et al. (1994) as having three key components to the choice process.

1. The expression of a primary choice (or goal).
2. Actions, such as enrolling in a particular training program that is designed to implement one's choice.
3. Subsequent performance attainments (successes, failures) that form a feedback loop, affecting the shape of future career behaviour.

The interplay of these three components, along with the influence of other variables on them, is shown in Figure 2.5, on page 53.

The SCCT model of career related choice is similar to other models of career choice (L. K. Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996; Tiedeman & O'Hara, 1963), however, it builds on these by making the distinction between an individual's goal and their actions. This aspect of SCCT links with the career interest model as it assumes that an individual makes career choices based on their interests in "optimal conditions" (Lent et al., 1994, p. 269). Lent et al. (1994) are quick to point out that most people do not make career choices in optimal conditions.

Previous research has found that many people make career choices that are impacted by their economic need, educational limitations, lack of familial support, or various other considerations (Vroom, 1964; Williamson, 1939). In SCCT this is linked with the overarching aspects of self-efficacy and outcome expectations as they suggest that when an individual's career choices are not in optimal conditions, they will likely choose a career which provides them with sufficient incentives and at which they believe they can succeed.

In the teaching profession it has been found that not only does the initial interest level of the teacher (rated as high, medium or low interest) in the profession have a significant influence on their overall job satisfaction, it is more important than demographic variables (Eren, 2012). Watt and Richardson (2012) used the FIT-Choice scale to measure teacher reasons for entering the profession after a significant focus in the field both in Australia and globally had shown difficulties in comparing studies looking at a teacher's reasons for entering the profession (Watt & Richardson, 2007; Watt et al., 2012; Watt, Richardson, & Wilkins, 2014). The FIT-Choice scale was derived from the expectancy-value motivational theory of Eccles

(1987). Watt and Richardson (2008) proposed three types of motivation groups who enter into the teaching profession. They classified them as highly engaged *persisters*, highly engaged *switchers*, and lower engaged *desisters*. Past research had grouped teacher career choice into intrinsic, altruistic and extrinsic motivations (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992), but the FIT-Choice scale chose to extend this with their classifications. SCCT provides a theoretical underpinning to understand how career choice is developed and is linked with career interest, however, the FIT-Choice scale provides a scale to measure the reason a person enters the teaching profession which can be used by education sectors and schools to foster the career choice and career interest of the teachers based on their results. Brincker and Pedersen (2020) considered a teacher's initial choice of the profession as well as their intent to remain, through an integration of the fields of public service motivation (PSM) and psychology (sense of community (SOC), sense of community responsibility (SOC-R) and excitement motivation (EM)). They found that teachers who entered the profession with high levels of PSM and SOC-R had higher rates of intent to leave (denoted as de-recruitment in the study) when the workload was too high or their "needs for community" were not met (Brincker & Pedersen, 2020, p. 19). This would suggest that there could be different attrition rates across groups of teachers with different reasons for joining the profession when placed in similar situations. Overall, it has been shown that initial motivation (or career choice in SCCT) is of importance to teaching and in a teacher's overall job satisfaction, motivation and intent to leave.

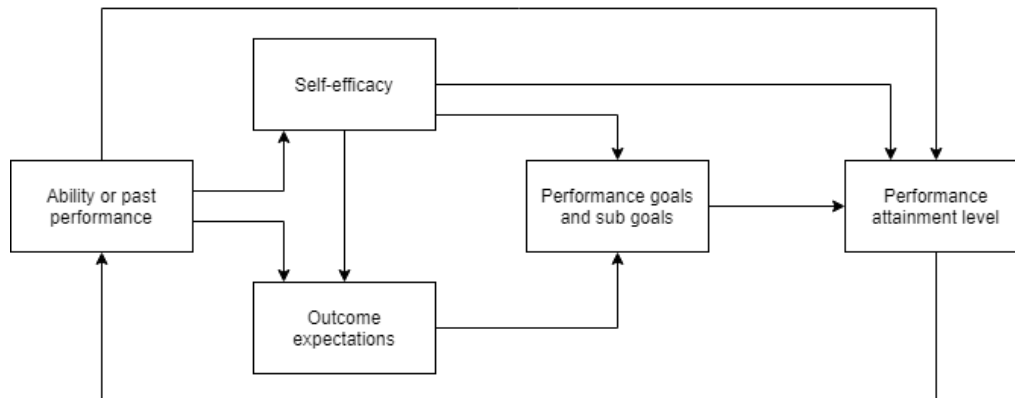
### **2.3.6. Performance**

Occupational and academic performance are important in the SCCT and are believed to be affected by an individual's ability, self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and performance goals. As previously discussed, self-efficacy and outcome expectations are the uniting thread which impact on all aspects of the SCCT. Lent et al. (2002) described the links between ability, self-efficacy, outcome expectations in influencing an individual performance as:

Ability (as assessed by achievement, aptitude, or past performance indicators) is seen as affecting performance, directly and indirectly, through its impact on self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Self-efficacy and outcome expectations, in turn, affect the level of performance goals that people set for



themselves. Stronger self-efficacy beliefs and more favourable outcome expectations promote more ambitious goals, which help people mobilise and sustain their performance behaviour. (p. 277)



*Figure 2.6* SCCT model of task performance adapted from (Lent et al., 2002, p. 277).

Petty, McGee, and Cavender (1984) found that job satisfaction and job performance are closely correlated, which continues to be relevant in more recent studies (Bakotić, 2016; Platis, Reklitis, & Zimeras, 2015). It was illuminated that as an individual achieves success in their career, they have higher reported self-efficacy but in reverse if they do not have success in their careers, they are likely to report lower job satisfaction and have higher rates of attrition (Chang & Busser, 2019; Petty et al., 1984). The SCCT would suggest that staff who are underperforming or have low self-efficacy benefit from a focus on the positive aspects of their performance, whilst building their skills and abilities using the career choice model.

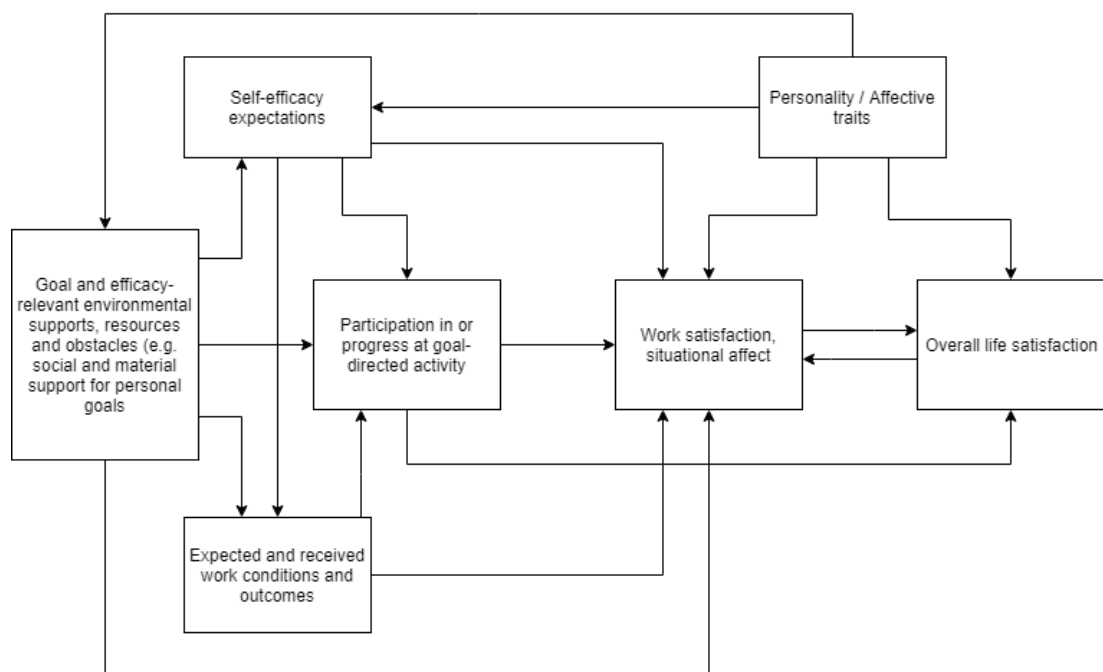
Overall, as the SCCT reports, aspects of overall career development are all interlinked and complex with each key aspect often playing a role in the other domains. This is true for job performance, which can be influenced by the other variables discussed previously and below.

### **2.3.7. Job satisfaction**

Lent and Brown (2006a) proposed an additional social cognitive model to the SCCT that was originally presented in 1994. This was to include the implications of the SCCT on an individual's job satisfaction. In this model there are five variables which they report direct influence an individual's job satisfaction. They are:

1. Personality/affective traits.
2. Participation in/progress at goal-directed activities.
3. Work-related self-efficacy.
4. Work conditions.
5. Goal and efficacy relevant environmental supports or obstacles.

The SCCT theory has been tested in a wide range of career settings, including teaching (Duffy & Lent, 2009; Lent et al., 2011). In Duffy and Lent (2009) SCCT was tested to determine the effectiveness of using a unified model to study job satisfaction among a teaching cohort in North Carolina in the USA. In this study it was reported that, whilst all the variables were important to overall job satisfaction the greatest impacts emanated from work conditions, self-efficacy, and positive affect. This was in line with previous studies, which also found that these were key variables impacting on an individual's job satisfaction (Judge, Bono, Erez, & Locke, 2005; Judge, Bono, & Locke, 2000). Further, it was revealed that it is important to consider job satisfaction as a complex issue, but through the lens of a unified model, rather than separate and non-overlapping concepts.



*Figure 2.7* The SCCT process model of work satisfaction, updated to include overall life satisfaction with interrelations between multiple variables adapted from Social cognitive career theory and subjective well-being in the context of work (Lent & Brown, 2008, p. 10).

The model was again updated in 2008 to include the role of SCCT in overall well-being and life satisfaction (Lent & Brown, 2008). The unified and updated model shows the interplay between the various factors that impact on an individual's overall job and in turn life, satisfaction.

### **2.3.8. Personal and Contextual Influences**

The influences of a wide range of variables on an individual's interest in a specific career is incorporated into the SCCT. Gender, race-ethnicity, physical health or disability, genetic endowment, and socioeconomic conditions are all assumed to have an important role in shaping the career development process of an individual (Lent et al., 2002). Figure 2.2 shows how these factors are interconnected with career interests and choices in the SCCT models. As discussed at the start of this chapter, multiple theories which SCCT has drawn on include aspects of gender, race or genetic backgrounds. Individuals from varying backgrounds will have different life experiences, have different societal pressures and will likely develop different interests. In the context of this study, it is of interest as demographic variables are being explored to consider whether they have a connection with teachers having different experiences in the teaching field. In the specifics of SCCT these different backgrounds will be linked through the personal and contextual influences illustrated in Figures 2.2 and 2.4.

In this study these influences will be tested to attempt to determine if there are any particular groups which experience higher rates of teacher attrition. In Chapter 1, it was shown that the gender balance across school settings in the ACT is not equal, with a large proportion of females in primary settings compared with males. SCCT has an underpinning of theories which suggest that women have different career experiences compared with men so it is possible that they will also have different attrition patterns. It is also known that minority groups have different experiences, which may lead to higher rates of attrition in pre-service programs (Trimmer, Ward, & Wondunna-Foley, 2018), or in avoiding entering the teaching profession altogether (Goings & Bianco, 2016).

## **2.4. Mastery of a subject**

Social cognitive career theory has been presented as a theory to explain the attrition/retention and job satisfaction of teachers in the previous section. In this

section another set of theories surrounding the mastery of a concept, and how they may play a role in teacher job satisfaction and attrition are presented.

Learning a new skill or starting a new career sees an individual move from a point in which they have limited knowledge or experience in the field to a point in which they can be deemed an expert. Bandura (1997) suggested that mastery of a subject or skill is the main source of self-efficacy.

Guskey (1980) discussed the application of the theory of mastery learning, which built on the work of numerous other researchers (Block & Burns, 1976; Bloom, 1976; Dolan, 1977). This was initially focused on the teaching of skills to students via a teacher. However, it is also the process through which adults can acquire new skills, such as in the transition of a teacher through a pre-service program to a point at which they are working as an experienced or lead teacher. The theory of mastery learning moves away from the idea that aptitude is fixed, and children are either good or bad learners, and instead states that children can all learn the same skills and concepts, albeit at different rates (J. B. Carroll, 1963). Bloom (1976) then demonstrated that children who were all given the same instruction, at the same time ended up with some achieving mastery quicker, whilst others fell behind and did not master the skill being taught. Mastery learning has had a strong resurgence in a number of fields in recent years (Betts, 2019; Eppich, Hunt, Duval-Arnould, Siddall, & Cheng, 2015; McGaghie, 2015).

This philosophical approach to learning can be also linked with the growth in learning that a teacher progresses through once they have made the decision to become a teacher. It is also relevant to the setting of teacher job satisfaction when considered through the lens of the SCCT. The model consistently links a teacher's (as an individual) need to have strong self-efficacy, positive performance and progress in goal activities. Many of these are congruent with mastery learning, however, they do not take into account (which mastery learning does) that teachers may learn skills at different rates. The key underpinnings of mastery learning inform many teachers pedagogy in the context of teaching their students (McLennan & Peel, 2008), but there is limited evidence that it is something that is considered in the context of teacher training, induction and mentoring.

As an individual progresses through the stages of learning and mastering a skill it enhances their self-efficacy, contributes to their outcome expectations, builds

their performance at work and is closely tied with the career choice model of the theory.

The acquisition of skills model is also of relevance to the nursing field, with a wide breadth of literature which has built on or supported the skill acquisition theory in the nursing profession (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986). The Dreyfus model has also been shown to be relevant in understanding teacher skill development (Lyon, 2014). Growth in this field has been driven by the culmination of complementary theories including the ability to use intuition as an expert (Field, 2004; King & Appleton, 1997), theories of expertise (Gobet & Simon, 1996), template theory (Gobet & Simon, 1996, 2000), and chunking theory (Chase & Simon, 1973). Benner (1984) presented an influential theory which detailed how nursing professionals move from beginning to experienced, as shown in table 2.1. This is also relevant to the process in which a teacher moves through the same stages. This model proposes that a nursing professional progresses through stages as they learn and apply skills in their work-specific setting.

There has been criticism of Benner's theory in the context of the progression through the stages (Gobet & Chassy, 2008). Other studies have instead suggested that whilst the stages can be viewed as distinct, the means in which an individual acquires new knowledge and skills can be in smaller components and that experienced individuals still require analytical and abstract methods to be taught, alongside a move towards using their intuition in scenarios (Gobet, 2005; Gobet & Wood, 1999). These can be considered from either theory, expertise model or the template model, in teaching as both share the concept that an individual needs to move through stages and be guided as they go. Supervisors should have an awareness of multiple different theories in the field, to determine which is more appropriate for them.

The various stages of learning discussed here are similar to the four career stages of teacher progression in the AITSL teacher standards (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2018a). Dale et al. (2013) applied the Benner model to a nursing evaluation tool which is reminiscent of the teacher standards. The AITSL Teacher Standards provides a detailed list of skills that an individual teacher should have at various stages of their career (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2018a). However, much of this list is focused on what a teacher should be doing, with little guidance to supervisors and mentors on how to support

them in attaining and applying these skills in the occupational setting. Linking the stages of Benner's theory to the educational setting would provide supervisors a more concrete model to show the theoretical and psychological underpinnings of each stage. Whilst the teacher standards give a strong framework to apply, it does not fully explain why each stage is important or what cognitive processes are occurring at each stage. The other major issue is, as previously discussed, that there is an assumption that all individuals learn new skills at the same time.

Table 2.1 *A summary of the stages of Benner's theory of nursing expertise (Benner, 1984)*

	Characterised by:
Novice	<i>Learn through instruction; they acquire domain-specific facts, features, and actions. Application of learning ignores the nuances of the situation.</i>
Advanced beginner	<i>Use of contextual clues and "situational elements." Link past experiences to contexts.</i>
Competent	<i>Actions can be linked to long term plans. An increase in efficiency, but with planning still occurring as conscious, abstract, analytic, and deliberate.</i>
Proficient	<i>An ability to view a situation as a whole rather than as unconnected as well as the ability to determine what factors in a situation are relevant and which are not. Intuition can be used, but actions still require an analytical approach.</i>
Expert	<i>Initiative responses can be used in various situations. At this stage an individual has deep understanding of situations and acts explicitly, making decisions and solving problems. If they encounter a new situation, or if their intuitive response is incorrect, they may revert to analytic thinking.</i>

It is interesting to note that there has been a large body of research that applies mastery learning to other fields, such as nursing (Barsuk, Cohen, McGaghie,

& Wayne, 2010; Dale et al., 2013; Gonzalez & Kardong-Edgren, 2017) and other medical experts (McGaghie, Issenberg, Cohen, Barsuk, & Wayne, 2011; Roh, Lim, & Issenberg, 2016; D. B. Wayne, Barsuk, O'Leary, Fudala, & McGaghie, 2008; D. B. Wayne et al., 2006). This is seen as important in the training, induction and skill progression in the medical field. This field appears to have similar issues with the retention and satisfaction of staff (Heilferty, 2018) as has been presented in this thesis around the teaching profession. However, much of the focus for all models learning or of skills acquisition in teaching are focused on how a teacher can apply these philosophical models and theories to their practice in teaching children (Hilarski, 2013; White & Kern, 2018). The importance of mastery learning is well reported in the context of building self-efficacy (de Vries, 2017), however there is no presentation of how this could, and should, apply to the training and skills development of teachers as they progress from pre-service to beginning and then to experienced, along the teacher professional standards in Australia (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2018a). Albion and Gibson (2000) presented the application of skills acquisition models, in particular problem-based learning (PBL) (Boud & Feletti, 2013), in the context of teachers learning how to use new technologies. It was found that teachers, much the same as students, need to progress from beginning to experienced when learning a new skill and there needs to be a framework to support this (Albion & Gibson, 2000). The framework chosen can differ, and there is much discussion in the academic field as to which is the *best* model for learning, however, the end point is that teaching as a whole is a skill which is comprised of a number of individual but linked skills which must be learned by a teacher. The teacher must also move through levels of learning these skills, and this can be at different rates.

As discussed in the Introduction chapter of this thesis, it is common for beginning teachers to be treated the same as experienced teachers. The concept of mastery learning, or its variants, all share the common idea that this is counter to what needs to happen to build a new teachers' abilities and skills in the profession. If they are to grow as a teacher, they need to be able to move through these stages, at their own pace, with support and guidance. Without this, it is likely that they will not develop strong career goals, or self-efficacy, both of which have been shown in this literature review as key to establishing a long-term career pathway according to the SCCT.

## 2.5. The Theory-Practice Gap

Another concept which is of relevance to this field is the theory-practice gap which has been well documented in education (Allen, 2009b) as well as in various medical fields (Frank et al., 2010). This theory covers the implementation of research or theory into a profession at various points in an individual's career.

In the teaching profession it is well reported that pre-service teachers feel that there is a significant gap between what is taught to them at university and what they experience in the field (Bilal, Rizvi, & Ahmad, 2016; Korthagen, 2008; Levine, 2006; S. Murray, Nuttall, & Mitchell, 2008; Skilbeck & Connell, 2003; R. Smith, 2008). In the Introduction chapter of this thesis the impact of this gap on teacher attrition was presented. One major aspect which many pre-service teachers feel unprepared for is behaviour management (Bromfield, 2006; O'Neill & Stephenson, 2012). Whilst some teachers feel there is not enough content covered in their pre-service programs, others report that they felt there is too much of a focus on theory, with limited exploration of practical skills (Hobson et al., 2008). This balance between educational theory, especially in areas such as behaviour management, with practical skills is a consistent juggling act for many pre-service programmes and researchers (Allen, 2009a, 2009b).

Eraut, Alderton, Boylan, and Wraight (1995) presented six points to clarify the term “theory-practice gap” in the medical field. The theory-practice gap in nursing is described by (Chapman, 2017) as the difference or gap between:

1. Workplace practices and the idealised practice in the literature.
2. Knowledge and principles taught in preservice settings and difficulty in applying them to a work specific setting.
3. Abstract theories and how they can be applied.
4. Scientific knowledge and its application into common practice.
5. Personal experiences in the field and the findings in the literature.
6. What individuals believe are their underpinning theories which guide their practice compared with the implicit theories which actually guide their practice (which they may not even be aware of).

In the context of nursing, it has been suggested that it is vital to have better links between researchers and practitioners (Eraut, 2012) but also that new nurses arrive with theories but very little practical experience, so the focus for these



beginning nurses needs to be around providing opportunities to practice putting these theories into practice (Frank et al., 2010). The question then of how to ensure a nurse is able to access and apply new findings in research across their career is also important (Chapman, 2017). Leach and Tucker (2018) stated that in order to bridge the theory-practice gap there needs to be greater collaboration between academic and practitioners, there needs to be a culture of research within the workplace and it needs to be easy for practitioners to access the research relevant to their field.

The theory-practice gap theory is also relevant to SCCT and to the findings of this research. SCCT studies in the teaching field have argued that there need to be better links between pre-service education courses and schools to support beginning teachers in their transition (Duffy & Lent, 2009). There is a need to support beginning teachers in their induction into the teaching profession, but it is also important that all teachers are guided to transition from knowledge about teaching, to the application of that knowledge to their practice. SCCT mentioned this as a need in the bigger context of an individual career goals and the building of self-efficacy.

Education is also an evolving and changing field, and therefore, teachers need to ensure that they are consistently updating their knowledge base and skills in line with updated findings in research. In the theory-practice gap theory SCCT gives the underpinning process of how this could be achieved.

## **2.6. Relationship between supervisors and staff**

One major theme which is not explicitly explained by SCCT is the perceived quality of the relationship between the teacher and their supervisors in the workplace. In this context this is considered to include school leaders which in the ACT Education Directorate are classified by the acronyms in table 2.2 on page 65.

Across the many studies and underpinning leadership theories, the literature highlights that the quality of the relationship between a supervisor and employee can play a role in the employee's overall job satisfaction, motivation and performance (Mascall, Harris, Leithwood, Straus, & Sacks, 2008; Mosley, Broyles, & Kaufman, 2014). As mentioned previously, each of these variables is difficult to consider independently as each has an impact or correlation with the others.

Social exchange theory is one theory which explains how *resources* can be exchanged in relationships, in the realm of supervisory relationships how a supervisor may exchange resources with their leaders which they then pass onto (or

do not) to the employees they supervise (Blau, 1964; Molm, Peterson, & Takahashi, 2001).

Table 2.2 *Summary of supervisor classifications in the ACT Education Directorate (ACT Government, 2018).*

Commonly used designation	Meaning	Comparable name from other teaching settings
SLC	School leader C	Executive teacher
SLB	School leader B	Deputy Principal
SLA	School leader A	Principal
Lead teacher	Teacher who has undertaken a process to be recognised as having skills as a school leader (includes additional remuneration).	--

The impact of the relationship between an employee on their supervisor on the employee's job satisfaction has been shown across a number of different workplace settings (Griffin, Patterson, & West, 2001; Stringer, 2006). An extension of this theory is that of the well-researched leader-member exchange (LMX) theory (Dansereau Jr, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Scandura, Graen, & Novak, 1986). It states that "leaders form relationships of varying quality with different subordinates. Specifically, leaders develop high-quality exchanges with some subordinates, and these relations are characterised by trust, liking, and respect" (Erdogan & Enders, 2007, p. 321). It has been found, using the LMX theory, that high-quality relationships between leaders and their staff are characterised by the provision of resources which are tangible and intangible (Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997). When these resources are provided staff report higher job satisfaction.

It has also been shown that when supervisors do not provide these resources then there is a decrease in the supervisee's job satisfaction (Gerstner & Day, 1997) and motivation (S. J. Wayne, Liden, Kraimer, & Graf, 1999). In the context of

teaching, these resources could be considered as the level of support given to beginning teachers or the recognition of the work of the more experienced teachers. Sparrowe (1994) found that the degree of empowerment that an individual reported as being given by their supervisor was correlated with their job satisfaction overall. This is also true in other settings, where staff level of empowerment was directly linked to the behaviours of their employer or supervisor (Lorinkova, Pearsall, & Sims Jr, 2013; Srivastava, Bartol, & Locke, 2006).

S. J. Wayne et al. (1999) found that individuals who have positive relationships with their supervisors also report higher levels of work-based motivation. This continues to have relevance in the field, with studies continuing to find links between relationships and motivation (Al-Eisa et al., 2009). Motivation in the overall context of teaching experiences has been discussed at various points throughout this literature review. Harackiewicz and Larson (1986) found that supervisor feedback played a significant role in the motivation of staff. This is important in the current teaching context, as supervisors are encouraged to provide regular and in-depth feedback to their teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2018b). If feedback has such an important role in motivation is important that educational supervisors understand how, when and why feedback should be given.

The motivations of an individual have been explored in the context of motivation to complete work tasks as well as a subset of SCCT as the motivation to choose teaching as a career.

The overall performance of an individual (Dunegan, Uhl-Bien, & Duchon, 2002; S. J. Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997) and an organisation (Scandura et al., 1986) appears to be impacted on by supervisory relationships (Erdogan & Enders, 2007). It has been shown that in order for relationships to have a positive impact on performance it is vital that supervisors build strong relationships with those they support, but it is equally important that the supervisors feel supported and valued by the organisation overall.

There are a number of leadership theories which have explored the role of a leader within a workplace group (Yammarino, Dionne, Chun, & Dansereau, 2005) as well as overarching workforce theories which apply the supervisory and leadership roles within wider contexts (Erdogan & Enders, 2007). It is difficult to fully define what is meant by the term leadership (Jameson, 2013; S. J. Marshall, 2006), but it is

a well-researched and ever-growing field of study (Southwell, Scoufis, & West, 2008; Yammarino et al., 2005). There are a number of leadership models, each of which can be seen in teaching (Southwell et al., 2008). The difference between leadership styles is summed up by (Southwell & Morgan, 2009) as “those that focus on individual, formal or hierarchical forms of leadership and those that focus on collective, participatory or shared forms of leadership” (pg. 19).

The overall impact of supervisor or leader relationships appears to be wide reaching across many aspects of an individual’s career. The importance of relationships in teaching is well known in the teacher-student context in Australia (Brophy, 2013; De Nobile et al., 2017; Liberante, 2012) and around the world (Quin, 2017; Teng, Liu, & Song, 2018). The role of the relationship between teachers-supervisors has also been explored in Australia in the context of teacher-supervisor relationships in pre-service settings (Pfister & Paljevic, 2018). A link between supervisory relationship quality and increased student outcomes has also been published (Southwell & Morgan, 2009). This is a field that still warrants further research, especially in the Australian setting. It is also an area which could be better linked with other theories and models which can be applied to the teaching setting.

## **2.7. Motivation**

Motivation is a major component of many studies into employee behaviours, retention, attrition and job satisfaction which may also be influencing teacher attrition and retention. There have been suggestions that an individual's personality can impact on their motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Dweck, 2013), although most of the theories presented below believe that motivation is contextual and can be shifted. Motivation can be defined as "the forces either within or external to a person that arouse enthusiasm and persistence to pursue a certain course of action" (Daft, 1997, p. 522).

Some of the major theories which have attempted to explain an individual's motivations in the workplace are:

- Maslow’s hierarchy of needs
  - The most well-known of the needs-based models of motivation. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs presents five distinct categories of needs that motivate human behaviours. They range from physiological

(food, water), safety (shelter, safe from danger), social (need to bond with others), esteem (need to be respected by peers) and self-actualisation (a need to become all that they can become) (Maslow, 1943).

- Self-Determination Theory
  - In this theory it is assumed that individuals are driven by both intrinsic (such as values or interests) and extrinsic (such as rewards) sources. They have proposed three motivators of human behaviours which include a need for competence, relatedness and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2002).
- Alderfer's ERG model
  - A modification of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, this model groups needs into three categories existence (Maslow's physiological and safety needs), relatedness (social needs), and growth (Maslow's esteem and self-actualisation) (Alderfer, 1989).
- McClelland's achievement motivation theory / acquired-needs theory
  - In this theory it is stated that an individual has three types of needs they have acquired throughout their lifetime. They are a need for achievement, the need for affiliation, and the need for power (McClelland, 1958). Depending on which of these drives an individual will determine what they require to be motivated, this is determined using a Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) (TAT; H. A. Murray, 1943).
- Equity theory
  - Adams (1965) proposed that individuals are motivated by fairness. This theory reports that an individual will compare their inputs and outcomes with other people's inputs and outcomes to determine what they feel is a fair amount of work for them to do.
- Herzberg's hygiene factors vs. motivators workplace motivation theory
  - This theory stated that there is a difference between what satisfies and what dissatisfies an individual. Dissatisfaction factors are considered hygiene factors (company policies, supervision, working conditions, salary, safety, and security on the job) and satisfying factors are known as motivators (achievement, recognition, interesting work,

increased responsibilities, advancement, and growth opportunities) (Herzberg, 1966; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959).

- Expectancy theory of motivation
  - In expectancy theory of motivation, it is stated that an individual will consider their situation to determine whether they feel a high level of effort will lead to an increase in their performance which then will provide a reward (L. W. Porter & Lawler, 1968; Vroom, 1964).
- Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics model
  - In this motivation model, it is thought that each job can be defined by five characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback). These then impact on three psychological states (experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility for outcomes, and knowledge of the actual results) which then influence an individual's work-related outcomes (job satisfaction and workplace motivation) (Hackman & Oldham, 1974).

Motivation can be viewed in the context of what drives an individual to complete tasks at their workplace, but it can also be considered in terms of what motivates an individual to choose a specific career over another. The latter is included as a function of the interest model in SCCT. What motivates someone to achieve a high level of work in their career can be explained by motivation or needs based theories as above, however, this is also explained and interweaved with SCCT as a subset of self-efficacy, performance, interests and career choice. It is important however, that a successful school leader should be aware of the different types of motivation theories in order to better motivate their staff on a day to day basis.

## **2.8. Values**

One potential driver for teacher attrition is when a teacher's values do not align with their schools' or school leaders (Abdallah, 2009). In section 1.2, a number of strategies and policies to improve teacher attrition are presented. However, none of these includes how to best connect teachers with schools that share their own values around education. This has shown to be important in a number of different careers (Abessolo, Rossier, & Hirschi, 2017; S. H. Schwartz, 1992), so it is possible that this would have equal importance in educational settings (Abdallah, 2009). The

impact of values in an individual's career can be considered from the question "does the values of the individual match the values of the organisation" or in the teaching field "does their personal philosophies of teaching and education match with the values of the school and their supervisor?" Much of the research into values in the workplace are focused on the key aspects of trust, motivations and goals.

It has been found that individuals will work harder for those they trust, and see as having similar values as their own, largely because they feel they are working for a larger cause that matches their own personal values or philosophies (Gillespie & Mann, 2004). In the case of education, it can be viewed as an individual's beliefs about the purpose of education and the role of the teacher in that. This can be found in other industries, where people choose to work for certain organisations that they see as having values and beliefs that match their own (Sinek, 2009). When people feel that they are in an environment in which they are surrounded by others who share their values and beliefs about the purpose of the work they are conducting, they report feeling a strong sense of belonging (Sinek, 2009).

In addition, when an individual is trusted by and has similar values to their supervisor, they are given more challenging and rewarding assignments (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) are given more support, are encouraged to support their colleagues more, and have overall higher levels of job satisfaction and work related commitment (Dansereau Jr et al., 1975; Gillespie & Mann, 2004; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

S. H. Schwartz (1992) outlined how values can also be linked with the motivation goals of an individual. If an individual feels a strong connection between their values and the organisation, they are more motivated in their role as they see it as an extension of their own values and beliefs. That is, they see the progression of their work goals as a progression of their personal goals as well. As previously discussed in detail, motivations play an important role in the overall career development, job satisfaction and self-efficacy of an individual. Therefore, when individuals share the values of an organisation it is likely to also improve these job-related aspects as well (Gillespie & Mann, 2004; Simões, 2019).

Motivation and goals are linked, and both are also key aspects of an individual's career progress that also links with the SCCT, as they are key components of the outcome expectations aspect of this theory (Duffy & Lent, 2009; Lent et al., 2011). Work which provides an individual with a sense of purpose also

provides a greater sense of satisfaction than any other goal or motivator (T. Schwartz & Porath, 2014a, 2014b). Conversely, when individuals trust their supervisor they are more likely to also have higher job satisfaction levels (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001) and positive work-related feelings (S. J. Wayne et al., 1997). In social exchange theory, as discussed previously, this is explained by an obligation to reciprocate when an individual feels they receive support, trust, and other tangible and intangible benefits from their leaders (Blau, 1964).

Values are linked with so many aspects that permeate an individual's work life, many of which can be directly linked with SCCT as an individual's beliefs about their own personal capabilities are all affected by environmental factors and by task-specific experiences. If an individual is more motivated and performs at a higher level in positions where they feel a sense of connection with the values of the organisation and their supervisors it will in turn increase their self-efficacy, outcome expectations and performance (Bandura, 1997; Lent, 2013; Wunsch, 2019). In the specific context of teaching, it can be seen that if a teacher feels that their personal values and beliefs about education and educational practices matches the school that they work at, or the supervisor they work with, then in turn it will increase their job performance, satisfaction and motivation.

## **2.9. Conclusion**

A number of different but often complementary theories and models that could be used as a framework to understand the findings of this study have been presented. The predominant theory which is relevant to the findings and emergent themes of this study is Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). However, the need to further include other variables, such as the teacher-supervisor relationship, in the specific context of teaching will also be explored. Section 1.2 discussed the wide variety of ways in which teacher attrition is addressed by different states and territories, whilst this chapter included section 2.1 which looked at the underpinning reasons that teachers leave the profession across different educational systems.

This chapter has also illuminated that teaching is not completely distinct from other professions in a number of ways. It was shown that there is a number of professions, such as nursing, that have issues similar to teaching surrounding retention, job satisfaction and motivation. It can also be considered that there are more important factors outside of attrition which should be studied when looking at



teacher retention. Instead, retention should not be considered as simply converse to attrition (Mason & Matas, 2015). The opposite factors that make teachers leave do not make others stay. Instead, the experiences of a teacher should be considered from the perspective of career development as a whole, with the consideration that negative experiences in this process may lead to attrition.

This study aims to understand the experiences of teachers to explore which of them may be leading to them choosing to leave the profession. As presented in this chapter, and in Chapter 1, teacher attrition and retention are difficult to measure, with many studies instead focusing upon job satisfaction. This study will explore teacher experiences through the research questions below.

1. What experiences impact teachers' job satisfaction and influence their decision to leave the profession?

*Sub questions:*

- a. Are there higher attrition rates for teachers across different years of service?
- b. Are there demographic groups which indicate a higher rate of teacher attrition?
- c. What are the experiences of teachers which impact on them positively or negatively with regard to attrition?
- d. What are the implications for improved support of teachers in order to reduce attrition?

Addressing these questions would assist supervisors and policy makers to better understand what experiences are important in retaining and developing the highest quality teaching workforce possible. This chapter has explored the various theories in education and other career fields which will be explored in this study. These theories were also linked with the context of the teaching profession and the current research and background information that was presented in Chapter 1. In the following chapter the methodology which underpinned and guided this thesis will be presented, with explanations for the reasons behind their selection. The following chapter will present the reasoning behind the selection of post positivism as an underpinning methodology and philosophy for the conduct of this study, and will link it with SCCT through the exploration of what constitutes *best experience* in the teaching profession to determine means in which to retain a quality workforce.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the design of research is discussed, with the justification behind the choice of Mixed Methods Research (MMR) being presented as well as the type of MMR selected for the study. The underpinning philosophical stances that have guided, influenced, and impacted on this study are then explored and their impacts on this thesis, in the choice of methodologies, methods and the final theories, are given. The integration of IPA as a methodology for the interview strand of the study is presented before an in-depth justification of the methodical decisions that were made in the processing method chapter are given. As this study includes IPA a background to the researcher is given, as context for the lens through which the data was interpreted. Finally, the limitations and considerations are presented before they are discussed in further detail in the discussion chapter and a summary of this chapter leads into the following method chapter.

This study is a fixed Mixed Methods (MM) design, with the inclusion of qualitative and quantitative research strands from the beginning (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Mixed Methods (MM) was selected for this study as the use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods gave a more in depth understanding of the research question than each would independently (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

*The study addressed the following research question and sub questions:*

1. What experiences impact teachers' job satisfaction and influence their decision to leave the profession?

*Sub questions:*

- a. Are there higher attrition rates for teachers across different years of service?
- b. Are there demographic groups which indicate a higher rate of teacher attrition?
- c. What are the experiences of teachers which impact on them positively or negatively with regard to attrition?
- d. What are the implications for improved support of teachers in order to reduce attrition?

Sub questions *a* and *b* were addressed through the survey, whilst *c* was explored in depth through the interviews. Sub question *d* was addressed through the findings of both strands and the findings from all the sub questions culminated in a more in depth and well-rounded final response to the research question.

Sub questions *a* and *b* were explored through the hypotheses below.

a. Which of the year/s of service presents the greatest risk that teachers will leave the profession?

*H<sub>0</sub>*: There is no difference between the number of teachers who leave the profession across different years of service.

*H<sub>1</sub>*: There are differences between the number of teachers who leave the profession across different years of service.

b. Are there demographic groups which indicate a higher rate of teacher attrition?

*H<sub>0</sub>*: There is no difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.

*H<sub>1</sub>*: There are differences between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.

The investigation was carried out in two strands, running concurrently as a single research phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The first strand was a quantitative survey, using a Post-Positivist paradigm (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). It also included an in-depth interview strand, using qualitative Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Palmer, Larkin, de Visser, & Fadden, 2010). In this study the focus was placed on the qualitative strand, as it is through this research method that the factors which may be addressed by schools, educational departments and policy makers to potentially improve the intent to leave rate of teachers in Australia were determined. Therefore, in this design the qualitative (denoted by uppercase QUAL) had a greater priority over the quantitative (denoted as lowercase quan) (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

### **3.1. Philosophical Underpinnings**

The overarching philosophy which guides this study is Post-Positivism (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). In some MMR, such as the Convergent Parallel

design, a single paradigm is selected that informs the entire research progress (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). However, in Embedded design of MMR there can be multiple paradigms, for each distinct phase or strand (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In this particular study Post-Positivism is the overarching paradigm, with Post-Positivism also being the lens through which the supplemental quantitative survey is considered. The major interview strand used Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, to better understand how teachers interpret their lived experiences in the teaching profession.

As a researcher I have adopted a post positivist stance throughout this study. As a teacher moves throughout their day their perceptions of the day are uniquely personal. Since I am wanting to grasp how these experiences then impact on an individual's decision to leave the profession, I need to better understand how they construct their world and those experiences (Creswell, 2012). This fits in with an interpretive phenomenological approach to research, which will also allow me to recognise that I myself, as the researcher and fellow teacher will never be able to fully remove myself, my beliefs and biases from the study (Laverty, 2008; Reiners, 2012).

Post-positivism is a paradigm which states that knowledge is not fixed but is instead flexible and open to conjecture (Phillips & Burbules, 2000). Quantitative methods can be considered to suit people with a positivist or a post positivist paradigm approach to research, which some critic's claim is a negative aspect of this research method (Cohen et al., 2017; Somekh & Lewin, 2011). There are arguments that human nature cannot be quantified and measured in the same way the refraction of light can be measured (Somekh & Lewin, 2005) and therefore, the critics of this method state that they often oversimplify or generalise human behaviours (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008; Maxwell, 2012; Somekh & Lewin, 2011). As discussed previously most researchers are aware of how their personal standpoints and life experiences shape their research. Whilst some researchers aim to remove this influence from their work (most quantitative methodologies and the *a-paradigmatic stance*), others embrace it and use it as part of their research process (many qualitative methodologies and the dialectic and pragmatic stances in mixed methods). Post positivism is seen as an amendment to positivism rather than a complete rejection of it. It shares commonalities in that its ontological perspective is that a reality exists in the same way that positivism accepts that reality exists, and

truths can be measured (Crook & Garratt, 2005). However, its difference is that post positivism has the caveat that this truth cannot be measured perfectly, instead it deals with probabilities (Gall & Borg, 2005). In this case of this thesis, post positivism is the underpinning reason for selecting mixed methods as a research methodology and method. This study comes from the perspective that human behaviour cannot be quantified or broken down into a set of firm rules.

The use of IPA has been widely discussed, especially in the field of psychology (Arvinen-Barrow, Penny, Hemmings, & Corr, 2010) and nursing (Crist & Tanner, 2003; Mackey, 2005; S. Porter, 2008; Reiners, 2012), with its popularity growing in the educational research arena (Greenwalt, 2008). This study has used IPA to better grasp the way in which the teachers in my study make meaning of their life experiences and how these impact on the phenomenon of being a teacher. This allowed the exploration of what variables in their everyday life have encouraged them to remain in the teaching profession or, at times, considered leaving it. The IPA interviews, and the supplemental survey, also facilitated the exploration of the emergent themes and allowed the study to focus on the experiences of beginning teachers differed, or was the same, as those teachers with more than three years' experience.

The use of IPA has been described as a means to understand "what happens when the everyday flow of lived experience takes on a particular significance for people" (J. A. Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 1). In this study IPA was used to better understand the experience of being a teacher, through the interpretive lens of those who have lived the experiences. IPA allowed the study to determine what key life experiences the participating teachers felt lead to their considering leaving, and in turn, to those experiences which lead to them staying. J. A. Smith et al. (2009) have stated that in an IPA study the exact phenomenon can be known at the start of the research or can become apparent as the IPA process progresses.

Heidegger's views on the use of Phenomenology and its links with Hermeneutics are underlying this study as I will be using an interpretive approach to understand the experiences of teachers (Reiners, 2012). VanScoy and Evenstad (2015) explained that "phenomenology becomes hermeneutical when its method is taken to be interpretive (rather than purely descriptive" (p. 341) and this use of IPA will become an example of a double hermeneutic with my interpretations of the participants interpretations underpinning of the study findings.

The use of IPA will allow the research findings to "describe and interpret lived experience, then relate the findings to existing theory. Theory is... of critical importance in developing an initial research topic and after the data has been analysed, as a way of making sense of the analysis" (VanScoy & Evenstad, 2015, p. 341). The links with theory will become apparent as the analysis progresses, as with an IPA study it is more appropriate to "compare the fit" between the findings and the data at the end of the interpretive strand of the IPA process (J. A. Smith et al., 2009).

In IPA research there is not a set method which must be followed (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). Instead, IPA provides the epistemological underpinning through which the research is planned and then analysed (VanScoy & Evenstad, 2015). In this study a qualitative, semi-structured, in-depth interview process was chosen. The interviews were transcribed and then analysed according to following steps.

1. Reading and re-reading the transcripts.
2. Making notes during the readings on the transcripts and in a journal. The notes were tabulated and followed a process of initial comments → Descriptive comments → conceptual comments → Deconstructed comments.
3. Emergent themes were identified using an abstraction approach, where the patterns between the emergent themes were compared and collected under 'super-ordinate' themes (J. A. Smith et al., 2009, p. 96).
4. The above steps were completed for all the interviews.
5. The super-ordinate themes for each interview were then compared and contrasted with each other to determine what themes were relevant, or different, across each of the participants' experiences.

In some IPA studies there is an additional data source required to contextualise the data, such as a diary or in-situ observations (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). In this study it was decided that an in-depth interview would be sufficient as the focus was on the participants past experiences and their interpretations of those events. In this study the increased time pressure on the participants to collect additional qualitative data was determined to not be required for this reason, along with the additional data already being presented by the survey.

In an IPA approach the researcher moves into the process without a guiding theory (Reiners, 2012; J. A. Smith et al., 2009; VanScoy & Evenstad, 2015). In this MMR the interviews were started with some ideas about the theories surrounding retention and attrition of teachers, however, these were shelved to allow the

experiences of the participants to be analysed for emergent themes to be discovered. As the process progressed the themes discussed in the results and discussion chapters were linked with SCCT which became the most relevant theory to explain the findings as the themes emerged.

### 3.2. Mixed Methods Research

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) describe the type of association between the quantitative and qualitative strands in this MMR as an "interactive level." Single phase concurrent timing was used, with the survey strand in term four (November - December) and the interview strand over the break between term four 2017 and the start of term one 2018. This allowed the timeline constrictions my PhD (part time) program to be met whilst allow me the ability to conduct the study at the least intrusive, and most reflective time, for the teachers participating in both the survey and the interview strands.

Table 3.1 *A summary of the design typologies of this study which sit within an embedded mixed methods research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).*

Mixed Methods design component	The design typology in this research	Explanation
Level of interaction	Interactive	The quantitative survey plays a supplementary role, as part of the qualitative interviews and because the two have been designed to answer different sub questions to then give a richer answer to the overarching research question. If the two strands were completely separate and then combined at the end of data analysis to answer the same research question the level of interaction would independent.

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Priority	Qualitative (QUAL)	Qualitative (QUAL) over quantitative (quan)
Timing	Concurrent	In a concurrent design the data from each phase or strand is collected and analysed in a single phase. In this study the needs of the participants were considered and therefore the survey data was collected, then the interview data was collected and then analysed. The survey data was then collated. This mixing through the collection, collation and analysis of the data is concurrent, despite the two strands being distinct to each other and answering different research questions. The study could have been conducted sequentially, however, the surveys required extra time for participants, and therefore it made sense to conduct them during the school stand down / holiday period. However, the survey needed to be conducted during the school term. In order to have all the data available for analysis before the start of term in January 2017 it required the survey data to be collected before the survey.
Mixing	Design level	This study uses an embedded mixing design which is classified

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		as a mixing at the stage of design. The quantitative survey is considered to be embedded in the qualitative research, in that its findings are supplemental to the interviews.
Paradigm/s	Mixed	In this embedded design the researcher also mixes paradigms, rather than operating from one overarching paradigm. In this study the survey is viewed with a post-positivist lens and the interviews are considered through an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. This is explored in detail in the methodology section of this thesis.

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This MM study could be classified as a convergent parallel or embedded design as both these designs include qualitative and quantitative phases or strands which are distinct to each other. There are two distinct strands, and their data was not linked until analysis, however, they have interacted since the start of the study as they have always been planned to answer different sub questions in the study. The different designs are presented, with a final decision made on which is the most appropriate for this research.

### **3.2.1. The convergent parallel design**

In the convergent parallel design is the most common and well known of the MM research types (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In this design the collection of the data occurs at the same time and the analysis occurs at a similar time as well, with the data interfacing at the end of the data analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The quantitative and qualitative strands are of equal importance and are determined by the researcher as needed to create a fuller picture of the research topic

or questions being considered (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Due to the high volume of data to be collected and analysed it is suggested that this design is better suited to a team of researchers or a researcher with extensive experience in both quantitative and qualitative research (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). As the two strands are given equal weighting to each other throughout the research, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) have suggested that the researcher using this design is usually operating within a philosophical framework such as pragmatism rather than mixing philosophies along with methods.

### **3.2.2. The embedded design**

The embedded design shares some commonality with the previously discussed convergent parallel design in that the quantitative and qualitative strands can occur either at different or the same time and the data is collected and analysed separately until the end of analysis. Both designs are chosen because the use of single method would not be sufficient to give an in-depth response to the research questions. However, in the embedded design the two distinct strands answer different, but related questions rather than a single question, as in the convergent design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

### **3.2.3. The design of this study**

In the case of this study it is ultimately classified as an embedded design as it allows for the quantitative strand to be given less emphasis than the qualitative interviews strand. In this study the embedded design was the appropriate choice for a number of reasons, including:

- The qualitative interviews are given more significance in the study than the quantitative survey, which will provide supplemental data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The role of the surveys was to provide supplemental data that will extend or challenge the findings from the interviews. It was also to better understand the attrition risk across different demographic groups.
- There is more than one research question which each strand will answer.

In this study, timing had to be considered from the perspective of the researcher, as a part time student who works full time, and the participants, who work in school term blocks of ten weeks with two to six-week blocks of stand down

or leave in between. With these considerations in mind, the supplemental survey strand was completed prior to the interviews. This also allowed the interview participants to be contacted through the survey.

In the initial planning a participant variant of an exploratory sequential design was chosen. This was to allow the interview participants to be selected based on the findings of the survey. However, as the study progressed the design was reconsidered due to the small number of survey participants in some of the strata groups which made it difficult to determine high and low attrition groups. As this was planned as a possibility from the beginning the method continued as normal but the change was in the timing of the data analysis and the use of the quantitative data. The data from the interviews was transcribed and analysed before the interviews. The data was then mixed at that point, with the survey data playing a supplemental role in giving statistical data to support or challenge the findings from the interview data. This process fit within the embedded design whilst still retaining the initial philosophical assumptions that had been determined at the start of the research process. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) stated that this research method design is appropriate when “the researcher identifies emergent issues related to the implementation of the primary... qualitative design, and insight into those issues can be obtained with a secondary data set” (pg. 92).

In this study the interviews have been used to understand how the experiences of teachers in the ACT Education setting have impacted on their decision to leave or remain in the teaching profession. The role of the survey was to further explore the emergent themes from the interviews strand, and to allow the researcher to answer sub questions surrounding the rates at which different demographic groups of teachers (including years of service) intend to leave the profession. It also allowed the researcher to compare and contrast what different demographic groups experienced as reasons for considering leaving the profession.

In this embedded design there are two separate philosophical viewpoints which have guided each distinct strand. In the interview strand an interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA) was utilised to plan, conduct and analyse the data.

### 3.3. Quantitative Survey Strand

The first strand of the study was a quantitative survey which was designed to determine if there were any particular groups which were at a higher risk of leaving the profession. Its goal was to address research sub questions a and b through the hypotheses below using a series of questions that have been taken from the USA Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012), and the AEU State of Our Schools (SOS) survey (Australian Education Union, 2010).

Sub questions *a* and *b* were explored through the hypotheses below.

a. Which of the year/s of service presents the greatest risk that teachers will leave the profession?

*H<sub>0</sub>*: There is no difference between the number of teachers who leave the profession across different years of service.

*H<sub>1</sub>*: There are differences between the number of teachers who leave the profession across different years of service.

b. Are there demographic groups which indicate a higher rate of teacher attrition?

*H<sub>0</sub>*: There is no difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.

*H<sub>1</sub>*: There are differences between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.

The SASS has been cited and analysed in the USA literature (Ingersoll, 2001, 2003) and thus the questions have been shown to have reliability and validity in a US setting. The AEU State of Our Schools survey was run by the AEU until 2010 (Australian Education Union, 2010) and many of its questions were then amalgamated into the larger Staff in Australia's Schools (SiAS) survey which was administered by Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) from 2007 (Australian Council for Educational, 2015). These were chosen as they are often referenced in the context of teacher attrition (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2016; Ingersoll, 2001, 2003; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003, 2004; Mason & Matas, 2015; Weldon, 2018). As the surveys had overlapping questions, had not been formally pretested or piloted, and were focused on a different international setting to the ACT it was decided that the survey would

need to be piloted and pre-tested to ensure it was valid and reliable (Lancaster, Dodd, & Williamson, 2004; Ruel, Wagner, W, & Gillespie, 2015). Appendix B has the list of questions compared with which location they were taken from.

### **3.3.1. Research process – survey**

To complete the pre-testing and piloting the process was conducted over two schools, a preschool to year 10 school and a year 7 to 10 school, at which the researcher was employed. Permission was received from the Principals to work with teachers at the schools and an email was sent to all staff asking for volunteers for the pre-testing stage. Seven teachers responded to say that they were willing to take part. A time was selected by the volunteers to meet (during work hours) and they took part in the initial survey in a private office, which allowed for the process to be uninterrupted. As they completed the survey they were observed and notes were taken on their responses as well as their overall interest levels, tone and their non-verbal cues. They were also asked to “think aloud” as they went, with any observations, questions or considerations they had regarding the questions (Lancaster et al., 2004). They were timed, as the aim was to have the average time taken to complete the survey below 10 minutes. This was based on personal experience, as well as conversations with the volunteers, as to when teachers would either stop completing a survey or would not consider starting it at all.

Survey burnout where teachers are asked to complete so many surveys and for significant amounts of time (Glazer, 2015; Leath & Fuchs, 2012) was to be avoided to ensure that as many teachers as possible would complete the survey, even if it meant a shorter than originally planned set of questions. After each volunteer had finished changes were made, based on their feedback and the observations, to some wording of questions and cut those which seemed irrelevant to this particular study. The list of initial questions compared with the final survey is available as Appendix B and Appendix C and the feedback received is presented in more detail in the following method chapter.

Once the survey was finalised a link was sent to whole school asking all teaching staff (including leadership) to complete the survey as a pilot. Participants were asked to give feedback on the survey via email or as a comment at the end of the survey. Their average completion times were checked to ensure that they were

below 10 minutes. The average overall time for the 20 participants was 8 minutes which was decided as appropriate for this study.

### **3.3.2. Recruitment – survey**

The Australian Education Union (Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Branch) agreed to send the survey out to its members on my behalf after being contacted to conduct research via phone and email. In order to send it out I needed to join the union, as they were willing to send the survey if it was supporting one of their members.

The ACT AEU has approximately 3,500 members in schools across public and private sectors. This form of participant selection is known as self-selecting sampling as the participants responded to the email if they wanted to participate (Creswell, 2002; Dimitrov, 2008). Self-selecting sampling leads to biased results (Lavrakas, 2008) and in this study, it is possible that teachers who already have a strong negative or strong positive view of their career would take part in the study. In this study it was hoped to get a large as possible number of respondents to allow a stronger quantitative analysis to be conducted. As there are 3,735 teachers across the ACT (ACT Education Directorate, 2018a), 3,600 in the Union (ACT Australian Education Union, personal communication, September 9, 2018) and 150 participated in the survey this means that a total of four percent of staff from the ACT completed the survey. This is a small sample and, therefore, the decision was made to use the data to explore potential trends using a non-parametric test, Chi Squared (McHugh, 2013). The survey was sent three times over a term to collect this number of participants. The survey was not sent again to gather more responses as it was the end of the school year, and the responses in a new school year may differ. Teachers may have moved schools or there is a potential variable of how teachers feel at different points in the year that could not be controlled for if it was conducted over multiple years or terms. There were also the time constraints of the PhD program. As the quantitative (quan) survey was designed to provide possible trends for exploration in the qualitative strand (QUAL) it was decided the small sample size would be included but would only be considered as providing trends for future exploration.

The survey included a link at the end asking if the participant would be interested in taking part in further research through the interview strand.

### **3.3.3. Data collection techniques – survey**

The final survey was created using a paid version of SurveyMonkey and was sent via a link through the ACT Australian Education Union (ACT AEU). The AEU sent it to all its members three times throughout Term Four (October – December), 2017 with information stating that the research was being conducted by a member to look at staff retention and attrition.

Term Four was chosen as it is, in the researcher's experience, the time in which there is the greatest staff turnover and movement across schools. It would also allow the teachers who completed the survey a chance to reflect on their experiences throughout the year (as well as their past teaching experiences). However, it was not intended as a repeated survey as its goal was not to track participants results over time (Creswell, 2002). Instead, multiple emails were sent to allow for staff who were busy at different points in time during the term to be reminded. The second and third email links had a line at the start reminding potential participants about the survey if they hadn't yet completed it.

The survey took participants an average of 8 minutes to complete and a total of 150 teachers started the survey, with 130 participants finishing it entirely. At the end of the survey there was a link to another survey to collect the contact details of any teacher who wished to participate in the interview strand of the study.

In the initial planning for this study a link was to be sent to teachers via individual schools to target all teachers, not just those in the union. However, in the scale of this study it was determined to be unfeasible and as the AEU had conducted previous research through the State of Our Schools (SOS) survey it was decided that it would be appropriate to collect data from this group of teachers. The Union has members from across all ACT school and welcomes all teachers, including Executive and Specialist teachers as well as other school leaders such as Principals. It represents approximately 94% of ACT Educators. Therefore, whilst the choice to send the survey via this avenue did decrease the potential number of participants, it was still a self-selected sample from a significant number of the ACT teaching population.

### **3.4. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis Interview Strand**

As IPA was chosen to explore the teacher experiences in this strand it was important that the theory to connect the findings was not determined prior to the

commencement of the research process (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). Instead in IPA the themes should be emergent and then be used to build or support a theory based on the findings (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). In this Mixed Methods Research I entered the interview strand with some ideas about themes that may be relevant, however, using the IPA approach with open ended guiding questions to direction of the interviews was left open to the participants' experiences in the context of retention and / or attrition. The focus was on the teachers experiences which they had felt at different points of their careers lead to them affirming their decision to remain in the profession, or to leave. The analysis of the data then led to the discovery of emergent themes which were then further explored and linked with existing theories in the field.

As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, the themes that emerged were not directly linked to teacher attrition. Instead it became apparent that the overall experiences and job satisfaction were what were most relevant to this study and to the participants. Decreased job satisfaction many lead to attrition, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, whereas teachers with high levels of job satisfaction are less likely to leave. The themes which emerged were the motivation (or reason) a teacher chose the profession; the perceived level of support or recognition they receive from their supervisors and peers and the relationships they have with their colleagues (most importantly their supervisors). These themes are explored and discussed in depth in Chapters 5 and 6.

The participants for this strand of the study were selected through the previous survey strand. Participants self-selected to participate in this strand as well, which brings the same considerations around bias as discussed in section 3.3.2. In this strand the exploration was about what experiences teachers had that they felt lead them to consider leaving or remaining in the profession. Therefore, as the bias will tend towards those teachers who have either had very positive or very negative experiences in teaching (Lavrakas, 2008), this was appropriate as these would have the possibility of including the types of experiences which would lead to a decrease in job satisfaction or attrition. In initial planning it was hoped to have participants from different high attrition groups to compare across. This is an example of purposive sampling as the participants did self-selected, however, they were chosen as teachers to take part because they could provide meaningful insights into the topic of teacher attrition and retention (Dimitrov, 2008). In an IPA study it is expected that



the participants should have some experiences in common, to allow the researcher to garner a better understanding of the shared contexts in their participants experiences (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). In this study it also allowed me to explore which themes differed for different groups of teachers. For example, beginning compared to experienced teachers.

The participants were all those who were willing to participate further. An initial twelve were willing to participate in the interview component and when contacted eight followed through. This small sample was determined to be appropriate for an IPA approach (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). The IPA approach was used to describe the experiences of teachers that have impacted on them (positively or negatively) throughout their teaching careers and have led to them choosing to remain or consider leaving the profession.

#### **3.4.1. Recruitment- interviews**

Recruitment to the interview strand was through the survey strand. At the end of the survey participants had an option to “participate in further research” button. Clicking this took them to a separate survey which allowed them to input their contact details. It also allowed their survey data to remain anonymous.

Twelve individuals responded at the end of the survey to the request to participate in an interview strand. All twelve were contacted via email or phone (based on their preferred contact method) and eight responded to participate further.

IPA works best with smaller sample sizes who are relatively homogenous rather than completely random in sampling (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). In this case all participants were contacted to ensure a large enough sample and it was determined that their current teaching status, in the small ACT Education Directorate, made them similar enough to warrant inclusion in the study. It also allowed some differences in their demographics, such as age, gender and years of service, which gave them different possible experiences to explore.

As the focus was on the experience’s teachers have that lead to them staying or leaving the profession it was appropriate to have teachers from across different years of service with different demographic backgrounds. Previous studies have focused primarily on beginning teachers experiences in other countries (Hobson et al., 2009), in Australia (Goddard & Goddard, 2006; Mockler, 2018; O'Brien et al., 2008; Schuck et al., 2018) and the ACT (Adoniou, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2015). There

is not as wide a breath of research on the experiences of teachers with more than 5 years experiences in the field of attrition and retention. This is also seen consistently in the media with regular articles discussing “up to 50% of teachers leave in the first five years” (Brennan, 2016; Cox & Connell., 2016; Gallant & Riley, 2014; Vukovic, 2015). As discussed in the background information section, this is not found to be true in the wide, but incomparable, data we have for Australian, and in particular ACT, teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2016; Mason & Matas, 2015). Therefore, in this study it was important to include teachers from across different years of service bands. By including the experiences of teachers across different demographic backgrounds and years of service it was hoped that a richer picture of the experiences of the teaching profession, in the ACT, would emerge. That would then allow the researcher the chance to better explore how those experiences have led to them remaining or leaving the profession.

#### **3.4.2. Data collection techniques – interviews**

Participants were contacted via email or phone, based on which they selected as their preferred means of contact in the survey they completed when they agreed to participate in the interview strand of the study. Of the initial twelve contacted, eight responded and were willing to be interviewed. Information on their demographic composition is found in section 5.3.1. As the ACT is a small location it was possible to meet face-to-face, although an online Skype or Zoom option was offered, and the participants were asked where was close and comfortable for them to meet (see Appendix D for email). All the participants chose to meet face-to-face, at either a Café or at their home which the researcher then travelled to. The timing for the interviews was purposely chosen to be in the January holiday period, with teachers being contacted prior to school ending in December 2017. This was to allow the participants to choose a date and time that was most convenient to them, and to give them time to reflect on the preceding year (which would have largely informed their responses to the survey they had completed).

At the start of the interview the participant was offered a drink (if at a Café) which was paid for by the researcher. Two recording devices were started, a portable recorder and a mobile phone recording app. The choice to record and transcribe later, rather than taking notes, was made to be as unobtrusive as possible (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; J. A. Smith et al., 2009).

The participants were informed of the researchers' position in the ACT Education Directorate, as a School Leader C (SLC) in a high school. It was also discussed that the study was supported by the researcher's Principal in principle but was not affiliated or connected with the Directorate in any way. This was explained to also be true for the ACT Education Union. This was important as it was probable that the researcher would know schools and staff that may be named in the interviews and it was not conducive for an IPA study for the participants to censor themselves when discussing their experiences (J. A. Smith et al., 2009).

The process was also explained including the decoding and anonymity of the data. It was explained that all names or potentially identifiable information would be removed and that they would be able to read the final publications prior to publication. They were then given an information form and were asked to sign a consent form which also outlined this information (see Appendix E and F).

Participants had been emailed questions to consider prior to meeting and were told that they could be used if "stuck" or the conversation could go in any direction they wanted as they began to speak about their experiences as a teacher which had led to them remaining in the profession or considering leaving. Some participants came prepared with what they wanted to talk about, whilst others used the questions as a guide for the conversation and elaborated on points as the interview progressed. The questions were:

- What have been some key life experiences which have defined you as a teacher?
- Can you explain any key life experiences you have had in your workplace?
- What have been the most / least positive life experiences you have had as a teacher?

The interviews were transcribed and sent to the participant for them to look at if they wished and for their records. They were offered the opportunity to make changes to the transcript, to add or retract anything they felt was inaccurate or had not come across as they intended. In qualitative studies the participants are not always included in the transcription process, however, in this study they were included in this way to correct any errors that may have come up in the transcription process, to clarify any sections they felt did not reflect their original meaning and to

allow them add any further information that the reading of the text may have generated (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). One of the participants did provide an addendum of information he wanted to include in the study and another included changes she would like made to the transcript. Four emailed responding that they were still in their current position and that they were happy with the transcript as sent. As the ACT Education sector is small, it was also hoped that this process also made the participants felt that they were part of the research process and that their contribution was valued.

The transcripts have not been provided as appendices in this thesis to ensure the anonymity of the participants. During transcription and analysis, it became apparent that the publication of the full transcripts, even with names and places coded or removed, could allow some participants to be identified within the small setting of the ACT Education system. A copy of the transcripts may be made available (with potentially identifiable information removed) on request.

The interview recordings were then analysed using an iterative, qualitative approach with IPA as the underpinning lens through which the results were considered. In the first stage of analysis the participants' experiences were considered through their personal interpretations and understandings. Major themes were grouped, and examples placed within those themes for each participant. They were then compared and contrasted across each of the participants' experiences, to determine the emergent themes for this study. In the later reflections the researcher placed their own interpretations of those experiences into the final results (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). As discussed previously, this is the defining feature of IPA, as the researcher's interpretations are considered part of the research process rather than something to attempt to remove or control for (J. A. Smith et al., 2009).

### **3.5. Situated researcher**

The interview strand of this study is using an Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (IPA) to collect and analyse the data. This method was selected, rather than a Descriptive Phenomenological approach (Reiners, 2012), due to the link between the myself and the research being conducted. As a teacher, in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), I am in a position where I know and work within the structures that many of the participants referenced. In some cases, I personally know people who were named during the interview process. Therefore, in this study

especially, I am not able to fully remove myself from the research process and to do so would remove the richness and diverse lens through which I am able to interpret the experiences of the interview participants. If I was researching in an area completely unknown to myself, then I could conceive that it would be possible to do so in line with Husserl's approach to Phenomenology (Reiners, 2012). However, in this setting I could not perceive how I could achieve this and the ability to connect my interpretations, viewed through my own experiences, brings a unique outlook to the field.

I chose a Phenomenological approach over any other forms of epistemological underpinnings in qualitative research as I believe that it is the experiences teachers have, and ultimately how they interpret those phenomena, that lead them to remain or to leave the teaching profession. In such a personal experience, it is the complex and multiple truths of lived experience that are relevant to the topic. Therefore, if the focus is on the experiences of teachers that lead to them remaining or leaving the profession it is their experiences and how they have interpreted them that is of interest to this study.

With IPA the researcher is situated within the research, rather than outside it (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, it is important to note that my own experiences and life philosophies will ultimately influence how the data is interpreted as well. As an individual and researcher, I have the following background which would influence how I interpret the research data. I am outwardly white but am an Indigenous Australian who does not have a strong connection to culture. I am a mother to three young children with a male partner. I am an executive (SLC) teacher at a Canberra high school and have taught since 2008 and have been an executive teacher since 2011. I am from a middle-class family, with a white mother and an aboriginal father, and I have two younger brothers. I attended a Catholic, all girl's high school and college and am a cisgender female who in later life identifies as an intersectional feminist.

My personal philosophies have been shaped by my life experiences and education. In my undergraduate degree, a Bachelor of Science, the initial courses were definitely taught from a Positivist perspective, something I did not fully realise until I undertook this PhD program. In these courses I was taught truths as exactly that, a fact that was reached through data and was thus incontrovertible. As my studies progressed there was a shift toward a greater focus on questioning both

research processes and data, which then lead to the questioning of the research design itself. Was it a well-designed method? Was the experimental method used sound? Was the data collected testing what they (or we) were seeking? This shift started my progression towards a Post-Positivist way of viewing the world around me. It is understandable that humans may seek certainty – that we wish that there were ways to measure in an absolute way, to reveal certainty in all findings. However, during my study I have come to realise the impossibility and even absurdity of that aim. This was why I started to question the unwavering dogma that had been presented to me in my high school to early university days. This is why, when I am exploring the experiences of teachers, I believe an IPA epistemology is appropriate. I reject the empiricist viewpoint, that all truth is constructed and that humans are born as blank states as suggested by John Locke (Locke, 1847). Instead I am led by the belief that humans (in particular) are shaped by a combination of nature and nurture. We are born with some inherent traits; we may have a natural proclivity to excel at some tasks over others (Pinker, 2003). The rest is a by-product of how we were raised and how we, with our own internal voices understanding, interpreting and apply those learnings (Pigliucci, 2001). This is why SCCT was also a positive link with the underpinning philosophical viewpoints I hold. It included aspects of innate abilities and interests but tied them with experiential interests and processes in an individual's lifetime and career (Lent, 2013).

People lead rich internal lives and what manifests itself externally is not always the same for every person. Therefore, it is difficult to measure external responses when you want to understand internal feelings and interpretations (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). This is why IPA was good fit for this study, as it allowed the researcher to get the participant to verbalise that which was internal.

### **3.6. Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter presented the background choices behind the selection of a mixed methods approach rather than a single qualitative or quantitative study. With such a variety of MM designs discussed in the literature it was explained how this study fits into an embedded design model as described by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011). The lens of post-positivism across the study and in the quantitative survey alongside the use of IPA in the interviews was explored and justified. The personal viewpoints, life experiences and background of the researcher were presented to

allow a context to be given to the reader. In an IPA study this is important as the interpretation of the experiences is by not only the participant, but also the researcher in the analysis component of the research (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). The study had limitation and considerations which could impact on further research in the field and these were presented briefly, as they are discussed in depth in the chapters five and six. This chapter provided a justification for the study and the research methods chosen from a philosophical perspective and in the following method chapter the steps taken to complete this study within these perspectives is given.

I have made the choice to switch between the situated and a distant scientific observer at different points in this thesis. To support this, and as a Mixed Method Research approach has been used, I will present the Method chapter as a distinct chapter following this Methodology chapter. The following chapter is the removed, third person account of the steps taken to conduct the two strands of the study.

## **CHAPTER 4: METHOD**

The proceeding chapter explored the underpinning philosophies and decisions made when designing and conducting this study. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, this study requires a switch between a removed and embedded researcher during different strands. To enable this Method section to remain an impartial, third person account of the steps taken, it is presented separately to the preceding Methodology chapter that included the first person and situated language that is appropriate to an IPA study. In this chapter the steps taken to conduct the study are presented, along with links to the relevant appendices which provide further information where required.

This Mixed Methods Research (MMR) was broken into two strands (a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews) which were conducted concurrently as single research phase. To conduct this study the following processes outlined in the proceeding sections were undertaken. This included:

- Applications to conduct research were sent to the ACT Education Directorate, the Catholic Education Office and all Independent Schools. A list of all schools in the ACT is available at Appendix G, H and I.
- Approval was granted by the Catholic Education Office and all ACT CEO Principals were contacted to conduct research in their schools. See Appendix H for a list of ACT CEO schools.
- Insufficient number of responses received to conduct the survey.
- Changed participant selection process.
- Contacted AEU.
- Email sent to all members (four separate times).
- Survey conducted - participants sourced from the survey via link to survey to collect contact details.
- Interview times and dates coordinated.
- Interviews conducted.
- Interviews transcribed.
- Interviews analysed.
- Survey data analysed.
- Findings presented.



#### 4.1. Survey Method

The survey questions were taken from the USA Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012), the AEU State of Our Schools (SOS) survey (Australian Education Union, 2010) and the Australian Staff in Australia's Schools (SiAS) survey (Australian Council for Educational, 2015). Questions which were deemed not relevant to the overall research question were removed and questions which were “double ups” or were testing the same content were condensed. Appendix B provides a full list of initial questions chosen for this survey and Appendix C contains a list of the questions which remained after the pre-testing and piloting.

The SASS has been cited and analysed in the USA literature (Ingersoll, 2001, 2003; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003) and thus the questions have been shown to have reliability and validity in a USA setting. The AEU State of Our Schools survey was run by the AEU until 2010 (Australian Education Union, 2010) and many of its questions were then amalgamated into the larger Staff in Australia's Schools (SiAS) survey which was administered by Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) from 2007 (Australian Council for Educational, 2015). However, in order to test the appropriateness of this amalgamated measuring instrument for an Australian audience, and the amount of time it took to complete, it was first pretested and piloted (Ruel et al., 2015).

The survey questions were chosen from the three sources above were those connected with research sub questions *a* and *b* to address the hypotheses presented below.

a. Which of the year/s of service presents the greatest risk that teachers will leave the profession?

*H<sub>0</sub>*: There is no difference between the number of teachers who leave the profession across different years of service.

*H<sub>1</sub>*: There are differences between the number of teachers who leave the profession across different years of service.

b. Are there demographic groups which indicate a higher rate of teacher attrition?

*H<sub>0</sub>: There is no difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.*

*H<sub>1</sub>: There are differences between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.*

The full list of which questions were included, along with their source instrument, can be found in Appendix B and C.

#### **4.1.1. Pre-testing the survey**

Participants were sourced from a single school at which the researcher was employed at through an email asking for volunteers for the process. Eight teachers responded to assist and provided times they were available during the working week to take the survey. The researcher met with the pre-testing participant at their desk, or the researcher's office (depending on their preference) at a time when there was no distractions or other staff around.

The pre-testing participants were sent a link to the draft survey and they were all asked to take the survey as if it was an anonymous survey link, they had been sent to their email account. They were asked to comment on any of the following:

- If they did not understand the question.
- If they thought the question could mean more than one thing.
- What they thought the question was asking.
- When they felt they would have “given up” if it was in a normal setting.
- What their overall thoughts on the survey were.
- Any other insights they wanted to share on the survey.

The pre-testing participants were recorded using a transcription recorder and notes were taken by the researcher as they progressed on their comments as well as points where they paused for a longer time than on other questions and points at which they seemed distracted.

##### ***4.1.1.1 Feedback and changes made to the survey.***

The following feedback was received, and the changes listed below were made to the survey prior to sending it to the whole school for the piloting phase.

#### 4.1.1.2. Overall feedback.

The overall feedback regarding the focus of the study, and the survey in particular, was positive with comments including “This is such an important topic,” “This is really relevant to where I am at now,” “I’m interested to know what you find.” There were also comments that they were surprised that beginning teachers were not the only focus of the survey as they had often read, they were at a high risk of leaving the profession. One participant said, “I always heard that heaps of beginning teachers leave, but I’ve never noticed that happen anywhere I’ve worked before.”

The consistent feedback regarding the survey at pre-testing was that it was too long. All the participants marked between 8-12 minutes as the point at which they would have, under normal circumstances, exited the survey.

After six participants had undertaken the pre-testing process the feedback showed that the survey needed to be shortened significantly. These participants had taken between 22 and 43 minutes to complete the survey. The remaining two participants were asked to also include feedback on any questions they felt they had already answered or were not what they were expecting to see in a survey of teacher attrition and retention.

Based on their feedback the survey had some questions removed. This was determined on the basis of:

- Feedback from the pre-testing participants.
- “Doubling up” across questions.
- Longer questions that were not directly linked to the hypotheses and could be better explored through the interviews.

The beginning teachers highlighted a redirect error on the survey which looped them continuously back to the start of the survey instead of to the next page at the end of their section. This was corrected and checked across all different sections.

#### **4.1.2. Piloting the survey**

After the changes were made from the pre-testing stage all teachers at a single school at which the researcher was employed at were sent an email containing a link to the survey. The email contained the same information and instructions that

were to be sent to the final survey participants, along with additional information regarding the piloting process. The email also asked the participants to make notes as they completed the survey if they had any responses to the questions below:

- If they thought if any of the question could mean more than one thing.
- When they felt they would have “given up” if it was in a normal setting.
- What their overall thoughts on the survey were.
- Any other insights they wanted to share on the survey.

They could return those notes via email, hard copy or through a long answer response at the end of the survey.

Table 4.1 *Feedback on specific survey questions from the pre-testing process, including the changes that were made to the survey.*

Question	Feedback	Change made
<p>How helpful was your initial teacher education course in preparing you for: <i>(please tick one box in each row)</i></p> <p><i>Teaching students with a wide range of backgrounds and abilities, Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, Supporting students with disabilities, Developing and teaching a unit of work, Developing subject content knowledge appropriate for school curriculum, Developing strategies for teaching literacy, Developing my own literacy skills, Developing strategies for teaching numeracy, Developing my own numeracy skills, Making effective use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Learning about resources available for my teaching areas, Developing my skills in classroom communication, Learning how to your evaluate and improve my own teaching, Involving parents/guardians in the educative process, Managing classroom activities to keep students on task, Dealing with difficult student behaviour, Making effective use of</i></p>	<p>This is the second one of these longer “boxy” type questions.</p> <p>It’s really hard to follow what the options are in these questions</p> <p>Nope, nope, nope. I’d be 100% out even seeing another really long question</p> <p>I feel like this isn’t really as important as some of the other questions</p>	Question removed

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*student assessment information, Ensuring that my assessments are consistent and comparable with those of other teachers, Interpreting achievement reports from national or state-wide assessments, Meeting my professional and ethical responsibilities as a teacher, Complying with legislative, administrative and organisational requirements, Developing contacts with professional teaching networks, Engaging with performance and development plans*

Since you began teaching, which of the following types of assistance have you been provided with by your school or employer, and how helpful were they?

*For types of assistance that you did not receive, please tick "Not Applicable."*

How helpful was the assistance? (Scale = Not helpful, Of some help, Helpful, Very helpful, Not Applicable).

An orientation program designed for new teachers, A designated mentor, A reduced face-to-face teaching workload, Follow-up from your teacher education

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Question removed due to survey length - not directly relevant to the hypotheses or could be better explored in the interview

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institution, Structured opportunities to discuss your experiences with other new teachers, Observation of experienced teachers teaching their classes, Other assistance (*please specify*)

How many hours a week are you paid to deliver INSTRUCTION to a class of students in THIS school?

Question removed due to survey length - not directly relevant to the hypotheses or could be better explored in the interview

Including hours spent during the school day, before and after school, and on the weekends, how many hours do you spend on ALL teaching and other school-related activities during a typical FULL WEEK at THIS school?

Question removed due to survey length - not directly relevant to the hypotheses or could be better explored in the interview

How much actual influence do you think teachers have over school policy AT THIS SCHOOL in each of the following areas?

Question removed due to survey length - not directly relevant to the hypotheses or could be better explored in the interview

How much actual control do you have IN YOUR CLASSROOM at this school over the following areas of your planning and teaching?

Question removed due to survey length - not directly relevant to the hypotheses or could be better explored in the interview

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To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Scale = Strongly agree, somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree

The school administration's behaviour toward the staff is supportive and encouraging, I am satisfied with my teaching salary, The level of student misbehaviour in this school (such as noise, horseplay or fighting in the halls, cafeteria, or student lounge) interferes with my teaching, I receive a great deal of support from parents for the work I do, Necessary materials such as textbooks, supplies, and copy machines are available as needed by the staff, Routine duties and paperwork interfere with my job of teaching, My principal enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it., Rules for student behaviour are consistently enforced by teachers in this school, even for students who are not in their classes, Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be, The principal knows what kind of school he or she wants and has communicated it to the staff, There is a great deal of

Argh, another long one. Yep, if I wasn't out before I sure as s\*\*t would be now

I think there's some good stuff here, but honestly, I am completely over it by now. I'm helping and knew it would take longer than usual but even I'm looking at the clock worrying I've got a class to go to in 5. Sorry.

This reads as very American. I can tell straight away that you got it from that American one.

Question modified - Extraneous questions were removed. The questions that were kept were;

I am satisfied with my teaching salary, The level of student misbehaviour in this school interferes with my teaching, Routine duties and paperwork interfere with my job of teaching, My principal enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it., Rules for student behaviour are consistently enforced by teachers in this school, even for students who are not in their classes, The principal knows what kind of school he or she wants and has communicated it to the staff, In this school, staff members are recognised for a job well done, I worry about the security of my job because of the

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cooperative effort among the staff members, In this school, staff members are recognised for a job well done, I worry about the security of my job because of the performance of my students or my school on standardised testing, I am given the support I need to teach students with special needs, The amount of student tardiness and truancy in this school interferes with my teaching, I am generally satisfied with being a teacher at this school, I make a conscious effort to coordinate the content of my courses with that of other teachers.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Scale = Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree

The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren't really worth it, The teachers at this school like being here; I would describe us as a satisfied group, I like the way things are run at this school, If I could get a higher paying job I'd leave teaching as soon as possible, I think about transferring to another school, I

performance of my students or my school on standardised testing, The amount of student lateness and truancy in this school interferes with my teaching, I am generally satisfied with being a teacher at this school

I think it's tricky with the "group stuff." I've been at schools with great groups and bad groups. Same with the time of year, people get stressed at this time of year and they react in different ways.

I think I wouldn't be sure if you were asking about teachers as a whole or teachers at my school in particular.

Question modified. Extraneous questions were removed. The questions that were kept were; The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren't really worth it, The teachers at this school like being here; I like the way things are run at this school, If I could get a higher paying job I'd leave teaching as soon as possible, I

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don't seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching, I think about staying home from school because I'm just too tired to go.

I think the pay question is one of the most important questions you've asked. I know lots of people who would leave in a heartbeat if they could get the same money somewhere else. It's the risk of losing money, especially with kids, mortgages, you know. I think that's why lots of people stay so I'd be really interested to know what the outcome is for that question in particular.

think about transferring to another school, I don't seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching

This question starts to get a bit long too

a. Has a student FROM THIS SCHOOL ever threatened to injure you?

b. Has a student FROM THIS SCHOOL threatened to injure you IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS?

c. In the past 12 months, how many times has a student FROM THIS SCHOOL threatened to injure you?

Overall feedback on survey length

Question removed due to survey length - not directly relevant to the hypotheses or could be better explored in the interview

This data is available through Freedom of Information (FOI)

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- a. Has a student FROM THIS SCHOOL ever physically attacked you?
- b. Has a student FROM THIS SCHOOL physically attacked you IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS?
- c. In the past 12 months, how many times has a student FROM THIS SCHOOL physically attacked you? Times

requests if required to further the study. Due to the need to cut the survey length significantly it was removed

Question removed due to survey length - not directly relevant to the hypotheses or could be better explored in the interview

This data is available through Freedom of Information (FOI) requests if required to further the study. Due to the need to cut the survey length significantly it was removed

How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your job? *Please tick one box in each row.*

Scale =

The amount of teaching you are expected to do, The amount of administrative and clerical work you are

Question removed due to survey length - not directly relevant to the hypotheses or could be better explored in the interview

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expected to do, Your freedom to decide how to do your job, Your opportunities for professional learning, Your opportunities for career advancement, The balance between your working time and your private life, Your salary, The rewards available to you for superior performance, The feedback you receive on your performance, Managing student behaviour, What you are currently accomplishing with your students, The number of staff available to your school, The school's physical resources (e.g. buildings, grounds), The school's educational resources (e.g. equipment, teaching materials), The culture and organisation of your school, Your working relationships with your colleagues, Your working relationships with your Principal, Overall, how satisfied are you with your current job?

At this stage, how do you see your future in the teaching profession?

I expect that teaching will be my lifetime career, I am unlikely to leave teaching, I am thinking about an

Question removed due to survey length - Many aspects of this question had been covered in other questions.

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alternative career, I am actively seeking an alternative career

Do you plan to leave teaching permanently prior to retirement?

Question removed due to survey length - Many aspects of this question had been covered in other questions.

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#### **4.1.2.1. Feedback and changes made to the survey**

From the feedback received changes listed below were made to the survey. There was only a small amount of feedback given at the piloting point of the process. Comments on the survey overall included “IT was an appropriate length and the questions were relevant,” “length was just about right.”

The online survey process was checked to ensure that the re-directs for responses which had additional questions were working correctly.

Table 4.2 *Feedback on specific survey questions from the piloting process, including the changes that were made to the survey.*

Feedback	Change made
Perhaps there could be an 'other' box for reasons for going into teaching?	Other box (with room for comments) was added
One of the questions in the early pages had a section where you could 'tick' the far left, but there were no words to go with it.	Checked and it was a glitch when using a mobile device. Changed font size and checked across iOS, Android and Windows platforms it was corrected
One option not explored as to reason for not retaining teachers is looking into people who choose it as a career because they cannot get work in their chosen field- "Well, I can't get a research position, so I guess I'll just become a science teacher. That will do"	See above - Other option added. Can be further explored in the interviews

#### **4.1.3. Conducting the Survey**

An initial request to conduct research in the ACT Education Directorate, the Catholic Education Office (CEO) and the ACT Independent schools was sent out. Approval was given by the CEO and the ACT Education Directorate requested further information. Requests were sent to each of the individual CEO school's Principals (in line with the research request process). Of the all the schools in CEO

in the ACT that were contacted, one school replied that they would participate, and one school said they would prefer not to at that time. At that point in the research process it was determined that there would not be enough participants for the study through that avenue of sourcing participants.

To source a larger number of participants the ACT branch of the Australian Education Union (AEU) was contacted via phone to request their support by sending out the survey email link to its members. They approved the request and an email link with the participant information and consent forms, along with the survey link, was sent (see Appendix E and F for the forms).

The AEU sent the email link with a short blurb as part of its “what happening in the ACT Education sector” email that is sent regularly to members. The email was sent three times throughout the fourth term of the ACT school calendar.

The link took participants to the survey which was hosted through a paid subscription to SurveyMonkey. At the start of the survey participants were presented with the information form and a “do you wish to continue” (yes/no) option to allow them to provide informed consent. One hundred and thirty participants started the survey, and one participant checked the “no” option and did not continue.

The results were collected via the SurveyMonkey site and were analysed through SurveyMonkey and SPSS.

The data was tested for normality using SPSS and was then analysed using a Chi Square analysis to test for expected compared with actual values, and a Mann-Whitney U test to consider if the average responses for some questions were significantly different.

#### **4.2. Interviews**

Participants for the interview strand of the study were sourced through the survey. At the completion of the survey there was an option for participants to be involved in further research through an interview. Those participants who wished to take part in the survey clicked a link which took them to a separate SurveyMonkey form to provide their contact details.

Twelve individuals completed this form to participate further through an interview and all were contacted via email or phone, dependant on their preference. Of the twelve contacted eight responded and were willing to take part in the interview.

Participants were asked to nominate a location to meet that was most comfortable and accessible for them. Two participants chose to meet at their home and six elected a Cafe where they would like to meet.

Participants were sent an email to the address provided with the Participant Consent and Participant Information forms. The information form had guiding questions (see Appendix E) as well as overall information about the study.

On the day of the interview the participants were provided with hard copies of the Participant Consent and Participant Information forms and were asked to read and sign the Consent form which was kept for the researcher's records. The interview was recorded, with the participants permission (verbally and through the consent form), using a transcription recorder and the researcher's mobile phone.

All interviews were kept within 1 hour and 15 minutes.

At the start of the interview the researcher discussed the interview process and their position within the ACT Education Directorate. Participants were reminded that they could withdraw at any time, and that the study was not affiliated with the ACT Education Directorate.

The interviews were semi-structured and used the guiding questions where required or, with some participants, were an open discussion on the participants experiences and their interpretations of them.

At the completion of the interview the participants were thanked for their time and the process for transcribing and analysing the data was briefly outlined. They were again informed that their identities and any identifying information would not be published in any form and that they would have access to the findings prior to publication.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim with time stamps, and notes were added to reflect additional aspects of the conversation such as pauses or laughs. The participants were given a pseudonym in place of their real name to protect their identity and any reference to specific schools or individuals was removed.

Participants were sent a copy of the transcript to read and were given the opportunity to make any changes or amendments. Six months after the initial interview participants were sent a follow up email asking if they wished to make any changes or addendums to the initial interviews and whether they were still in the same teaching position that had been when interviewed. Four participants responded;



all were in the same position. Two wished to make minor addendums which were included in the data for analysis.

The transcripts are not provided as appendices in this thesis to ensure the anonymity of the participants. A copy of the transcripts may be made available (with potentially identifiable information removed) on request.

The data was transcribed analysed using an iterative, inductive approach using an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis framework. The emergent themes were recorded and explored. This is discussed in further detail in the Methodology and Analysis sections.

This chapter presented the processes and procedures undertaken to complete this study. It was broken into the different strands, survey and interview, of the mixed methods research process. In the following chapter the findings from these strands will be presented and discussed before they are drawn together in chapter six to present an overall response to the research question.

## **CHAPTER 5: RESULTS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In this chapter the results from the quantitative survey are presented alongside their statistical analysis and summaries. An introduction to the participants in the interview strand of the study is then given, before an exploration of the emergent themes is shown. A summary of the key themes that emerged across beginning and experienced teachers is given before the three major themes that emerged, why they became a teacher (motivation), the level of support or recognition they received and the relationships in the career are discussed. This then leads into the following chapter, which draws both strands together to create a cohesive response to the research question around what experiences teachers have which they believe led to them considering leaving the profession.

### **5.1. Results - Quantitative Surveys**

The results from the quantitative survey are presented in this section of the chapter. There was a total of 134 participants in the survey, which is considered to be a small sample size for the total number of teachers in the ACT. Therefore, in the views of this researcher, the findings will be presented as possible trends which be explored further through the interview strand. It is for this reason that a Chi Square analysis was chosen over other statistical analyses, as it would allow for potential trends in the data to be explored, despite the small N overall and the small number of data points in some variables.

As this survey was designed to be supplemental to the qualitative interview strand (denoted as quan → QUAL) it is still appropriate to use the data to determine if there are any trends that support or challenge the emergent trends found in the preceding qualitative results.

#### **5.1.1. Teacher attrition data**

The data below shows trends found in the key attrition questions:

- a) Which of the year/s of service presents the greatest risk that teachers will leave the profession?
- b) Are there demographic groups which have a higher rate of teacher attrition?

In section 5.1.1. the data from the surveys is analysed to answer the questions above. In section 5.1.2. the statistically significant results generated by SurveyMonkey are presented and tested further where possible.

*5.1.1.1. Intent to leave by years of service*

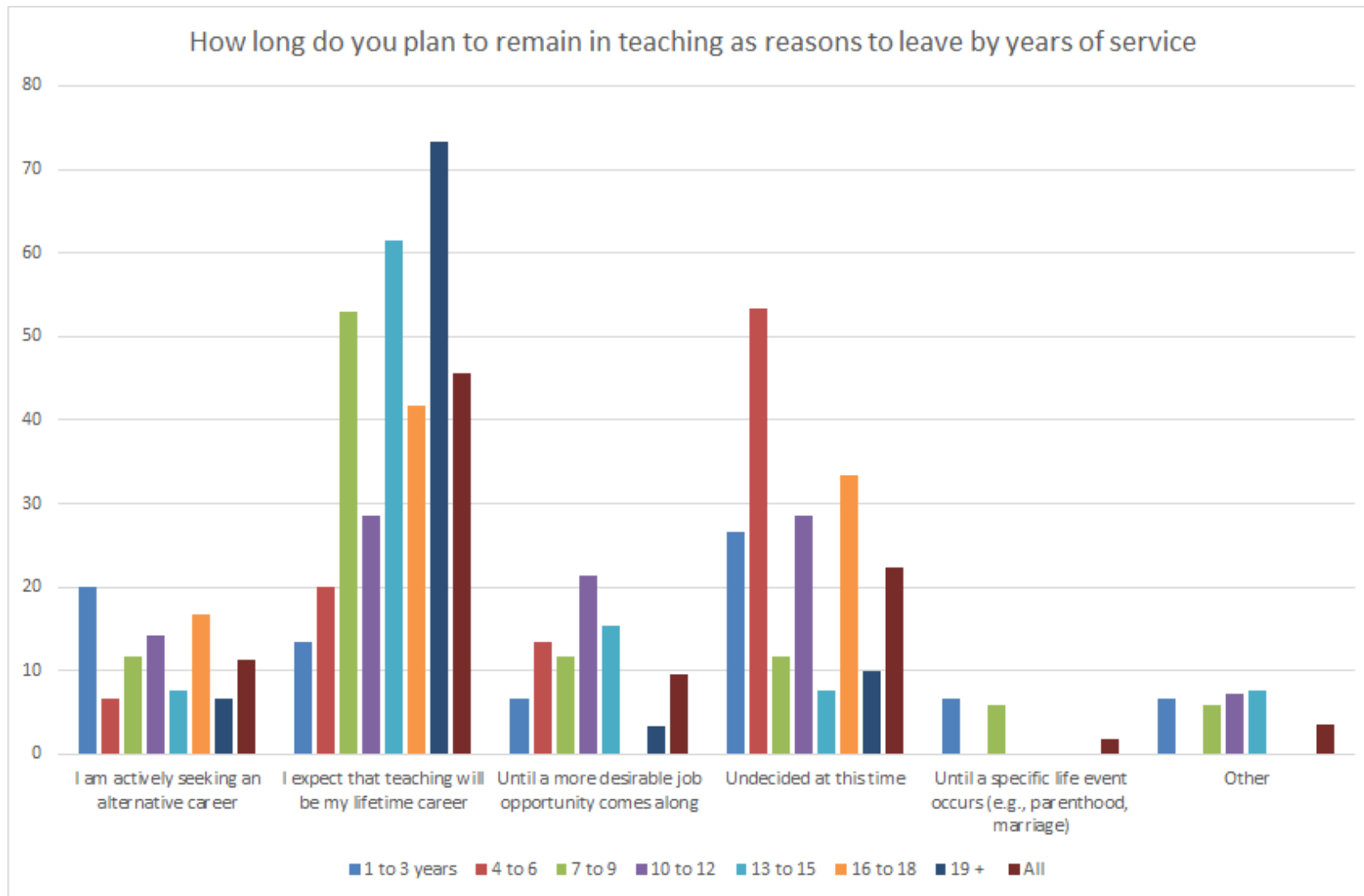
a. Which of the year/s of service presents the greatest risk that teachers will leave the profession?

*H<sub>0</sub>: There is no difference between the number of teachers who leave the profession across different years of service.*

*H<sub>1</sub>: There are differences between the number of teachers who leave the profession across different years of service.*

In Figure 5.1 on page 115, respondents answered the question “How long do you plan to remain in teaching?”. The results have been broken into years of service bands (3 years per band), to compare and contrast the attrition rates across teachers from beginning (1-3 years) through to experienced. There is a large proportion of teachers who believe that teaching will be their lifetime career, this is especially true for those teachers with more than 20 years’ experience when compared to beginning teachers and teachers as a whole. The number of teachers who are undecided is 20% of the results (combined years of service) but is as high as 52% for teachers with four to six years of service.

A Pearson Chi-Square test was conducted to compare the results of each section against the bands of service, the results are presented in table 5.1 on page 116. A significant difference between the expected and actual values, between years of service bands, was found,  $\chi^2 (30, N = 124) = 47.290$ ,  $p = 0.023$ . This result rejects the null hypothesis; *H<sub>0</sub>: There is no difference between the number of teachers who leave the profession across different years of service.*

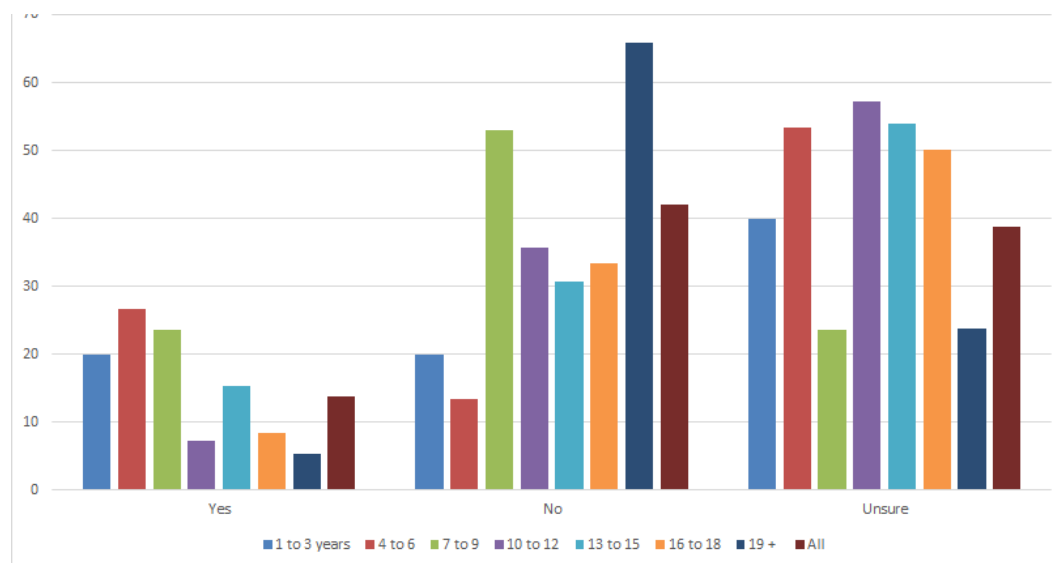


*Figure 5.1* Teachers' intent to remain in the profession, by years of service. Note: the other comments included "plan to retire when I am required to ask to stay at this school in 2 more years" and "life-time career but it could change if things keep getting worse."

Table 5.1 *Results of the Chi Square analysis of the actual versus expected number of teachers' responses to the question "how long do you see yourself teaching" by years of service bands.*

Years of service		I am actively seeking an alternative career	I expect that teaching will be my lifetime career	Other (please specify)	Undecided at this time	Until a more desirable job opportunity comes along	Until a specific life event occurs	Total
1to3	Count	3	2	1	7	1	1	15
	Expected	1.6	6.4	1.6	4.0	1.2	.2	15.0
	Count							
4to6	Count	1	3	0	9	2	0	15
	Expected	1.6	6.4	1.6	4.0	1.2	.2	15.0
	Count							
7to9	Count	2	9	1	2	2	1	17
	Expected	1.8	7.3	1.8	4.5	1.4	.3	17.0
	Count							
10to12	Count	2	4	1	4	3	0	14
	Expected	1.5	6.0	1.5	3.7	1.1	.2	14.0
	Count							
13to15	Count	1	8	3	1	1	0	14
	Expected	1.5	6.0	1.5	3.7	1.1	.2	14.0
	Count							
16to18	Count	2	5	0	5	0	0	12
	Expected	1.3	5.1	1.3	3.2	1.0	.2	12.0
	Count							
19+	Count	2	22	7	5	1	0	37
	Expected	3.9	15.8	3.9	9.8	3.0	.6	37.0
	Count							
Total	Count	13	53	13	33	10	2	124
	Expected	13.0	53.0	13.0	33.0	10.0	2.0	124.
	Count							0

In Figure 5.2 the results for the question “do you intend to leave teaching prior to retirement” are presented, broken into years of service bands (in 3-year blocks). The trend appears to be that there is a larger number of teachers in earlier years of service that have said “yes” they intend to leave teaching, however, the overall number of teachers who have said they intend to leave is less than those who said “no.” The number of teachers who said they would not leave was more comparable to those who said they were unsure whether they would leave or stay.



*Figure 5.2* Teacher intent to leave teaching, as measured by their response, as a percentage, to the question “do you intend to leave teaching prior to retirement” by years of service bands.

A Pearson Chi-Square test was conducted to compare the results of each section against the bands of service, the results of which are presented in table 5.2. A significant difference between the expected and actual values was found. The difference between years of service bands was found to be significant,  $\chi^2 (12, N = 124) = 25.279, p = 0.014$ . This result rejects the null hypothesis;  $H_0$ : *There is no difference between the number of teachers who leave the profession across different years of service.*

Table 5.2 *Table of the results of the Chi Square analysis of teachers' responses to the question "do you plan to leave teaching permanently prior to retirement."*

Years of service		No	Unsure	Yes	Total
1to3	Count	3	9	3	15
	Expected Count	6.3	6.7	2.1	15.0
4to6	Count	2	9	4	15
	Expected Count	6.3	6.7	2.1	15.0
7to9	Count	9	4	4	17
	Expected Count	7.1	7.5	2.3	17.0
10to12	Count	5	8	1	14
	Expected Count	5.9	6.2	1.9	14.0
13to15	Count	4	8	2	14
	Expected Count	5.9	6.2	1.9	14.0
16to18	Count	4	7	1	12
	Expected Count	5.0	5.3	1.6	12.0
19+	Count	25	10	2	37
	Expected Count	15.5	16.4	5.1	37.0
Total	Count	52	55	17	124
	Expected Count	52.0	55.0	17.0	124.0

The response to the question "how long do you see yourself teaching" was also included as a measure of teacher attrition. In Figure 5.3 on page 120 the results for this question are given. Beginning teachers (1-3 years of service) were not significantly more likely to report that they would leave within the next three years, which suggests that in this case the null hypothesis is not rejected.

In Figure 5.3 on page 120 all teachers reported a greater likelihood that they would stay more than 10 years (between 21% to 53%) across all years of service bands. There appeared to be a large difference between the number of beginning teachers who said they would leave within the next one to three and those teachers with 7 to 9, 13 to 15 and 19+ years of teaching. However, there was no significant difference between any of the years of service band responses to this question. A Pearson Chi-Square test was conducted to compare the results of each section against the bands of service, the table of results is presented as table 5.3 on page 116. No significant difference between the expected and actual values was found,  $\chi^2(24, N =$

124) = 23.727,  $p = 0.477$ . This result does not reject the null hypothesis;  $H_0$ : *There is no difference between the number of teachers who leave the profession across different years of service.* Table 5.3 details the expected versus actual figures for each band of service against their responses.

Table 5.3 *Results of the Chi Square analysis of teachers' responses to the question "how long do you see yourself teaching" against their years of service (in 3-year bands).*

		1-3	4-5 years	6-10	Don't	More	Total
		years		years	know	than 10	
						years	
1to3	Count	1	2	1	8	3	15
	Expected	2.1	1.5	1.5	4.4	5.7	15.0
	Count						
4to6	Count	1	1	2	5	6	15
	Expected	2.1	1.5	1.5	4.4	5.7	15.0
	Count						
7to9	Count	3	0	3	2	9	17
	Expected	2.3	1.6	1.6	4.9	6.4	17.0
	Count						
10to12	Count	1	2	0	5	6	14
	Expected	1.9	1.4	1.4	4.1	5.3	14.0
	Count						
13to15	Count	2	1	0	4	7	14
	Expected	1.9	1.4	1.4	4.1	5.3	14.0
	Count						
16to18	Count	0	1	2	4	5	12
	Expected	1.6	1.2	1.2	3.5	4.5	12.0
	Count						
19+	Count	9	5	4	8	11	37
	Expected	5.1	3.6	3.6	10.7	14.0	37.0
	Count						
Total	Count	17	12	12	36	47	124
	Expected	17.0	12.0	12.0	36.0	47.0	124.0
	Count						



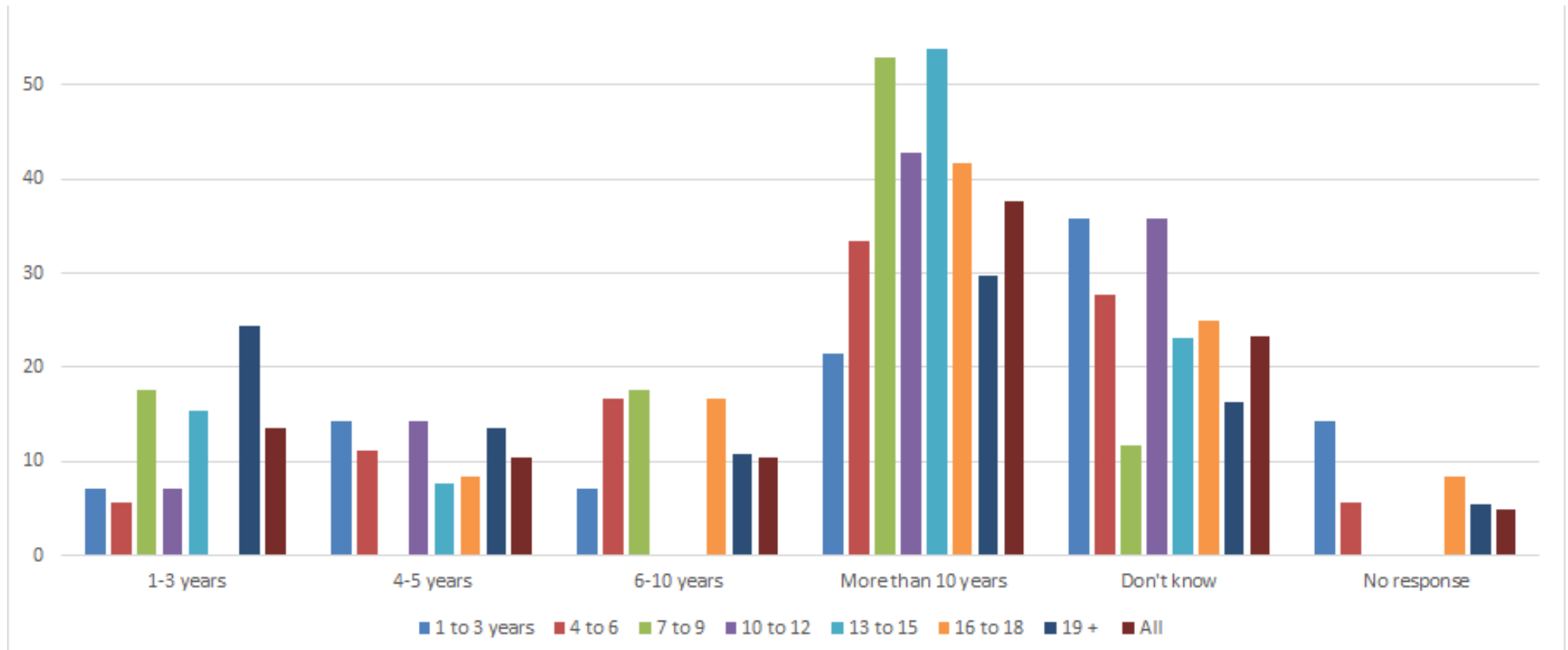


Figure 5.3 Teachers' responses to the question "how long do you see yourself teaching" against years of service bands.

A summary of the results which were used to measure the intent to leave of teachers with different years of experience is given in table 5.4. Of the three questions presented two rejected the null hypothesis, and one question did not.

Table 5.4 *A summary of the results for the hypothesis  $H_0$ : There is no difference between the number of teachers who leave the profession across different years of service.*

Question	Result	Reject or support the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ : <i>There is no difference between the number of teachers who leave the profession across different years of service.</i> )
How long do you plan to remain in teaching?	$\chi^2$ (30, N=124) = 47.290, p=0.023	Reject
Do you intend to leave teaching prior to retirement?	$\chi^2$ (12, N=124) = 25.279, p=0.014	Reject
How long do you see yourself teaching?	$\chi^2$ (24, N=124) = 23.727, p=0.477	Does not reject

#### 5.1.1.2. *Intent to leave by demographic variables*

The research sub question c. Are there demographic groups which have a higher rate of teacher attrition? is addressed in this section through the measurement of differences in the intent to leave data across the variables of gender (male, female, prefer not to say), school type (college, other, primary, primary/secondary, secondary, special), employment type (part time or full time) and employment (casual, contract, permanent/on-going). To address this the hypothesis to test is  $H_0$ : *There is no difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different*

*demographic groups or strata.* H<sub>1</sub>: There are differences between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.

Intent to leave was measured through the same questions; “how long do you plan to remain in teaching (select reasons to leave),” “do you plan to leave teaching prior to retirement” and how long do you see yourself teaching (number of years).”

In this sub section teachers’ responses to these questions are presented, cross tabulated against demographic variables of gender, school type (college, other, primary, primary/secondary, special), employment type (part time, full time), employment type (casual, contract, permanent).

#### 5.1.1.2.1. Gender

Table 5.5 shows the results of the question “how long do you plan to remain in teaching” against gender. It was shown that there was no significant difference between the expected and actual results across the gender demographic,  $\chi^2 (10, N = 124) = 10.844, p = 0.370$ . This result does not reject the null hypothesis  $H_0$ : *There is no difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.*

Table 5.6 presents the data for the teachers’ responses to the question “do you plan to leave teaching permanently prior to retirement” cross tabulated against gender. A Pearson Chi-Square test was conducted to compare the results of table 5.6 on page 120, of each section against the bands of service. No significant difference between the expected and actual values was found,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 124) = 2.798, p = 0.592$ . This result does not reject the null hypothesis  $H_0$ : *There is no difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.*

Table 5.5 Results of the Chi Square analysis of teachers' responses to the question "how long do you plan to remain in teaching" against gender.

Gender		I am actively seeking an alternative career	I expect that teaching will be my lifetime career	Other (please specify)	Undecided at this time	Until a more desirable job opportunity comes along	Until a specific life event occurs	Total
Female	Count	10	35	12	22	6	2	87
	Expected Count	9.1	37.2	9.1	23.2	7.0	1.4	87.0
Male	Count	3	18	1	9	4	0	35
	Expected Count	3.7	15.0	3.7	9.3	2.8	.6	35.0
Prefer	Count	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
	Expected Count	.2	.9	.2	.5	.2	.0	2.0
Total	Count	13	53	13	33	10	2	124
	Expected Count	13.0	53.0	13.0	33.0	10.0	2.0	124.0
	Count							0

Table 5.6 Results of the Chi Square analysis of teachers' responses to the question "do you plan to leave teaching permanently prior to retirement" against gender.

Gender		No	Unsure	Yes	Total
Female	Count	36	39	12	87
	Expected Count	36.5	38.6	11.9	87.0
Male	Count	16	14	5	35
	Expected Count	14.7	15.5	4.8	35.0
Prefer	Count	0	2	0	2
	Expected Count	.8	.9	.3	2.0
Total	Count	52	55	17	124
	Expected Count	52.0	55.0	17.0	124.0

In table 5.7 the responses of teachers to the question "how long do you see yourself teaching" cross tabulated with gender are presented.

A Pearson Chi-Square test was conducted to compare the results of each section against the bands of service in table 5.7. No significant difference between the expected and actual values was found,  $\chi^2 (8, N = 124) = 1.963, p = 0.982$ . This result does not reject the null hypothesis  $H_0$ : *There is no difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.*

Table 5.7 Results of the Chi Square analysis of teachers' responses to the question "how long do you plan to remain in teaching" against gender.

		1-3 years	4-5 years	6-10 years	Don't know	More than 10 years	Total
Female	Count	12	8	8	27	32	87
	Expected	11.9	8.4	8.4	25.3	33.0	87.0
Male	Count	5	4	4	8	14	35
	Expected	4.8	3.4	3.4	10.2	13.3	35.0
Prefer not to say	Count	0	0	0	1	1	2
	Expected	.3	.2	.2	.6	.8	2.0
Total	Count	17	12	12	36	47	124
	Expected	17.0	12.0	12.0	36.0	47.0	124.0

#### 5.1.1.2.2. School type (College, Other, Primary, Primary/Secondary, Secondary, Special)

Tables 5.8 (page 125), 5.9 (page 126) and 5.10 (page 127) present the results for intent to leave against different school types which included the categories; College, Other, Primary, Primary/Secondary, Secondary, Special.

Table 5.8 on page 125 shows that there is no significant difference between teachers from different school settings in their response to the question "how long do you plan to remain teaching", by school type. A Pearson Chi-Square test was conducted to compare the results of each section against the bands of service. No

significant difference between the expected and actual values was found,  $\chi^2 (30, N = 121) = 22.700, p = 0.595$ . This result does not reject the null hypothesis  $H_0$ : *There is no difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.*

Table 5.8 Results of the Chi Square analysis of teachers' responses to the question "how long do you plan to remain in teaching" against school type (college, other, primary, primary/secondary, special).

School type		I expect that					Until a more desirable job opportunity comes along	Until a specific life event occurs	Total
		I am actively seeking an alternative career	teaching will be my lifetime career	Other	Undecided at this time				
College	Count	2	9	3	4	0	0	18	
	Expected	1.9	7.9	1.9	4.5	1.5	.3	18.0	
	Count								
Other	Count	1	2	3	2	2	0	10	
	Expected	1.1	4.4	1.1	2.5	.8	.2	10.0	
	Count								
Primary	Count	5	15	5	13	4	2	44	
	Expected	4.7	19.3	4.7	10.9	3.6	.7	44.0	
	Count								
Primary / Secondary	Count	0	4	1	1	0	0	6	
	Expected	.6	2.6	.6	1.5	.5	.1	6.0	
	Count								
Secondary	Count	4	22	1	9	3	0	39	
	Expected	4.2	17.1	4.2	9.7	3.2	.6	39.0	
	Count								
Special	Count	1	1	0	1	1	0	4	
	Expected	.4	1.8	.4	1.0	.3	.1	4.0	
	Count								
Total	Count	13	53	13	30	10	2	121	
	Expected	13.0	53.0	13.0	30.0	10.0	2.0	121.0	
	Count								

In table 5.9 on page 126 the summary of teacher responses to the question "do you plan to leave teaching permanently prior to retirement" cross tabulated by school type is presented. The results of a Pearson Chi-Square test comparing the

results of each section against the school type showed a significant difference between the expected and actual values,  $\chi^2 (10, N = 121) = 12.885, p = 0.105$ . This result does not reject the null hypothesis  $H_0$ : *There is no difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.*

Table 5.9 Results of the Chi Square analysis of teachers' responses to the question "do you plan to leave teaching permanently prior to retirement" against school type (college, other, primary, primary/secondary, special).

School Type		No	Unsure	Yes	Total
College	Count	8	7	3	18
	Expected Count	7.7	7.7	2.5	18.0
Other	Count	4	5	1	10
	Expected Count	4.3	4.3	1.4	10.0
Primary	Count	15	19	10	44
	Expected Count	18.9	18.9	6.2	44.0
Primary/ Secondary	Count	5	0	1	6
	Expected Count	2.6	2.6	.8	6.0
Secondary	Count	19	18	2	39
	Expected Count	16.8	16.8	5.5	39.0
Special	Count	1	3	0	4
	Expected Count	1.7	1.7	.6	4.0
Total	Count	52	52	17	121
	Expected Count	52.0	52.0	17.0	121.0

In table 5.10 on page 127, the results of the question "how long do you plan to remain in teaching" against different school types shows no significant difference between the observed and expected number of teachers in each group,  $\chi^2 (24, N = 121) = 17.225, p = 0.638$ . This result does not reject the null hypothesis  $H_0$ : *There is no difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.*

Table 5.10 *Results of the Chi Square analysis of teachers' responses to the question "how long do you plan to remain in teaching" against school type (college, other, primary, primary/secondary, special).*

School type		1 to 3 years	4 to 5 years	6 to 10 years	>10 years	Don't know	Total
College	Count	4	1	2	8	3	18
	Expected	2.5	1.8	1.8	7.0	4.9	18.0
	Count						
Other	Count	3	1	2	1	3	10
	Expected	1.4	1.0	1.0	3.9	2.7	10.0
	Count						
Primary	Count	6	6	5	16	11	44
	Expected	6.2	4.4	4.4	17.1	12.0	44.0
	Count						
Primary / Secondary	Count	0	1	0	4	1	6
	Expected	.8	.6	.6	2.3	1.6	6.0
	Count						
Secondary	Count	4	3	3	17	12	39
	Expected	5.5	3.9	3.9	15.1	10.6	39.0
	Count						
Special	Count	0	0	0	1	3	4
	Expected	.6	.4	.4	1.6	1.1	4.0
	Count						
Total	Count	17	12	12	47	33	121
	Expected	17.0	12.0	12.0	47.0	33.0	121.0
	Count						



### 5.1.1.2.3. Employment type (part time or full time)

In table 5.11 the comparison between full time and part time teachers' responses to the question "how long do you plan to remain in teaching" is given. There was no significant difference found between the two demographic variable groups responses,  $\chi^2 (10, N = 118) = 10.448, p = 0.063$ . This does not reject the null hypothesis,  $H_0$ : *There is no difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata*. However, it is very close and could warrant further investigation with larger numbers).

Table 5.11 Results of the Chi Square analysis of teachers' responses to the question "how long do you plan to remain in teaching" by employment type (full time, part time).

Employment type	I am actively seeking an alternative career	I expect that teaching will be my lifetime career	Other	Undecided at this time	Until a more desirable job opportunity comes along	Until a specific life event occurs	Total
Count	6	44	9	23	8	2	92
Full-time	Expected						
Count	10.1	40.5	10.1	21.8	7.8	1.6	92.0
Part-time	Expected						
Count	7	8	4	5	2	0	26
Total	Expected						
Count	13	52	13	28	10	2	118
Count	13.0	52.0	13.0	28.0	10.0	2.0	118.0

In table 5.12 on page 129 the comparison between full time and part time teachers' responses to the question "do you plan to leave teaching permanently prior to retirement" is given. There was no significant difference found between the two demographic variable groups responses,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 118) = 3.049, p = 0.218$ . This does not reject the null hypothesis  $H_0$ : *There is no difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata*.

Table 5.12 *Results of the Chi Square analysis of teachers' responses to the question "do you plan to leave teaching permanently prior to retirement by employment type (full time, part time).*

Employment type		No	Unsure	Yes	Total
Full-time	Count	43	38	11	92
	Expected	39.8	39.0	13.3	92.0
Count					
Part-time	Count	8	12	6	26
	Expected	11.2	11.0	3.7	26.0
Count					
Total	Count	51	50	17	118
	Expected	51.0	50.0	17.0	118.0
Count					

Table 5.13 *Results of the Chi Square analysis of teachers' responses to the question "How long do you see yourself teaching?" by employment type (full time, part time).*

		1-3 years	4-5 years	6-10 years	Don't know	More than 10 years	Total
Full-time	Count	10	11	11	22	38	92
	Expected	13.3	9.4	9.4	24.2	35.9	92.0
Count							
Part-time	Count	7	1	1	9	8	26
	Expected	3.7	2.6	2.6	6.8	10.1	26.0
Count							
Total	Count	17	12	12	31	46	118
	Expected	17.0	12.0	12.0	31.0	46.0	118.0
Count							

In table 5.13 the comparison between full time and part time teachers' responses to the question "how long do you see yourself teaching" is given. There was a significant difference found between the two demographic variable groups responses,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 118) = 7.710, p = 0.103$ . This does not reject the null hypothesis  $H_0$ : *There is no difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.*

#### 5.1.1.2.4. Employment type (casual, contract, permanent/on-going)

In table 5.14 on page 131 the comparison between teachers' responses to the question "how long do plan to remain in teaching" cross tabulated by employment type (casual, contract, permanent) is given. There was no significant difference found between the two demographic variable groups responses,  $\chi^2 (20, N = 124) = 28.972, p = 0.088$ . This does not reject the null hypothesis *H<sub>0</sub>: There is no difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.*

In table 5.15 on page 132 the comparison between teachers' responses to the question "do you plan to leave teaching permanently prior to retirement" cross tabulated by employment type (casual, contract, permanent) is given. There was no significant difference found between the two demographic variable groups responses,  $\chi^2 (8, N = 121) = 7.903, p = 0.443$ . This does not reject the null hypothesis *H<sub>0</sub>: There is no difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.*

In table 5.16 on page 133 the comparison between teachers' responses to the question "how long do you see yourself teaching" cross tabulated by employment type (casual, contract, permanent) is given. There was no significant difference found between the two demographic variable groups responses,  $\chi^2 (12, N = 121) = 14.447, p = 0.129$ . This does not reject the null hypothesis *H<sub>0</sub>: There is no difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.*

Table 5.14 *Results of the Chi Square analysis of teachers' responses to the question "how long do you plan to remain in teaching" by employment type (casual, contract, permanent).*

		I am actively seeking an alternative career	I expect that teaching will be my lifetime career	Other	Undecided at this time	Until a more desirable job opportunity comes along	Until a specific life event occurs	Total
Casual / Relief (continuing appointment)	Count	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Expected Count	.1	.4	.1	.2	.1	.0	1.0
Casual / Relief (on call)	Count	0	2	0	2	0	0	4
	Expected Count	.4	1.8	.4	1.0	.3	.1	4.0
Fixed-term/ Contract (1 to 3 years)	Count	2	1	0	2	1	1	7
	Expected Count	.8	3.1	.8	1.7	.6	.1	7.0
Fixed-term/ Contract (less than 1 year)	Count	0	0	2	2	2	0	6
	Expected Count	.6	2.6	.6	1.5	.5	.1	6.0
On-going/ Permanent	Count	11	50	11	23	7	1	103
	Expected Count	11.1	45.1	11.1	25.5	8.5	1.7	103.0
Total	Count	13	53	13	30	10	2	121
	Expected Count	13.0	53.0	13.0	30.0	10.0	2.0	121.0

Table 5.15 *Results of the Chi Square analysis of teachers' responses to the question "do you plan to leave teaching permanently prior to retirement" by employment type (casual, contract, permanent).*

Employment type		No	Unsure	Yes	Total
Casual/ Relief (continuing appointment)	Count	0	1	0	1
	Expected Count	.4	.4	.1	1.0
Casual/ Relief (on call)	Count	2	2	0	4
	Expected Count	1.7	1.7	.6	4.0
Fixed-term / Contract (1 to 3 years)	Count	1	3	3	7
	Expected Count	3.0	3.0	1.0	7.0
Fixed-term / Contract (less than 1 year)	Count	3	2	1	6
	Expected Count	2.6	2.6	.8	6.0
On-going/ Permanent	Count	46	44	13	103
	Expected Count	44.3	44.3	14.5	103.0
Total	Count	52	52	17	121
	Expected Count	52.0	52.0	17.0	121.0

Table 5.16 *Results of the Chi Square analysis of teachers' responses to the question "how long do you see yourself teaching" by employment type (casual, contract, permanent).*

Employment type		1-3 years	4-5 years	6-10 years	More than 10 years	Unsure	Total
Casual/relief*	Count	1	0	0	3	1	5
	Expected Count	.7	.5	.5	1.9	1.4	5.0
Contract (1-3 years)	Count	2	2	1	0	2	7
	Expected Count	1.0	.7	.7	2.7	1.9	7.0
Contract (less than 1 year)	Count	0	0	1	1	4	6
	Expected Count	.8	.6	.6	2.3	1.6	6.0
Permanent	Count	14	10	10	43	26	103
	Expected Count	14.5	10.2	10.2	40.0	28.1	103.0
Total	Count	17	12	12	47	33	121
	Expected Count	17.0	12.0	12.0	47.0	33.0	121.0

\* *Casual/relief (on call) and Casual/Relief (continuing appointment) were combined in this analysis.*

*Both were completed, and neither rejected the null hypothesis.*

There were questions which rejected and others which did not reject the null hypothesis of  $H_0$ : *There is no difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.* In table 5.17 on page 134 a summary of the findings for each of the questions is presented prior to the following section which presents other statistical findings from the survey.

Table 5.17 A summary of the results for each demographic variable against the intent to leave measures.

Demographic group	Question	Result	Reject or support the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ : <i>There is no difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.</i> )
Gender	How long do you plan to remain in teaching?	$\chi^2(10, N = 124) = 10.844, p = 0.370$	Does not reject
	Do you intend to leave teaching prior to retirement?	$\chi^2(4, N = 124) = 2.798, p = 0.592.$	Does not reject
	How long do you see yourself teaching?	$\chi^2(8, N = 124) = 1.963, p = 0.982$	Does not reject
School type (college, other, primary, primary/secondary, special)	How long do you plan to remain in teaching?	$\chi^2(30, N = 121) = 22.700, p = 0.595$	Does not reject
	Do you intend to leave teaching prior to retirement?	$\chi^2(10, N = 121) = 12.885, p = 0.105$	Does not reject

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	How long do you see yourself teaching?	$\chi^2 (24, N = 121) = 17.225, p = 0.638$	Does not reject
Employment type (part time, full time)	How long do you plan to remain in teaching?	$\chi^2 (10, N = 118) = 10.448, p = 0.063$	Does not reject
	Do you intend to leave teaching prior to retirement?	$\chi^2 (4, N = 118) = 3.049, p = 0.218$	Does not reject
	How long do you see yourself teaching?	$\chi^2 (4, N = 118) = 7.710, p = 0.103$	Does not reject
Employment type (casual, contract, permanent)	How long do you plan to remain in teaching?	$\chi^2 (20, N = 124) = 28.972, p = 0.088$	Does not reject
	Do you intend to leave teaching prior to retirement?	$\chi^2 (8, N = 121) = 7.903, p = 0.443$	Does not reject
	How long do you see yourself teaching?	$\chi^2 (12, N = 121) = 14.447, p = 0.129$	Does not reject

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### 5.1.1.3. Impact of student behaviours by reason for entering the profession

Questions were included to measure the different variables which may contribute to positive or negative experiences for teachers. The research sub question, c. what are the experiences of teachers which impact on them positively or negatively, was addressed in the proceeding data. The relationship between a teacher's reason for entering the profession and their perceived impact of negative student behaviours is presented below in table 5.17. Teachers were grouped as Social/Emotional Imparters (reason for entering the profession = give back to society), Subject Imparters (reason for entering the profession = love of subject) or Both Imparters (reason for entering the profession = give back to society + love of subject).

The data was tested for normality using a Shapiro-Wilk test and was shown to be not normally distributed, SW (117, N = 117),  $p = 0.000$ . Therefore, a non-parametric Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test was completed. In table 5.17 the results of a Kruskal-Wallis Test were used to determine if the distribution of average behaviour issues was the same across the different reasons teachers entered the profession. It was shown that there is no significant relationship between the reason a teacher entered the profession and their perceived impact of negative student behaviours on their teaching experiences.

Table 5.18 *Results from the Kruskal-Wallis test to determine the relationship between a teachers' reason for entering the profession and their perception of the impact of negative student behaviours on their teaching experiences.*

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Average of behaviour issues is the same across categories of Reason for teaching.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.260	Retain the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .050.

Table 5.19 Summary of the results from the Kruskal-Wallis test to determine the relationship between a teachers' reason for entering the profession and their perception of the impact of negative student behaviours on their teaching experiences.

<b>Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	
Total N	117
Test Statistic	4.014 <sup>a,b</sup>
Degree Of Freedom	3
Asymptotic Sig.(2-sided test)	.260

a. The test statistic is adjusted for ties.

b. Multiple comparisons are not performed because the overall test does not show significant differences across samples.

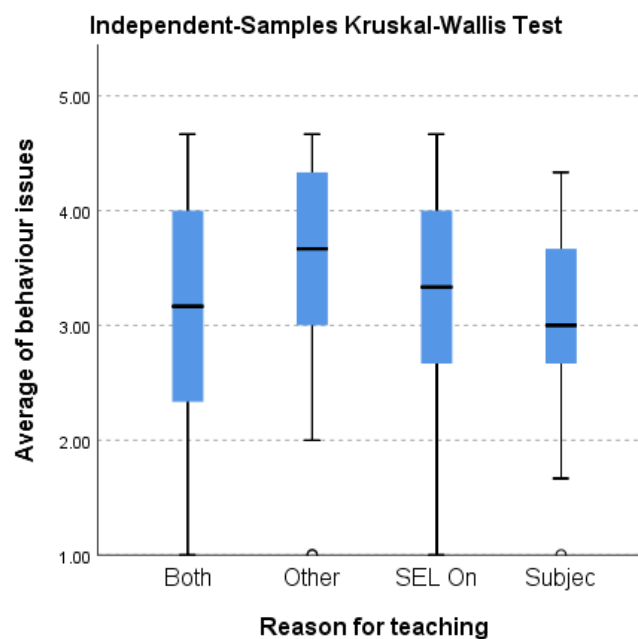


Figure 5.4 Graph of the results from the Kruskal-Wallis test to determine the relationship between a teacher's reason for entering the profession and their perception of the impact of negative student behaviours on their teaching experiences.

### 5.1.2. Other Statistically Significant Results

SurveyMonkey, which was used to administer the survey, generated statistically significant results for each question. The results below were tested

further using a Chi Square or Kruskal-Wallis H test (for the Likert Scale data) and no significant result was found when the average of the scores were compared. The data is presented as potential areas for further investigation. The shaded (blue) data was presented as statistically significant by SurveyMonkey.

In Figure 5.5 it was found that there is significantly higher number of participants were females in primary schools, compared to males. However, there was a significantly lower proportion of females in the secondary setting compared to males. In the survey there was almost double the proportion of male secondary teachers, when existing data (as presented in chapter one) suggests that there is approximately the same proportion of males to females in this field.

	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	COLLEGE	PRIMARY/SECONDARY	SPECIAL	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	TOTAL
Q3: Male (A)	20.59% 7 B	50.00% 17 B	14.71% 5	8.82% 3	0.00% 0	5.88% 2 Responses	28.10% 34
Q3: Female (B)	41.86% 36 A	25.58% 22 A	15.12% 13	3.49% 3	4.65% 4	9.30% 8 Responses	71.07% 86

Figure 5.5 Gender of teachers against school type.

In Figure 5.6 there is a suggestion that female teachers report higher levels of interference from routine duties and paperwork on their teaching. Males did not report the same level of interference from this variable.

Routine duties and paperwork interfere with my job of teaching,							
	STRONGLY AGREE,	SOMEWHAT AGREE,	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE,	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Q3: Male (A)	29.41% 10 B	52.94% 18	14.71% 5	2.94% 1	0.00% 0	29.06% 34	1.91
Q3: Female (B)	51.22% 42 A	37.80% 31	8.54% 7	1.22% 1	1.22% 1	70.09% 82	1.62
Q3: Intersex (C)	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00
Q3: Prefer not to say (D)	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.85% 1	1.00

Figure 5.6 Teacher responses to the question “Routine duties and paperwork interfere with my job of teaching” by gender.

There is a trend in the question “I don’t seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching” towards a more positive response from male teachers who reported nearly double the response of strongly agree to this question.

I don't seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching,							
	STRONGLY AGREE,	SOMEWHAT AGREE,	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE,	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Q3: Male (A)	41.18% 14 B	17.65% 6	14.71% 5	20.59% 7	5.88% 2	29.06% 34	2.06
Q3: Female (B)	21.95% 18 A	21.95% 18	12.20% 10	29.27% 24	14.63% 12	70.09% 82	2.49

*Figure 5.7* Responses to the question “I don’t seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching” by gender.

In the focus on the initial choice of teaching secondary and college teachers were significantly more likely to have chosen the career based on a love of their subject of choice when compared to primary school teachers. There was not a significant different between the secondary and college teachers though, with both over four times more likely to have chosen teaching because of this variable compared with their primary school counterparts.

	LOVE OF TEACHING	LOVE OF SUBJECT
Q19: Primary (A)	63.64% 28	18.18% 8 BC
Q19: Secondary (B)	51.28% 20	76.92% 30 A
Q19: College (C)	66.67% 12	72.22% 13 A
Q19: Primary/Secondary (D)	83.33% 5	50.00% 3
Q19: Special (E)	25.00% 1	0.00% 0
Total Respondents	66	54

*Figure 5.8* Responses to the question “Which of the following factors were important to you in your decision to become a teacher?” by school type.

## 5.2. Discussion – Survey

The quantitative (quan) survey was included to provide insight into research sub questions a and b. It also allowed some exploration of sub question c which could then be further addressed in depth through the qualitative (QUAL) interview strand.

### *Sub questions:*

- a. Are there higher attrition rates for teachers across different years of service?
- b. Are there demographic groups which indicate a higher rate of teacher attrition?
- c. What are the experiences of teachers which impact on them positively or negatively with regard to attrition?
- d. What are the implications for improved support of teachers in order to reduce attrition?

The following hypotheses were used to address the quantitative research questions:

*H<sub>0</sub>: There is no difference between the number of teachers who leave the profession across different years of service.*

*H<sub>1</sub>: There are differences between the number of teachers who leave the profession across different years of service.*

A summary of the results which were used to measure the intent to leave of teachers with different years of experience was given in table 5.17 on page 134. It was found that of the three questions presented to measure intent to leave, two rejected the null hypothesis. This supports the assertion that there is a difference in potential attrition rates between beginning and experienced teachers. However, as one question did not reject the null hypothesis, this is still an area which need further research and exploration. Overall, the suggestion in the data is that it is possible that there is a difference in the experiences of teachers with different years of experience. This was further explored, through the qualitative interview strand to generate a more in depth understanding of the reasons for these differences to address the overall research question fully.

The survey found that there was a possible difference between the intent to leave results for beginning (<3 years of teaching experience) compared to more

experienced teachers. The Pearson Chi-Square for the question “how long do plan to remain in teaching?” found that beginning teachers reported higher levels of looking for alternative employment and lower rates of considering teaching as their lifetime career. There was a significant drop at 10-12 years of service in response to the statement “teaching will be my lifetime carer” though it was not as low as in the beginning (1-3 years of service) bracket. This is linked with the findings of the interviews, which are discussed in the following section, that found that many participants reported they themselves, or their peers, had reconsidered their career choice at a point later in their career. This finding would support this and would suggest that the experiences of those teachers around this level of experience should be further explored to better understand what is occurring that is leading to these higher rates of not intending to stay in teaching.

A second possible trend to consider was found in the response to the question “do you intend to leave teaching prior to retirement.” In this question there was a strong trend towards beginning teachers responding “no” in comparison to more experienced teachers, however, teachers with 4-6 years of service reported higher levels of “no” than those teachers with <3 years of service. This finding would suggest that teachers with different years of service do have different intents to leave or stay in teaching, however, the trends were not as strong as in the previous question.

The third question included to measure intent to leave as a potential indicator for attrition was “how long do you see yourself teaching?” Responses to this question did not present any trend to suggest that there were differences across this question across years of service. This is counter to the other two questions which both rejected the null hypothesis.

The difference in findings across questions suggests that in future research a mixture of questions must be used to measure intent to leave. It is also important to again note that, as the participants were still in the profession, that this is not a measure of actual attrition. Instead it is a measure of intent to leave, which could lead to attrition but is not a direct link to measure it accurately. Therefore, this data is considered as a trend with it providing some directions to consider in the interview strand. In particular the differences between the experiences of beginning versus experienced teachers will be considered. The findings of one question also supported the findings of the interviews, where multiple experienced teachers

reported an intent to leave later (around the 7-10 years of service point) in their careers. The interviews suggested that this could be due to a lack of senior, support or leadership roles or possibly the need to transfer to a new school later in their career. It was also suggested as a component of the different needs of experienced versus beginning teachers, in particular the need for recognition for experienced teachers compared to the need for support by beginning teachers. This is explored in Chapter 6 in more detail.

The response to the question “how long do you see yourself teaching” was also included as a measure of teacher attrition. In Figure 5.4 the results for this question are given. Beginning teachers (1-3 years of service) were not more likely to report that they would leave within the next three years, which suggests that in this case the null hypothesis is not rejected.

The survey also considered whether different demographic groups show different intent to leave patterns in the data. There is some suggestion in the data that there may be a difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata and, therefore, the differences and similarities between with different demographic backgrounds will be further explored in the interview strand.

The hypothesis used to measure the potential differences between demographic groups is;

*H<sub>0</sub>: There is no difference between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.*

*H<sub>1</sub> : There are differences between the proportion of teachers who leave across different demographic groups or strata.*

The results focusing on the intent to leave by different demographic groups was inconclusive. There were some questions, across different groups, which suggested that there is a possible difference between the likelihood that a teacher may leave the profession. However, this was not seen across all groups, or for all questions, which suggests that this is an area which still requires further exploration in the study and in future research. In this study there appears to be no difference in the trend across the likelihood that males will leave, compared to females (note: there was insignificant data points (N=2) for individuals who do not identify either male or female to include in the final analysis).

It is also suggested that there is no difference between teachers with different employment types (contract, casual, permanent) which is unexpected, as there has been some suggestions in research that the casualisation of the workforce is driving staff to leave positions (Bamberry, 2011; Mercieca, 2017; Nicholas & Wells, 2017). This result could suggest that casual or contract teachers do not have higher intent to leave statistics, which appears to be counter to the findings of past research (Mercieca, 2017). It could also be that this is a small sample, which is only able to provide possible trends in the field and therefore, there may be a difference in the intent to leave between employment types which has not been captured in this study. Another possibility is that teachers who continually remain as casual or contract employees do so by choice, or they leave the profession early. This would mean that the data shows them as no more likely to leave (when they are experienced and choosing to remain in that type of employment) or they have left already and therefore, would not have been able to take part in this survey. As this survey was conducted through the ACT AEU, it could also be that casual and/or contract teachers do not join the union in as high numbers as permanent employees. These are all areas which would warrant further research, as the number of casual and contract positions is increasing in Australian education settings and the impacts of this casualisation on job satisfaction and intent to leaves should be better understood.

Teachers in different school settings (college, other, primary, primary/secondary, special) have shown a possible trend towards having a potential difference in their intent to leave. In this case there is a difference in the response to the question “do you intend to leave teaching prior to retirement,” which suggests that this is an area which may require further exploration as well.

The strongest result was in the different employment type (part time, full time) which showed that there was a significant difference between the groups responses to two out of the three questions around intent to leave. This is also interesting, as it was reported that in the ACT the majority of part time teachers are female and there was not a significant difference between genders found in this survey. Future research could explore ways in which to correlate and compare gender with employment type to determine whether this is a result of note. There may also be differences which emerge in the interviews which could further explain this finding.



Overall, the results of the survey are inconclusive, with some demographic groupings showing a stronger trend towards differences in intent to leave, whilst others showed not difference. In this study it has been reported that the confidence level was only able to be assessed at 90% due to the number of participants. Therefore, this data has been considered as trend data overall, with areas for future consideration being explored. In particular it is interesting to note that there was some difference across the demographics, when most research only considers attrition through the lens of beginning versus experienced teachers. In most cases all teachers are grouped together for all studies, however, this would suggest that in future research a consideration needs to be placed on the possible differences in responses across teachers in different settings, with different employment situations or with different backgrounds. It was also important to note that the area of gender did not show any significant difference in results, however there was a slight difference in the results across school settings (college, other, primary, primary/secondary, special) and a more significant difference in the employment type (part time, full time). In the ACT, as it was reported in Chapter 1, there is a large difference in the gender composition across primary, secondary and college school settings as well as across teachers' employment type when considered by gender. In the table below it can be seen that there is a large difference between the proportion of female teachers who are part time, in comparison to their male counterparts. Female teachers are much more likely to work part time in the ACT compared to male teachers.

There is also a noticeable difference between the number of females in primary schools compared to high schools and colleges in the ACT public education sector as reported in Chapter 1. It was also shown that in this sector, primary teachers are predominantly female, whilst there are a higher proportion of males in college settings. As this study has shown that there is a difference between the intent to leave across school type as well as employment type, it would suggest that there may be differences in gender which were not apparent in this study. This is an area that could be explored in larger studies, as this research did not have enough participants to explore these groups in enough detail. It is suggested that future research (with a large number of participants) which is exploring attrition or retention, considers how variables (such as gender, school type and employment type) may show different patterns due.

*Table 5.20 Number of teachers, by gender, in each employment demographic group. Data from the ACT Education Annual Report 2017 – 2018 (ACT Education, 2018).*

Employment type	Total number of teachers		Proportion of teachers (compared against the total for each gender)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Casual	627	255	12.02	15.99
Permanent Full-time	2322	903	44.50	56.61
Permanent Part-time	1422	136	27.25	8.53
Temporary Full-time	383	165	7.34	10.34
Temporary Part-time	464	136	8.89	8.53

For this study it was determined that there are some demographic groups which likely experience different rates of intention to leave. Therefore, in the qualitative interview component the experiences of teachers were considered holistically, as well as from potential demographic groups to better explore whether the experiences were different or shared across and within any groups.

In this strand there was also some other areas of interest that were raised. This included the differences between

- Reason for teaching – love of subject closer linked with college than primary
- Enthusiasm (gender) – the SurveyMonkey results suggested that males have a higher level of enthusiasm compared to females.

So, there is a suggestion in these results that there may be differences between teachers with different demographic backgrounds. However, in the context of this study it was not supported that teachers with different demographic backgrounds have different rates of attrition. The results of these specific questions do highlight an area of need for future research, as there were some potential differences, however there was not enough participants to have a significant number

of teachers in each category to measure significant (or not) results as accurately as the study would have wanted.

In measuring intent to leave three questions were used from existing surveys which have been frequently presented (Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Ingvarson, Kleinhenz, & Wilkinson, 2007; McKenzie et al., 2014; Weldon & Ingvarson, 2016). In many of these studies, only a single question was used as a measure for intent to leave (Australian Education Union, 2010) or in some cases this intent to leave data was presented as attrition data (Vukovic, 2015). The findings in this study around intent to leave, especially across years of experience and the different demographic groups, raises questions on the accuracy of using a single question, or using intent to leave as a direct measurement for attrition. As discussed previously in Chapters 1 and 2, researchers have been frequently warned against directly using intent to leave as a measurement for attrition (Mason & Matas, 2015). Attrition is more complex than intent to leave, as frequently teachers may report an intent to leave, but then do not. This would suggest that intent to leave is a more accurate link with job satisfaction and also as a means of measuring climate within an organisation more than pure attrition. This does not discount the importance of intent to leave, however, as it allows an organisation to survey and reflect on their current employees and to put retention strategies in place to support them remaining in the profession. It has been shown that many people who do leave a profession do so after multiple negative incidents with, in many cases, a single final incident which pushes them to make the decision to leave (Manuel, 2003a). Therefore, the findings in regard to this, suggest that education systems and schools individually need to consider their practices when conducting staff surveys as intent to leave figures may be higher than actual attrition. However, without changes being made to the negative incidents being reported, or a continuation of the positive experiences, the intent to leave figures could become the attrition rate as well.

The final findings in from the survey were centred around the impact of student behaviours on teachers' intent to leave. In this stage of the study it was found that there was no direct correlation between a teacher's intent to leave and their perceived impact of student behaviours on their teaching. This was also true for a comparison of the reason a teacher entering the profession (for subject specific teaching purposes or for educating young people or social/emotional reasons). There

was no significant difference between these two groups in their perception of the impact of student behaviours on their teaching or intent to leave. This was unexpected, as in the interview strand of the study it was found that there was a difference between these two groups in their perception of different situations, such as student behaviours, on their positive or negative experiences of teaching. This was not an area which was initially designed to be explored in the survey but was considered in the light of interview findings. Therefore, considering the low confidence levels due to the number of participants, it is recommended that further research could be directed at measuring this aspect of teacher experience and its potential impact on teacher attrition rates. Further quantitative tools could be designed to test whether a teacher's reason for entering the profession has a correlation with their experiences. In particular whether those teachers who enter the profession due to a want to teach a particular subject report higher levels of negative impacts based on negative student behaviours compared with those teachers who entered the profession with greater focus on social and/or emotional growth of students. In turn, it could also be measured to determine whether those who enter for social/emotional reasons report a greater impact on their positive experiences from variables such as standardised testing, national curriculums or other curriculum or subject based pressures.

### **5.3. Findings - Interviews**

This section introduces the participants, as their backgrounds and narratives are important in the IPA process as it is ultimately their interpretation of their experiences as teachers which are of interest to the research topic. It then moves to the summary of the findings and then the major themes which have emerged from the IPA analysis. In this section there will be many points in which I will shift from the external quantitative perspective to the qualitative IPA focus and in these moments, as I will be situated within the study, I will shift my written tone. This allows the section to then lead into the proceeding component of the chapter which presents the results of the quantitative survey. The two strands are then linked in the following discussion chapter where the importance of the findings, as well as their links with theory, is presented and explored.

The interviews were transcribed and then analysed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a lens through which the major emergent

themes were discovered and then explored. In previous chapters the reasons behind using IPA, including the close links between the researcher and the subject, were presented. IPA was chosen to allow me to position myself within the research, rather than on the outside looking in. As an executive teacher in the ACT Education sector, I have my own experiences which may mirror, or deviate from, the participants who shared their experiences. Therefore, using an iterative IPA analysis approach, which explored the experiences of the teachers alongside my own interpretation of those experiences allow me to explore the emergent themes from a shared perspective.

The interviews were semi structured, as looking at teacher attrition and retention, but participants were open to talk about anything in this area as the conversation progressed. In the analysis stage the researcher started with no preconceived ideas about what the emergent themes would be, however, as an IPA study the researchers own interpretations and experiences were not bracketed and instead are part of the final findings. The study had begun with a focus on attrition and retention, however, the themes which emerged focused more on the teachers' overall job satisfaction, motivation and intent to leave or remain in the profession. This shift is explored, and linked with the potential to increase attrition, in section 5.4 in this chapter and in the proceeding Chapter 6 (Discussion).

### **5.3.1. About the participants**

There were eight teachers who gave up their time to participate in the interviews and provided in-depth insights into their career experiences. As described in the method chapter, they were assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity and to allow their experiences to be presented as individuals. Three of the participants identified as male and five as female. They came from a mix of primary to college level and worked in schools across the ACT Education Directorate networks. No participant was from a Catholic or Independent school, and due to the survey collection process (through the union). As the survey was sent out through the AEU on my behalf, as I am a member of the union, all participants were also members of the ACT AEU.

The summaries below paraphrase the responses of each participant as a third person narrative with minimal changes to the context and intent of the content. At some points a summary of the key topics is presented, prior to a quote, as the information could have allowed the participant to be identified and thus was not

presented verbatim. Some summaries are also to give clarity or context from my perspective. The information in these summaries was gathered and collated from the interviews, from the participants themselves at the start of the interview (in the participant information forms) and from follow up emails (at 6 and 10 months post the interviews) where each participant was invited to comment on or change the transcripts if they wished to do so. This ability to have input into the process allows the participant to feel more included in the study and more open in their discussion (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). The participants were also asked if they were still in the same position or if they had moved schools or left teaching at the end of the year (2018). All the participants were still in teaching, some having had more successful years than previously, some were still actively looking for other positions and others did not respond to the email.

The summaries presented below were sent, along with the abstract, to the participants prior to publication of the thesis. The participants were able to change any of the details or to add or remove anything from the transcript or the summary if they wished at this point.

### ***5.3.1.1. Participant 1: James***

James was a high school, beginning teacher in his fifties who had taught English overseas during a sabbatical from his permanent, long term public service carer. After thoroughly enjoying his overseas teaching experiences he returned to Australia and enrolled in a Graduate Diploma of Education. James committed to teaching but said that, realistically, he won't continue if the workload is as high as it currently is.

James was employed on a long term (greater than 6 months), full time contract. At the time of the interview he was about to start another long term, full time contract for the entirety of the year at a new school. When reflecting on his experiences in education he stated,

I did the teacher qualification in 2014 so I gave up a pretty steady, cushy job to embark upon this. Albeit, I'd been there a long time and I wasn't that challenged, I wasn't that happy. I'd had a lot of experience prior to teaching, coaching [sport], so I've had a lot of experience dealing with kids. And I had the 2 and half years overseas ... teaching. But now I am wondering if I've done the right thing. I don't feel very supported, I don't have a lot of good

things to say about the Directorate, I thought the teacher training [location removed], the graduate diploma, now that I'm teaching, left me totally unprepared for teaching. So, I am wondering if I've done the right thing essentially.

James reported that he had found in his two years of teaching that there was great variation in the level of support and mentoring he received. He described the level and type of support he received as,

I had a mentor at [first school], she was the executive teacher. She was good. Um at [second school] ... I had a mentor teacher; this was in the [James' main subject] area. At [second school] I had three lines of [main subject area] and two of [out of subject teaching area]. So (drawn out), my mentor was [first subject area], which is my strength anyway. I just found him though, he was just so busy you know. So, to find the time to talk with him [was difficult]. It would have been better, to have mentor in the [second subject] area, because that wasn't my strength."

When asked what he found successful with one mentor, and not with others he responded,

I think the fact that, um, (pause) [mentor at first school] was an executive teacher so she didn't have a full teaching load. So, we tried to organise weekly meetings and I could, she just seemed less busy. And, perhaps more approachable, and so I could go to her and ask her things, clarify things, and get suggestions.

James also reflected on the level of support he got from his more experienced colleagues and the number of hours he was committing to his position. He stated,

Yeah, so the hours I've been putting in. I've been putting in a lot of hours. You know, preparation, stuff like that and yeah, at times I've felt a bit unsupported and all the other teachers are so busy as well. It's hard to try and get a chance to sit down with them and consult with them.... I used to stay to probably 6 or 7 [pm]. Four nights a week, between preparing classes, you know marking, yeah. That wasn't expected, but I had to do that for myself to prepare and to stay on top of things. So, I mean I feel pretty guilty

and I don't want to go into the classroom unprepared, so it was mainly preparing lessons and marking. I found as well that there wasn't a lot of stuff that was already existing. You know that I could use. So, I was pretty much reinventing the wheel I thought. To prepare my own lessons and stuff like that, and again, with it not being my area of strength, [first subject area] I have no problems, but the [second out of area subject] at [first school], the [third out of area subject] at [second school] they call it there. Yeah so, I just felt that I had to do that to stay on top of things. [When asked whether the resources did not exist or where just not shared with him] I think it was more the latter. More that they weren't willing to share and ... I think it was really that everyone was just so busy. I found it really hard to get anybody to actually sit down and have a chat with me because everything, everything just seems so frantic.

The major factor in James considering leaving, and at times actively looking to leave, was the lack of preparedness from his pre-service education coupled with the erratic career opportunities in the ACT Education Directorate. When asked what he thought could have made his journey more positive he said,

I mean, I've been generally okay with the supervisors and the support, but I still feel a bit thrown in the deep end and unprepared...I think the training should have been better, the initial training. Um, I think it should have been made clearer just how difficult it is to get full time positions. You know, I didn't realise that it was going to be this challenging. I don't think the information given to, and I don't know if all the other people in my class feel the same way, but I don't feel the information that you're given when you finish your training, as to what the next stage is, is good enough.

I think the difficulty I've had, I didn't think it was going to be this difficult to get a permanent position. I did some research before I embarked on this and they always said "oh, you'll have no problem's getting a job." Well it hasn't worked out like that.

When asked where the issue was coming from, he said that he had issues with the Directorate and he also said that at university he was told that casual teaching was what most beginning teachers should start doing after graduation. He reported



that at university “it should have been made clearer just how difficult it is to get full time [permanent] positions.”

At the end of both his contracts he was told his performance was good, but he found out that his contract was not going to be renewed (due to staff returning to positions) by an email in one instance and in a public forum in front of his colleagues, minutes before he went to class. He reported this again in his follow up email response, writing

Five minutes before a lesson, I was told in the staffroom (not in a private situation) that my contract wouldn't be renewed due to staffing/financial reasons (nothing to do with my performance). Is this professional? At another school, I discovered my contract wouldn't be renewed (again, not due to my performance but due to teachers returning from leave) when an email was sent around with the proposed classes for the next school year. No discussion with supervisors, etc. Is this professional? Do schools and the department realise that staff have financial commitments? Many of us don't want to be on temporary contracts – we want permanent employment.

These negative experiences have all built on each other and have, overall, lead to James making the decision to look for other career pathways. When reflecting on his overall experiences he also reported

this [casual teaching] seems the first step after completing a teaching qualification. I did casual teaching – why are casual teachers not given keys? I had to hunt down teachers all the time just to gain access to classrooms. I had to go on long journeys to near the school reception, because there was a toilet there where I didn't need a key. Why aren't casual teachers given email access and an ACT Education logon? I was left lesson plans that required me to use IT resources for which I needed a logon... I also found, after completing my education qualification, that it was ages before I was offered a contract. In the interim I just did casual teaching. So, I forgot loads about the national curriculum, etc etc, because you don't need to know this when you are just teaching casually and are implementing other teachers' lessons. I found this a big problem.

James was keen to remain in teaching but was not confident if he would long term due to the workload. He followed up our interview with some additional points he wanted to raise that he had thought about during the first six months of 2018. He said that there was a number of key points which he listed as “problems faced as a recently qualified teacher.” A copy of this response is included in Appendix J with identifying information redacted. The issues included; his Graduate Diploma in Education (lack of preparation in areas such as behaviour management and online programs such as Google Classroom), issues during placement (“One of teachers at the placement school made racist comments about students”), errors in the HR section of the Education Directorate, a lack of induction, feelings of unequal payrates in superannuation, lack of empathy / understanding, difficulties in gaining permanent employment and navigating the registration process for new teachers.

### **5.3.1.2. Participant 2: Edward**

Edward was in his mid-forties and was a beginning teacher (less than five years' experience), at a high school. His position was permanent and full time. He had both positive and negative experiences in his first three years of teaching. He started teaching in a role which usually would have been reserved for a more experienced teacher. When asked to reflect on his experiences he reported;

Probably the biggest thing that's impacted on my last three years has been the ad hoc way that the Directorate does mentoring in schools for new educators. At my first school, I was [teaching in a specialist setting]. For the program that I was teaching in, I was overloaded with students. I had too many students for what is recommended for experienced teachers... I was supposed to be working with and be mentored by an experienced [teaching] person. That didn't really work, that relationship. There were a lot of things behind that... It was a tough year for me for a number of reasons, but ultimately the mentoring that I should have had, I didn't feel like I had. It wasn't until maybe, June, May, June that I got an email from the person who was mentoring me to say I'm starting this email thing. I'm going to mentor few [teachers in this specialist program], but this email thing can be a discussion backwards and forwards, but I'm going to do this thing. For a start, that was too late for me. Second, that was not the sort of help that I need. I needed the setup help from the start. I hadn't ever had to build

relationships with students over that long period, over a year before, which was a difficult thing for me in managing those relationships and those ... kids given that we were together for [the majority of the teaching load]. That's a lot of time together, just me. From what I've seen in other schools, other [schools with specialist programs], it really works well to have a team-teaching situation with two teachers there that the kids can bounce off. If I was going to make a suggestion to them to what to do next is make sure of the mentoring end and put a new teacher with an experienced teacher to team teach from day one... [asked if "was that person assigned to you or do you get to choose people?"] No, they were assigned to me mainly because that was [an experienced] person who had a lot of experience and was very good at what they did. It's just that the mentoring didn't happen.

When Edward was reflecting on his mentoring at other schools and his overall experiences across different schools he stated,

At [a second school] school, I wasn't included on the new educator list, email list. It wasn't again until May that someone said, "How long have you been teaching?" I said, "It's my 2nd year." "How come you haven't been going to the new educator meeting?" I'm like, "What new educator meeting?" They're like, "Well, do you have mentor?" I'm like, "No." They said, "Well you're working with this person pretty closely so they can be your mentor."

They [the assigned mentor] said, "Oh, I didn't really want to be a mentor this year..." because they were teaching a few different things, doing some new [out of their teaching area] stuff and that sort of thing and wanted to really concentrate on their own stuff. The mentoring there was ineffective as well because of that-- so between February when we started and September, [they] only came into my classroom once.

My executive came in twice in that time and one of the deputies came in once for 20 minutes. At the end of that 20 minutes, she got up and told the class that they were being really disrespectful and being rude. Basically, had to a big rant at them and then walked out. Leaving me to pick up after all of that. ...[in a semester block] I had four visits from people observing me teach. Again, it's ineffective. It doesn't help a new educator to ground themselves and to be able to learn from more experienced teachers when nobody can see

what you're doing. In the September just before the end of third term, there was an incident in the classroom...

It had been building up and I had voiced concerns about some of the things that were being said to me as a male teacher. That culminated one day in [a specific incident] and I then stopped teaching basically for a year. Went out on a leave ... and only went back to teaching [the following year]. I basically had a year off of teaching... It was ... a really horrible exit. I guess part of that was clouded by a friend from South Australia, who'd been a teacher, who had had a similar thing happen to him in one of the schools he was at where he had a female student stalk him. Somehow, he moved house, changed his phone numbers, everything and she still managed to find where he was which he still doesn't know how she did that. The school and the department in South Australia didn't support him in that either. He was just left to deal with it on his own and he left teaching permanently.

With all of this at the back of my mind, the day that the incident happened I managed to catch my deputy in the corridor and told her what had happened. She said, "Oh, just put it in Maze [online data collection program] and tell your executive on Monday," because my executive wasn't there that day. In fact, my executive had been away for a week and so on the Monday-- I didn't put it into Maze that afternoon because I was just too shaken up.

I came in on Monday and in my free lessons put it into Maze and wasn't actually able to catch up with my executive because, having been on leave, they had a lot of stuff to do as well and it just never happened.

There was no follow up from the deputy on the Monday. How are you going? Have you been able to catch up bla bla bla. When I went to a meeting, during the time that I was on leave, just following up, [the Deputy] said she didn't even remember me telling her the story in the first place. Yes, it was just horrible.

Edward also reflected on his workload and ability to plan. In his first placement he was offered a long-term contract, in a high school, to teach straight out of university, and was eager to prepare for his new role over the December - January holidays between his graduation and starting in his new position. However, he stated the following.

I went in and signed the contracts the last day of the previous year and was asking questions like, "Can you give me some stuff to work on? Can I prepare over the holidays?" They're like, "No, just chill out of the holidays, you'll be good, we'll get you going when we get back to school. The first week or so is just get to know your stuff anyway and all that type of thing." That's not helpful. For a new educator that just made me worry because it was always in the back of my mind, not knowing what I was actually going to be doing... Then I left that school at the end of my first year of teaching and went to another school and was told the same thing at the end of the year before I started there. "Oh don't worry. We've got a lot of set up. Just come in day one. We'll sort you out." Which again didn't really happen. From day one that made life difficult as far as me being sure of what I was doing in the classroom and it was my first time in [teaching a different subject area].

Edward also raised concerns with administrative issues he had in his career, and further issues he had around mentoring and support from his supervisors, which included the points below.

So, they did [meet with me] mid-year when my probation was supposed to be over. There was no mentor support when my probation was supposed to be over. I was supposed to have a meeting with my exec. I found out that morning that the deputy would also be there and at that meeting they said they wanted to extend my probation because they didn't think that I was ready to be offered that. That I needed more help. All of this stuff and I obviously was upset about that because there had been nothing before that because no one had been in the classroom. You can't train someone in the way that you want them to teach if you are not observing them and effectively mentoring them. Yes, I guess that's all a very long story to say the mentoring needs to be fixed across the system because it's so ad hoc. To contrast that, when I came back to teaching, having fought for 12 months to not go back to the same school... [they] the whole time and still today, want me to go back to the same school. It's only through the support of the union, that over that 12 months, that I have been able to-- that I'm even still in teaching, because if the directorate had their way, I would have been back at the other school day

one last year, having had no restorative conversations, no anything, no contact from the school.

He reported that he had to fight, through the union, to be transferred to a school which was advertising a vacancy and which he wanted to work at. He reported that this was a very difficult process when he was dealing with HR.

I wanted to contrast with that, my experience over the last term... when I came back into teaching. Actually, I had a school that had a position for me that I could have filled at the start of the year, that both myself and the union asked the Directorate to place me [in]. They advertised for this position, they ended up filling it from a person that had been doing relief work for them at this school and even though I had requested [to be placed in the position]. I'd seen the Ad and requested that I be placed in that position as my return to work. That was-- I didn't even get a reply to that request...

Edward was eventually placed in a new position and he had positive experiences with many of his classes and with his supervisors at this school.

I ended up finally the week before term three again at a different school in [specific] area and they were just so supportive, the execs there were just fantastic.

I had a Year 10 and they were doing some project stuff for their last major assignment for the year really, and I had booked a lab at one stage and had about half the class just mucking round and I went spoke to my exec and she said, "Well, the next two times you have that class, we'll just split them in half, and the half that want to work you can take them to the lab and the other half I'll do the other stuff with in the classroom."

All the way through last term, the two execs that I was working with on, because I was doing [second subject area], so those two execs worked with me really closely to help me in that sort of situation, to come into the classroom, they did observations, they both observed classes, they had other people, other senior staff observe classes with me and give feedback and yes. It was a complete contrast to what I had had in the other two schools.

I think it's intent. That, to effectively mentor someone, you have to be of a mind that that's what you are doing, that is the part of your role to build

peoples capacities. And I feel like in my first two jobs that there was an expectation that as a 40 something year old guy, that I had it all, that I would be able to just walk into a classroom and do it. Whereas, we know from other research that it takes up-to eight years for a new teacher to become proficient. Yet here I was, walking into classrooms with no army supporting me, it was like one soldier walking out into the battlefield against somebody else's army and turning around and everyone else has stepped back...

[When asked if he was remaining at that school he responded] What I've been told is that they have, they have, that I'm surplus to requirements at that school, but that they are keeping me on for, the first six months of this year and so that's where we are at, at this age... The advice that I've had is that, when you're on leave, ... your leave is still accruing, all of the normal things are still happening and as a part of that process, our understanding is that my probation period has just lapsed. There hasn't actually been a final probation report, but their understanding is that that has, that I'm no longer on probation... even within that six months if something else comes up they could shift me. Yes, at this stage that's where I will be and probably only teaching [second subject area] at this stage.

Edward was, at the time of the interview, considering leaving teaching after negative experiences with students which he felt were consistently mismanaged. In the follow up email he said that he had moved schools, found a position with a supervisor he respected and was experiencing far less student behaviour issues in his new role.

I've actually have applied, I have been applying for other positions outside of teaching... [asked if he would leave if the applications were successful] Yes, I would potentially step out of teaching at least for a while. My experience with teaching has brought ramifications because my wife actually last year just finished her teaching degree and she's got a position this year. She's still waiting for her paperwork to come through from uni but she's got a position in the Catholic system this year and was really reticent to go into teaching in the Directorate having seen my experience and the way that I've been treated by HR.

Although she did talk to a couple of the public schools in that area, she's gone into the Catholic system. What we're hoping that that's a better experience for her than I've had.

For me staying in teaching is to a large extent still about the reasons why I did the Grad Dip [graduate teaching qualification] to start with, which was finding a stable job that where we could support the kids through school. My aim, I have never worked anywhere long enough to have long service leave. One of my aims going into teaching was to stay long enough to see my seven years roll around.

I don't know if that will still happen or not but it's still is there in the back of my mind that if I can get through this difficult period that I-- I do enjoy being in the classroom and I do enjoy being able to transfer that knowledge.

Another aspect of what makes me hesitate going back to school is having seen three lots of Year 10s now go through is the feeling that it's different to when I was in school in that with Canberra College system, Year 10 is a really difficult year for teachers. Students almost from the day that they get their college confirmation, switch off. So, many of them once they get that letter saying that they've been accepted to a college are like, " Right on to the next thing I'm done with my school." That makes life really difficult for a teacher.

I understand that system and I appreciate that it is-- it overall it is a good system, but it makes Year 10 a really complex year for teachers when students just switch off and become actually antagonistic towards the teachers. All of the teachers, it doesn't matter even their favourite teachers have issues with them over that last six months of Year 10.

That feeling that there's no discipline that works. That they ignore all of the contract stuff that is part of the discipline process. They truant a lot more. Even kids who haven't been truanters in the first three and a half years of high school suddenly stop turning up to classes. You're like, "Dude, what are you doing? This is not you."

### **5.3.1.3.        *Participant 3: Sally***

Sally was a teacher in her 60's who had been teaching for over 30 years in schools across the world. She described the length of her career by stating, "I started



teaching in [1970's]... But of course, I haven't taught continuously. I had two and a half years overseas. I had a year and a bit out, then I had babies. I took long service leave, or parenting leave.”

She originally chose teaching when she was younger, reporting,

I wanted to be a teacher when I was a kid at high school. Then I decided I'd like to give pharmacy a go. In [foreign country] at that time, you could do a Bachelor of Pharmacy at [specific location]. There are only 25 places, and it was a four-year degree. Or you could go to the CIT equivalent in [foreign country]. That course was focused on being a shop keeper, I thought. ... I did my first year at [name removed] University because you could do the first year. Then the second year, I went to [different university]. In that year, I realised, I guess the idealism had washed away. I had this idea that I would work beside the doctor in the hospital setting and maximise people's outcomes with drugs rather than count pills in the pharmacy. I guess I realised that it wasn't going to be like that. ... the rose-coloured glasses had changed. So, I decided I wanted to go into teaching.

When I got the telegram offering me the one in 25 place, that I was going to turn down, my parents were very distraught, but I'm glad I did. I went into teaching and I've had a good time. Some years are better than others. Some classes are better than others. Certainly, I'm glad I had little experience outside of teaching. When I came home, I tried the corporate world and realised it wasn't all that it's cracked up to be. Maybe I tried the wrong path of the corporate world too.

She had a rich and varied teaching career and spoke about her experiences in different educational settings in Australia and Internationally.

I taught for two years at [foreign country] High School. Then I went overseas. I worked in a pub in [European country] for six or eight weeks. Then I went to South Africa. It was very difficult because I was an [outsider]. I worked for six months in a school, a white boy's school, but it was a public school. That was a bit of a different experience because of the apartheid stuff. ... Then I went back to [foreign country], and I thought if I didn't have an experience outside of teaching, I'd just settle in and I'd be quite happy again because I quite liked teaching. I worked for [out of teaching company]. ... It

was a very interesting time, and I discovered a lot [but] I realised I'd be much happier teaching.

I went back teaching. Then I came here [to Australia] to marry my husband who I had met while I was traveling. I've been here ever since. I am happy teaching. I enjoy teaching. I do have those moments [positive]. I also have those moments that I think, "Ah, what am I doing this for?" But that's any job, I sort of feel, you have that.

When discussing how she has seen the transfer process operate across her career, Sally reported,

What happened at [specific ACT college], I was asked to move on because their numbers were falling. The two newest members of staff were asked to move on. I did discuss that with the union, and I decided in the end if I had been selected to go, then I didn't want to work at a place that didn't want me. I was very fortunate to get a job at [current college], and I've been very happy there.

I object to the five-year rotation business.

I think my Principal does a really good job. He spends [time], he comes and watches. In the fifth year, he came and watched a class of mine. Then he interviewed me. Then he made a decision [about staffing, contracts and transferring teachers to other schools]. In a big school with over a thousand, I reckon that's two weeks full-time work watching people and interviewing them... I was given a three-year extension.

She was committed to staying in teaching until retirement and had enjoyed teaching, across college and high school settings, despite some challenging school placements.

The school I went back to was very, very difficult. [New Zealand] College was very difficult. Predominantly, large proportion of Polynesian kids. It was difficult, yes. But I survived.

[when asked what made it difficult] Behaviour management. I had a 13 year old in my class. When I complained to the behaviour management [specialist teachers] about her, they said, "You've got to relax [Sally]. Remember she earns more money than you do as a night club singer. She's got a young baby

at home." Because she was a 13 year old married mother. "You've got to let go and be more understanding." That sort of thing. There were lots of behaviour issues, bad behaviour issues.

I don't think at that time drugs were an issue. If they were, I didn't know. We certainly weren't talking in school about it. I don't know that that sort of thing was an issue. But they didn't want to learn. They didn't want to do science and maths. Certainly not with silly, old Sally.

[when asked if she has behaviour issues in her current position] Remember, now I teach year 11 and 12.

Although I have a [lower level] class where behaviour management is important, I also have a [top level] class. I've been getting them to do [calming activity].

This year, in fact last year, I did it with [the class] and one of the girls in my [lower level] class the previous year had said to me as she walked out of my last class, "Sally, I'll never forget [calming activity]." I said, "Great. I made it." She mightn't be any good at maths, but I taught her something.

Last year was quite interesting. I had a student in my year 12 [top level] class. Now some of those kids I had taught the previous year, so they probably had seen [calming activity], but there were a couple of new kids. They were so willing to do that compared to the [lower level]. In fact, one boy after a couple of months, one boy got up at the beginning of the lesson in [lower level class], and said, "Sally, I'd just like to say that we don't want to do this breathing stuff. Okay. We just want to get on and do the work." Which was a lie because they didn't want to get on and do anything. I said, "Okay, Edward [name changed]. Thank you very much for telling me." He was a kid from one of the other [support style] programs in the school. I said, "Thank you very much. You did that very nicely and very politely, but too bad. We're going to breathe at the beginning of the [lesson]..." All I was doing with them was three deep breaths, and then sit down and work.

In the end, he moved on out of the class. ... In the end, I gave up the breathing with the [lower level class], because it was just too much of a fight. There's [only] so many fights you're willing to take on and so many you're not. I thought it was funny at the end, the final exam for the year 12s, they're all in

this big room with all the other kids. My class stands up and says, "Okay, [calming activity]."

I was really chuffed that they did that because I didn't tell them to do it. It wasn't initiated by me. It was lovely. Those are the sorts of things that are real highlights in teaching.

I've been in a college since 2001. There were some lovely moments at high school, and I just perhaps can't remember them really. But of course, there are also some real [difficult classes in high school]. I think it [high school] is very different. In fact, I don't know many people that I've worked with a long time who are still teaching. A lot of my friends have retired, but I think high school is much, much more difficult. Because we have a real engagement problem.

[when reflecting later on working with students with behavioural and/or engagement issues] That's why I do [calming activity] and those sorts of things. I talk about, "Don't come to the test tired. It's like being drunk. It's like being 0.05. You wouldn't come alcohol affected to my math test, would you?"

Usually when there are incidents, your peers support you.

I go in and after my [lower level] class, and say, "Oh, God. We're still doing these things." "They're still on their phones instead of doing some work." The other say, "Oh, yeah. Don't worry. It's all right, Sally. It's okay. It's okay. It's like that in our class too." Most teachers do, [but] some have rose coloured spectacles on. I think of one particular teacher who says, "Oh, no. They're working really hard." When I walk past that room, I know what they're really working hard on. I don't go in and say, "Put away Facebook... Whatever. YouTube. Instagram. Whatever. Way past Facebook. Put that all away and do the work." I don't go in and harass, but that teacher's blissful ignorant. It's all lovely.

[when talking about people who did not feel supported with difficult classes] That's not teaching. That's behaviour management.

If they were given a class that they could actually teach, they might have actually enjoyed it. Because it is a people job. Although, saying all that, if one of my children told me that they were going to go teaching, I would ask them to think very seriously because it's very challenging. Increasingly, we're

dealing with more and more challenging situations. When I was the AST coordinator, the number of kids who had serious mental health issues was staggering. It amazed me. I know that years ago, too bad if you had a mental health issue. You either quit school or you got on with it. Things have changed dramatically [now] that we are dealing with those sorts of things. We have to cater for all [student issues] much more, I think, than we used to. Kids come from some pretty awful backgrounds. Thank goodness I don't know about it most of the time. ... I have a nice middle-class white upbringing with no real [issues], my husband doesn't beat me, doesn't come home drunk. All those things. I go to school thinking they're all like that [with positive home lives]. No, they are not all like that.

She has noticed a decrease in the expectations for students, giving an example of being told to pass a college student (by her school leaders) despite them not having achieved what she perceived was a satisfactory level of work or outcomes in her class.

[when discussing engagement in college classes] Certainly not in the [top level] class. There's no problem. Of course, I'm told from the higher ups, that it's my job to engage them. Well, until we say that this is a fail, getting seven percent on a test is a fail, until we say those sorts of things, kids are not going to step up. At college, attending, not doing any work in class, but attending, being there avoids [fail due do non-attendance] grading as long as you do the assessment. Even if it's terrible. I have over the years gone for a non-genuine attempt because I think if you get seven percent, it indicates that you really haven't made a genuine attempt at this. You haven't engaged in the class with it. [when asked "they can get a Year 12 Certificate with?"] With five Es... I don't approve of it. ... I now write on reports, "Stacey, unfortunately, in all four of your assessment items this semester, you have scored below 15%. This does not indicate even a basic understanding of the material covered." [when asked if she was allowed to write these statements] It's a statement of fact... Many years ago, I wrote on a kid's report at [specific] College, "This was a dismal result". He was the one who got seven percent. Anyway, his father rang me and said I traumatised his child, and it was totally inappropriate. I said, "Do you know what he got?" He said, "No. That doesn't

matter." I said, "Oh, okay." I thought well, I'm never going to write your result was dismal, I'm going to write seven percent. Because I think seven percent is dismal after a semester's worth of work.

It's absolutely they're not trying because we have double line specialist, single line specialist. We have methods. We have apps. Those are all tertiary classes. Then we have essentials. We'll still calculating percentages and all those sorts of things. Every kid could get a C in essential maths. There'd be no kid who couldn't get at least a C, I think.

I actually think engagement is an issue. I think if we said, "Kids fail," I think some of them would step up to pass. I have discussed that with the BSSS. In fact, a few years ago, [a section] on the BSSS manual talks about participation in the class. It says that to be marked present, you have to have attended and participated. I wanted to mark kids absent who didn't bring a pen and did no work in class. However, I was told by my then Principal that was not what it meant.

You know, I have this half time rule. That if you come late to class after half the lesson, I round [up] because I'm a math teacher and do rounding, and I mark you absent. They don't like that. So, they go up to student services and get it changed. "She won't mark me present and I'm there."

Remember that if we take these things on, then the BSSS doesn't back you up. And if the BSSS doesn't back you up, then it's no go. We get notes saying, "Stacey is absent with my knowledge." You might have 40 explained absents. That is mummy and daddy said you were at home.

If you have medical certificates saying you're unable to attend, I don't mind that you get status. However, if you're just cannot get it together, and your mummy and daddy are happy to sign off, I do not think that's allowing the kid to take responsibility. I know that if we don't accept those, then the parents can go to the department and the Minister of Education and say, "They couldn't come to school because they weren't happy." Then they get marked present, and if they have done 70% of the assessment tasks- [when asked "even if it's not a pass grade [on the tasks completed]"]. That's right. 70%. Then they can get an E or whatever grade. But of course, that's the worst-case scenario, Stacey. There are some lovely kids who give it their best shot. I really enjoy working with those kids who are willing to give it their

best shot. They're challenging and exciting, and a lot of them are a lot smarter than me... And a lot more agile. I might be more experienced in maths, but they have more agile minds. They're great fun. They are really good fun to work with.

[asked if she has choice over which mathematics courses she gets to teach] I guess I could go to my level 2 [SLC / Executive teacher] and put a request in, but I don't approve of that. I think if you're not willing to teach the full range...

She has been in the ACT Education setting for over 15 years and is hoping to remain teaching in her current position where she is now part time at a college. Sally has enjoyed her teaching experiences and has seen changes in the Educational environment that she has felt improved outcomes for students as well as decreased them.

In regard to workload Sally stated that she did not find her workload excessive in her part time position but did not think that she would find this to be the case if she was working full time.

I've been very fortunate. When I returned from maternity leave, I was [part time], and I used to do some casual work when it suited me. But not much that first year when both kids were in primary school ... Then the next year, I was [part time], and again, I did [relief] sometimes, I think both kids were at school then. In [1990's], my husband was made redundant from the public service, so I wanted to go full-time. I did a bit more work, in 1997, I was full-time. I would have probably gone to full-time by then anyway. Then in 2010, I was [part time]. I thought it would be nice to think about retirement and what I wanted to do. Then I was full-time the next year because it just suited the school and suited me. Then I've been, this is my third year as 0.6 now. That works quite well. It's very different to teaching full-time [described specific job-sharing arrangement with another teacher].

Due to a family issue Sally took leave and then returned at full time. She said, That was interesting because I was suddenly full-time again. I'm happy to be [part time], and I'd like to continue to be [part time] because it means that

your nights and weekends are not taken up with preparation and exotic assignments for the specialist kids. Marking [detailed] answers that they come up with.

She reflected on her workload when she was full time and said, I put in [effort, but] ... there is a colleague at work. He's a young man. I think he's lazy actually. He turns up at school in the morning and never takes work home. Occasionally I think he does. I don't think I could do that. Also, I'm very aware, as a teacher, you do a lot of thinking. I'm in the shower thinking about exotic assignments. I read something and I think, "Oh, that would work," and that sort of thing. So, it's not necessarily sitting at a desk typing or anything. You're doing a lot of thinking as a teacher that is outside school hours. I certainly can't imagine doing 8:30-5:00 each day and getting my work done. [when asked whether long hours were expected and normal in teaching] I think that is the norm... that's just the way it is... And always has been.

Sally reported that one factor she saw as contributing to staff attrition was the lack of stable positions in the college system. She reported that the student numbers at colleges go up and down very quickly so teachers can lose work at short notice. She proposed that this could be why they have a large number of contract staff in these positions. She also said that the non-continuation of contracts and the forced transfer process (for permanent teachers) was managed very poorly. Sally reflected on the overall transfer process as she objects to the 5-year rotation process that happens in the ACT. She reported that, depending on what placement number (first, second, third) teachers were up to, they had to transfer to a new school after three, five or eight years. In her school experience she had seen this process not managed well and for some staff she had worked with the need to move to a new school was a major factor in them deciding to leave teaching.

So next year, I'll go through the same process again, unless there's a different principal who does it differently. I know from the system there are principals doing it different. I object to that whole idea of not having control over your professional pathway... After five years, we need to move or ask for our job to stay in a particular place, because of the system of rotation.



I think my Principal is doing a good job, a better job than many other Principals are doing. Certainly, [he] came into my classroom, and he sent me immediate feedback about what had gone on. I thought that was very good.

[first school in the ACT] got rid of two maths teachers, they had too many teachers. There were 10 staff moved on that year because in [the first school in the ACT] enrolment goes up and down dramatically. I'm not quite sure why, but it does. That means that sometimes a lot of teachers are asked to find alternative jobs. It [is] very difficult to do that. Very, very difficult. I'm not sure [of] the best way [to tell teachers that they have to move schools], but it certainly wasn't done the best way at the time. The poor office lady, at 3:00 on Friday, put letters in pigeonholes and we were all standing around waiting to see who would get the letters.

[When asked if that happened late in the school year] No. No. No. Earlier in the year so we could apply in what was the [transfer] round.

It doesn't happen like that anymore.

If the enrolment fell dramatically, and you needed to get rid of teachers, somehow you would have to decide, as the Principal, who is going. Not everybody [can stay], it's too expensive in terms of points and accountability, and money, and school-based management to have more teachers than you need. You do have to make hard decisions, but that's why they get paid the big money. I'm sorry but that's what they have to do, hard as it might be.

I don't know the best way to go about it, but certainly it's not to send the poor office lady with ten letters to put in pigeonholes... On a Friday afternoon. I know doing it on a Friday afternoon means you can go home and kick the cat, and shout at the dog, and frighten your husband, and it does remove it from the schools. I think perhaps that's a good idea, but I don't know how to do it [better]. If it's one person, you go up and tell them. But I don't know how you do when it's a big number.

It's only the permanent members of staff that are treated like that because contract people are just not renewed. They know they're not going to be renewed anyway. It's only the permanent members of staff that are being moved on.

In recent years she has noticed a major shift in teaching, not in the student behaviours, but more in the attitude of the students, schools and parents around academic expectations. She retold a story,

I was at moderation, not last moderation day, the moderation day before, so it was March last year. A private school teacher told me this story. One of his colleagues was concerned because a kid had not done the assignment and was concerned about the kid not doing homework. The teacher rang the parent and said, "Freddy isn't doing his homework." The parent said, "That's your job. Do I tell you when he doesn't clear the table?" I'm not sure that you always get the greatest support you could from parents when you're in a private school either.

At college level, it is definitely [an issue]. I actually think that's one of the things that parents need to realise. You can't keep supporting your kids to do the wrong thing. It's time to toughen up.

Yeah, I think that's what we need to be doing. Teaching them to manage their problems. If you're not frightened to go to a test, there's something wrong with you. You need to be nervous because it shows you care.

Overall, Sally had chosen to remain in teaching for a long-term career, she found the work challenging but flexible and her experiences in seeing student succeed in her classes was something that was a positive to her. She intends to remain teaching until she retires.

#### **5.3.1.4. Participant 4: Veronica**

Veronica (late 30's) was a permanent college teacher who had moved to part time hours to allow her to balance her work and home life in various ways. She was a very experienced educator (15+ years teaching) who was passionate about teaching and had always wanted to be a teacher. She had very positive teaching experiences overseas and was eager to teach in the ACT, however, her experiences in this setting have not always matched her expectations from overseas. She was, at the time of the interview, intending to remain in the profession but she was frustrated by issues that she felt wouldn't be acceptable in any other workplace and a lack of recognition of her skills and experience.

Veronica reflected on her decision to become a teacher by saying, I dressed my sister, there's six years between her and I, so I used to dress her in my school uniform and make her do worksheets. I would fret, and I would sit her in her highchair and make her do all these worksheets. Probably, this idea of being a teacher, but I absolutely refused to be a teacher. Everyone keeps saying, "I think you'd be a great teacher." "No, no, no. I pushed it all away."

I did my honours in [first subject area], took it and went overseas. Actually, that's where my teaching started. I'm an [specialist] teacher, I worked for [resource writing company]. I did curriculum resources modifying University of Cambridge press stuff for an agent setting, doing a lot of that sort of thing, then got into emergency education. I worked with UNICEF helping set up schools and doing trauma education for [for countries after catastrophes], and those types of things.

That was my education background, and doing that fulltime and really working with teachers, doing all the teacher training. Then in 2010, I came back to Australia... and started working here. Just had the wind totally knock at me. I think those two experiences, that's really shaped how I look at teaching, is that I have always thought everything I've done has been as a teacher in education, and I think no, here it's not.

One of the major experiences that Veronica reported as negative in teaching was a perceived lack of recognition of the skills, she, and others, had bought in from outside teaching.

Just recently, I had shenanigans with another teacher in terms of marking. When we moderated, all my As were turned to Ds and my Ds got turned to Bs. It has come on the back of some really passive-aggressive bullshit for about a year. At that point I was just like, "Uh," and then my school leader said, "Well, I think the problem is that you're not really an [first subject area] teacher." I have a degree in [first subject area] and I've always taught [first subject area], and actually, four years of a PhD in [first subject area], and taught [first subject area] at uni. I think actually I'm an [first subject area] teacher.

He had no idea, no idea of my background. I don't make any fuss about my background, but it was just no interest whatsoever. I think even at that point some of my executive teachers didn't know what my history was, and they are just not interested. It is, "You worked at this school, and then you worked at this school," that is it, and the fact that I've gone to [part time], I think they found that just really fancy.

Veronica also spoke about what she perceived as a lack of recognition both inside and outside of teaching.

If you look at all the articles on education in *The Canberra Times*, like where are the ones from the department that say that teachers are doing this, teachers are doing that. How fantastic. There'll be something around Public Education Awards, but I don't think that they would know who any of those people were. There was a press release sent. There's nothing there that says— [that teachers are doing a good job].

If you looked at another entity, if you looked at [Department of] Defence, "Well, our guys are fantastic. We have all this technology. We are doing these things in Afghanistan, and here, and here, and here. We can only do that because of these soldiers who are doing awesome work in really difficult circumstances. Who we remunerating for their hardship, who we are doing all of these things. They're doing that, which is fantastic. I don't have a question mark or two over [laughs] their outcomes and what they're actually doing for the Afghani children, but we're doing it for our kids."

I'm not getting any hardship, but I'm not getting the nice stories and the thank you's and the, "We understand that," either. People get aid, it would be same thing. People who are out there doing that, fantastic. People put out emergency services, the people who are out there, thank you for doing that. Teachers just don't get that, yeah. Teachers are the ones that you can blame for whatever you need, "They are all whining, they are all X, Y, Z"

I think that at the end, you look around and think, "Why would I stay here for \$75,000 when I can literally walk across the street for \$125,000?"

Veronica spoke of feeling a lack of recognition from her employer when she started a project that gained recognition throughout Australia and overseas. She said

that there was no avenue to recognise the other avenues of growth that experienced teachers can progress through. When asked if she knew of other pathways for experienced teachers she said,

Not really, no. No, I don't think there is, because that's the lead teacher practice job. I do have a gorgeous friend who has one of those jobs [SLC Professional Practice – a specialist role created within ACT Education], which she's killing herself to just be an exec but no one really knows what that job is. The amount of work you have to do to, to get it with all these portfolios and shenanigans, which I think is great but then why? You teach like one line, two lines less to go and watch other teachers. Anyone know what that what that job is.

Most of Veronica's peers from university are no longer teaching. Many are still in an educational setting, but not teaching.

When I look at the people who I started teaching with in the ACT because I was older and had other experience, I probably found other teachers who were older and had other experiences as well, none of them are teaching. Out of a group of probably six or seven, not a single one of them is still teaching in a public school in Canberra now. All teaching in other ways, so working at museums, galleries, working in sports education. Working in education, they're still great teachers, they're still passionate teachers, but not in a classroom. I think that is a really key thing. When I look at people leaving, I really worry that it's people with a depth of experience, with broad experience, who also know what the world is a bit like and say, "Woah, this isn't it." I think that, that frustration and disrespect, and that sort of stuff just grinds over time.

If I look at other jobs I've had, people would say, "Okay, this is your first time in Pakistan. I'm going to mentor you and help you with the Pakistani culture and context and what you need to do, but I recognise that you have a background in trauma education, amazing. I'm going to leverage that and we will get these great results. I'll take your this bit and you take my that bit." Whereas, I feel that does not happen.

It is, "I've been in a classroom for 5 years, 10 years, 20 years, 25 years, this is how it works." We don't take any of those other experiences, and we're not actually interested in any of those. This is how it's done.

Another woman I started working with was a science teacher who had a background in research science, had a PhD in science, and super-passionate about being a science communicator, not teaching anymore. I think actually there were things that she needed for a classroom that needed to be done, and there are things that the school and the classroom and the directorate should have plundered from her. Especially if we're saying our big issue is STEM. Yes. I've been here for this long, so I know, as opposed to, "You don't know." I kind of know about people and I think that that's a really tricky one, too. I think there's also not a very mature approach to workload, to behaviour, to inter-staff relationships. So, I think in that way there seems to be a lot of-- You deal with the students in the same way that you deal with the teachers. So, this is the workload, and this is what it is and if you can't do it then you're not professional, you've got this due date, you've got this thing. This is just how it is, and if you want to do something else on the weekend you're not committed. Or if you've got a problem with this person then you need to work it out, or if you've got an issue with a class, I don't have an issue with that student. It's you again. I think actually that that's how you talk to the kids, not how you talk to a [mid 30]-year-old woman who may have dealt with people before.

The transition process was something that Veronica spoke about; in that she was planning on remaining in the teaching profession but would leave if she had to move to a different school with challenging student behaviours. She would not want to teach in a high school setting again, especially one with difficult student behaviours.

So, one of my other little bugbears is the kids swearing at you. It's just ridiculous. I used to think that one of the things that we could all do as just a union movement. Was that everyone had a prepaid mobile phone that was one for school that the union provided, and you used the phone whoever was on break, got it, rang an extension in the department and just said, "Fuck you, fucking cunt," and hung up. You just do that, everybody everywhere and then

say, "How does that effect your health and your well-being?" Because you know what, I don't think it's okay. Also, I think that maybe we could just turn the air-con off in the department for just two, three weeks... Because I think all those little things just get to a point where you say "Oh god, not only do I have all this education that you aren't even looking at, you want me just to stand there and be super nice while someone calls me a fucking cunt in a 43 degree room."

Veronica's concerns around student behaviours were also linked to how schools and policy makers respond to student behaviours.

I think schools are just really scared of parents, really scared of departments. I think principals are in this really shit position. I don't think that they even really know what their jobs are. What are they? Are they a CEO because they're not then in management actually? They're being told they're kind of CEOs, but do they have those skills? How do you get that job? What is your life and strength really? Where is that respect coming from? I think most of us feel that we probably would be thrown under a bus any day to make a parent happy.

I've seeing it happening with other people and seeing-- Yes, I think ultimately that-- I've worked at two schools now with just really, really weak leadership teams. I think when that happens, they have to sort of [acquiesce] to parents to wherever that comes from, and teachers are your easiest. I think we're sort of this resource that they can—you know. It's an expensive number on a budget sheet. If we can get a cheaper one, we can do that. There are heaps of teachers lining up to come in. So, if you're not respecting quality and that. Then that teacher becomes an expensive troublemaker. Let's get rid of that [the difficult teacher].

Veronica reported that she enjoys teaching college students, where she gets positive feedback from her students as she gets them to consider new things and sees them question the world.

Those kids [college students in her current classes] are such a delight, and there is not a chance I wouldn't leave teaching, if I was moved to another college or to a high school. Because I'm not going to have that again. [When

asked if other colleges have behaviour issues] I think yes, they are reports back from other colleges that they get a bit of that. That's definitely, I think, what makes me stay and do the [part time load] is the kids that I have. So, I teach [first and second subject areas] and I think sometimes that I am the first person to really tell them about the civil rights and how that came about and they get into those conversations and that's a really great responsibility to have. Then they come back with, "Well we're gonna fix it because we would just do this this and this." I'm like, "Yes, you do that because I'm pretty sure we thought we were going to fix it in 1996 and we didn't." So, like passing the baton, here we go...

I think that's what teaching is, and I love the conversations I have with my team. That's fantastic and for that I will do the marking. If I had to deal with any of the other stuff, or if I had to do that full time, no way.

As the interview progressed Veronica spoke of the number of hours, she, and those around her, were putting into teaching.

[when asked if she thought workload contributes to attrition] It does because you think, "I am putting my family, and my friends, and my fellas, and all of those things aside to do this", and there is no respect for that at all. The danger of that is, and that gets into the whole workload conversation; but if you meet that point, it moves to there, and if you meet to that point it just moves. I think that people have done that for years. So now our problem is-- Actually, you just need people to be really, really bolshie and to say "No, we do nothing on the weekend, and we do nothing after 5:30." [when asked how that would be taken] I think you would just be shredded. You would absolutely be shredded. I would have no problem saying, "if you want me to do this 8:30-5:00, and you're going to give me that lunch break, and you're going to do all of those things, okay I'll give you some of my holiday time." If you're not going to give me all of those things, then I am going to take some my holiday time, but I'm not going to-- I think there has to be, 'you don't take things home'. I think there has to be at some point.

It just keeps pushing. I think there's a few of those things that I think if you come from another background, it's like you're the Frog that gets in the pot and says, "Uh, it's a bit toasty." Whereas others have just let that build, and



build, and build, and I know that they're overworked. They know that there's also, they know that things are different to five years ago, but I think that they don't know how much.

She later spoke that she felt the workload was increasing,

I think it's all of it. I think the workload is really going up, because you know, this idea of everything has to be these amazing project based blah blahs.

Instead of just say one thing. Everything has to be this outrageously based in reality, argh. Those things just take so much time to do.

For fuck's sake, like, "How does you painting a picture of Ophelia in a bath, in a neo-noir context demonstrate to me that you understood the play?" Is painting really your skill? It's not. Go away from that and just write me an essay." Do a creative story. We have this crazy sort of fad sport. Before it would have been you write an essay. The next thing we do a piece of creative writing, you do some textual analysis. You show me some related text that demonstrates that. That's pretty rich and go for it, but now this other crazy thing has to go.

The kids really demand now to be entertained, and that makes it outrageously exhausting as well, and I think that they also want everything to come to them. Then they have a huge amount of support from family and community that says, "Yes, your teacher should have taught you that. Your teacher should have given you that. Your teacher should have provided that." It's, "No, no you've got Google. You've got a library system, you've got all these things, you need to go and use that." We had to use that. I'm not giving you everything."

Then there'll be a whole lot of, "My kids didn't do this, because, compared to the person over this school who did get this. So why didn't my kid get this?" I think that there is a lot more of demands, and pressure and those sort of things on teachers.

Veronica also spoke at length of her, and others, decision to move to part time working hours. For her, it was to allow her to explore her other business options, but she had seen other teachers dropping their hours due to workload issues. She reflected on the whole process of moving to part time.

It was a personal slight to them [requesting to go part time] that perhaps I wasn't really good enough, or not committed. I had that told to me, that, "You're not committed because you're doing this and pursuing other things." I have an [education based] company that I run as well.

I've got other avenues [her business she had started] I'm going to go and explore that. I think I do really like my time in the classroom, but my school wouldn't be flexible. Last year, I went in four days a week to teach a [part time load] alone, and that's stupid.

I was a [part time] and someone was [part time], and they would not facilitate a job share.

And then they would say, "We don't think that there would be beneficial student outcomes for that. Every other bit of research on job share says that, if you have proper communication and a clear outline of what's happening, this actually is better for the kids, because they're getting input from two qualified adults.

Instead, the other guy who's a [part time], he left teaching and that he couldn't-- he had elderly parents to look after, he couldn't do that.

In my office area, the last full-time teacher has got to 0.8 this year. [when asked if the school was okay with this arrangement] You have no job shares. [you need to come in whichever days you have classes scheduled].

The Guardian did a series on it and they said they cannot-- that teachers were the worst at doing that so that so many teachers were going to at least 0.8 and 0.6s. To get paid less just to stay on top of everything. That's where it's this constant, let's keep turning up the heat, turning up the heat, turning up the heat. Let's push it a bit further, a bit further. I think ultimately-- Instead of think it's, "Oh, that person can't handle it or that person's not committed. That person is not--" That is actually where we are losing teachers and teachers who then say, "I'm going to go and work at the War Memorial. I'm going to go and--" Take this job as the education director over here, because I really love teaching. I love what I do and it's like in my area, but I'm not prepared [to take these conditions]-

That's where you probably get people who are older, more experienced, have all this other resources and backgrounds and stuff that should be plundered and who want to—[teach]. The guy who was [part time]. We would have

taught [subjects] together. Previously, he had been an education officer at the War Memorial. As a college, you lost that resource rather than facilitate a job change.

If you're him, it's really offensive, it's really offensive... Not only do you not give a shit about my experience and the relationships, and my knowledge and background, all those things I can leverage. You're not even going to give me enough respect to allow me to-- I'm already taking the pay cut -- to look after my parents.

When I said I was coming back, that I would come back as a 0.4, then I was actually told by my school, we don't need to be flexible because you don't have kids.

[when asked if she had seen others who did have kids with different experiences of going to part time] Yes, I've got a friend just coming back after maternity leave. Her baby is not quite the-- she should be a year in March. He was told-- [laughs] This is where you get people who don't know what their job is. Was told, "Okay, you can come back, but what you do is, you'll come back as a 0.4, and then you apply for a casual teacher number, and then we'll give you casual jobs to fill in that much [1 day] and that way you can come back three days a week." I was like, that's wrong. I'm pretty sure it's illegal, [laughs] and if you know anything about the tax system, that is a very bad deal. [laughs] You're going to get taxed for two jobs, different tax rates, different things. That doesn't make any sense.

One area she felt workload could be cut down was around the preparation of teaching materials, units of work and compliance documents.

I think a lot of it is preparing work. A lot of that sort of stuff. There's a lot of reinventing the wheel, there is a lot of that, and I don't know that that's in our best interests. There are teachers who find that really a sign that you're a great teacher. Whereas I just think-- someone's already done that... one of the things I would do for my company is that all our museums have education departments. They don't have kids there, they have experts in their areas, they have so many prime resources, they have beautiful resources and how many of us think, "Oh yeah I'm doing civil rights, I'll look at the Australian museum of democracy and take their whole freedom rights unit, and teach

that" or "I'm doing whatever the science thing is and I'll just take the question on that" or the art gallery has a huge thing on Australian democracy and federation. No one does that.

I guess if maybe you don't have time to look for things, I think part of the problem in the ACT is here at least we haven't had a proper curriculum. So, I am actually from NSW originally. The idea of a curriculum and a syllabus I'm not offended by, and I'm quite happy as well. I really hate the idea that all of our education would come from a company, but if you have a curriculum and PSN has a book, you use that and then add your own flavour. Just pay for it. If you want me to teach to the test, I think all of us should just put our hands up and say, "Yes. For two years I'm going to do that." then you see it would make my life much easier to see what you get.

I think making rich fantastic resources, takes a huge amount of time. All the assessment takes a huge amount of time just to prepare, then to mark, then through moderation, all those processes. It's just a huge amount of time. I think it is really, really important, but again just more and more time.

I think it is more at college, but there is a system at college. Whereas at high school, I don't know. I used to work at [first high school]. We had [first high school] and [other schools in the same network] and there was moderation occasionally between those schools, and we certainly in [subject area] worked closely together to write units and share units and do that. That is not the norm.

I would imagine a lot of schools don't have that, and that sense of what-- I think the public thinks that too. What is an A at [first high school] and what is an A at [another school]. They're not [different] because we actually do work together. But there is no system for that. That is just something that amazing people like [previous SLC] have made happen.

Veronica spoke about paperwork and compliance type responsibilities that increased her workload. She gave a specific example around using external ICT programs with students.

If you wanted to use that app, their idea was, you would have to give the parents a permission note to use the app, because the kids would have to sign up for an account. With that permission that you would have to give them,

the terms of service, the privacy policy, and you'd have to highlight relevant bits. Then you'd have to give them a summary of that. You would have to say, the information is going to be collected at this point. It's going to be under these laws. It's going to be stored here.

If I wanted my class to use Google docs, it was going to be 1,500 pages of paper per student, until Google updated and then I would have to [give the new version] -- but also that was me giving legal advice. I'm not giving you legal advice. I'm not highlighting what I think is relevant or not relevant in terms of service. I'm not summarising that. I'm not thinking of that. Then, if anyone stored data overseas, that was a huge issue. The thing is, we ended up pushing against it. So, now you just attach the terms of service and you can just have one form that you can agree to for those. That was ludicrous. Like, but it's also totally ridiculous. I think that came out of the department. You think, how can I have respect for that? You just made my life like [more difficult] you wouldn't do it. You would not do that. Why would you think that I should do that? That is also, there are other places that have schools. If you're more experienced, you do get that information and go ignore - versus someone who maybe is new or doesn't want to have that label of not conforming - dump it.

I think there's a whole lot of those things. I think I would want to see the department know, we're their team. We're not their enemies. We're not their adversaries. We are their team. We are their foot soldiers... If we take the example of Defence, they provide them with support, intelligence and updates, and all of those things to help them run. I buy my own markers. [laughter] I mean fuck off.

I think all of those things, they end up saying, we don't respect you. We don't really know what you do. You don't know what we do. We don't want a fuss. I think some, I think some [discrepancies between public and private schools]. I think if you look at those elite schools there, yes there is. If you look at most of those private elite schools, they've got nicer facilities which definitely makes a difference, that absolutely-- If you have air conditioning, then yes, your kids can learn as opposed to somewhere that doesn't, and so that has to--have an impact. I think those things make a difference in terms of teachers in a way, expectations, culture, there's a difference.

And I think that that is just where people just crash and burn, and say, "I am not staying here anymore. I am not." This is just ludicrous. I have a life, I've got other things I need to do.

She also spoke about how she felt about education overall,

People just don't feel respected. There's not really communication -- so no one is working here as a team.

You should have a chief minister and a minister and a department and a heap of teachers who are just pushing like hell together, because what are we going to do? I mean I look at this all time and I think, Trump and Brexit aren't accidents. [laughs] We've got people who can't read.

I don't think it was slowly [moving towards other countries]. We're pretty well there. We're just locking up a heap of people off an island with huge amounts of money, because there's a heap of illiterate white people who think they are going to steal their jobs. They don't fucking have a job. [laughter] You don't have a job. So, you know we are now hitting second and third generation [welfare]. I think Canberra has done appallingly in recognising that we have this underclass and that they have different needs.

If we are not all pushing together, it's a really urgent issue. It's a really urgent issue that you have—you know, its huge amounts of money in an economy. It's huge amounts of social harmony. What do you get? That is why teachers are super important.

I'm actually really happy with the NAPLAN test. I don't have a problem with the test, I don't have a problem with the data. I have a problem with what is done with that data... because no one has actually really explained, what do you do with literacy scores in geographical areas? We're looking at five, 10 years of data now, so what do you do with that data, because we have life skills and stuff from the '80's. We've been doing these tests forever, what do you do with that?

Yes, I think there is-- and I think those are the sorts of things that no one is really looking at, but actually there's a huge picture on this huge, really, urgent social implications to be overcome here. If you just shit on me in the news, then why will anyone listen to me.

Despite some challenging experiences in her teaching career Veronica has ultimately continued in the profession because she has been able to drop her working hours and has had very positive experiences with supervisors and colleagues. When she spoke of her supervisors she reflected,

She is the reason that I am still here. Her [an SLC she had in a high school ] and [another colleague].

Again, just amazing people. , but probably people I would also say [when speaking to that SLC], "Fuck, no, at 5:00 you don't go back. You don't add another job, you don't pick up another thing. You let some people crash and burn." I think there's a lot of that. That happens where you have a system that runs on the goodwill of a lot of people. How you put that on families, and their own health and a whole lot of things at stake just to be shat on.

#### **5.3.1.5. Participant 5: Jackie**

Jackie (mid 40s) was an experienced teacher (15+ years) with extensive experience in Australia and overseas. She had taught across different year levels, in a specialist teaching role across the school, and has had overall positive experiences as a teacher. She was in a permanent, part time, specialist position in a primary school.

Let me just think back about things that made me want to leave or maybe want to go, or stay. They would have been lots and lots of individual interactions with students, where I know by what happened or things I've said or done that I've made a difference to that individual. Lots of those that give you that boost. Also, I think there would've been lots of just well-taught lessons. During and after the lesson, I just go, "I nailed that. That was really went well. I'm good at my job. The kids learned something. I taught them something well." That kind of feeling. All of those will be giving me that rush of a positive emotion.

Likewise, just getting praise from whoever; a parent, or a supervisor, or a colleague or a student. That makes me feel like, "Yes, I'm on the right track. I'm in the right field," but when it's genuine praise. More recently, probably, let's say the past five to seven years, the thing that is making me feel the most proud of what I do and that I feel like I'm on the right track for my life and with regard to my professional work, has been more bigger picture stuff. That is work to do with the union because I'm a union member too. Things that our

union does that I feel really proud to be a part of that effect on a big societal level.

Also, I had a career shift after having children. Even though I'm still a teacher, I went from being a classroom teacher to working in [a specialist position]. That initially was out of convenience for myself and the school because I had come back part-time after having kids. Just was muddling along through that role, giving it my best shot. Then gradually overtime started reading a little bit of professional literature about what it means to be a [a specialist teacher] and had this frightening alarm reaction because I thought, "I actually don't know how to do any of that even though I'm calling myself a [specialist teacher]."

Jackie returned to university whilst teaching to train further in her Specialist teaching area. When she was reflecting on this she reported,

I'd thought, "Yes, I'm going to go back to Uni and get my specialist qualification." I did that part-time to get my Master's. I did it in four or five years. Now, I operate completely differently in the school than I did before. That's what I mean I had a career shift is that I'm still teaching but what I'm doing now is, while it's all targeted towards the benefit of the students, my target audience in my view is actually now teachers rather than students. That's how I have my biggest impact on the students.

That's a very different way of thinking but it's really rewarding because I know that every time I help a teacher in any of the multitude of different ways that I do that, then therefore, I'm making their life a little bit easier or I'm giving them a skill that they can pass onto their students. Either way, their students are benefiting because their teacher is more relaxed or has more time. Therefore, can do a better job with their lessons, or they actually have different skills now that they can pass on.

I consider that to be-- that's just different. That's completely different from the way I was operating in the early years when I had my own class. I also operate now, right now, literally, before you got here, I'm coordinating a national campaign that's going to launch [that year to support specialist teachers].



We're looking to revitalise [specialist teaching areas] around the country, so... they all can operate in the best practice model because we believe that that is going to help the students be better prepared for the future. That's all really big picture stuff. That's very different from, "I taught a really good maths lesson today to my year threes." It's the same kind of feeling in the sense that I'm making a difference. It's because of the extra qualification that I got and because of my experience, and also just because of the kind of person I am, I wanted and needed more.

Actually, I don't even know if that's true. Even if I was still in the classroom, maybe I would still be feeling really fulfilled, lots of people do. For me, the way that it's evolved with my life and my profession, feels like great. I feel really proud of what I'm doing and that-- Also, when I talk to other people, if I got to a high school reunion or something and meet up with people that I knew when I was a teenager, and they're doing jobs that they hate or they feel like are pointless or even maybe negative.

Then in terms of their impact on the world those people, I feel like I look into their soul and they're unhappy on some level. Maybe they have a nice family and other things are going well, but I don't feel that way. I feel like I've always felt that really proud of what I do. That's really important to me as a person. Comparing, I suppose, to others when we're just-- Somebody who would open up like that, someone who I had known for a long time who would actually share that with me, then I go "Oh, I'm in a really good job."

Jackie also reflected back to challenging points she had overcome in her career and highlighted that she did struggle in her first years of teaching.

On the flip side, the negative difficult things for myself have been, I think the most challenging times were for sure my very first year was really hard.

I was the first one there, and the last one to leave and then I will go home and have dinner, and keep working into the night, and worked also both days on the weekend. There was a pivotal moment towards the latter half of the end of that year, when somebody, a colleague said to me in the corridor, "Hey Jackie, what are you doing this weekend?" I'm like "Oh, I've got a lot to do and I'm going to do this and this, and this for lesson planning and marking,

whatever." He looked at me in he just kind of said, "You know, you need to have at least one day off, right?"

Literally, that had not occurred to me. That's just me. Like, that's how I was at that time and everything but that was a revelatory moment where I went, "Oh, right, okay, yes, that kind of does make sense."

[laughter]

There was that. That's a pivotal moment looking back. Also, I remember I had an excellent mentor teacher that first year. That was a really tough school. It was in an inner city in [overseas] and I had an excellent [mentor]... we had that really good mentor program setup where she was buddied up with me in an official way, and they gave us some money so that we could each have days off through the year. One time we went to a PD thing together, another time we split it and took half a day at a time and I went in and just sat in her class for half a day, and another day, she came in and sat in my class for half a day.

We were able to observe each other like that and also, I just went to see her every day, pretty much after school and debrief about the day but she at that time was working really strongly towards the goal. She, I think, had been teaching about 10 years and she said, "I don't want to take any work home, my goal is that all my planning and marking done while I'm here." That was her goal.

In my mind that was planted early on as an idea and by the time I had been teaching for five years, because I only taught one year overseas, and then the rest has been here. That has been [in one city] the whole time too. By my fifth year, of full-time classroom teaching, I was pretty well at that level, aside from report time or something like that, when it's just like a really peak workload and you just simply have to do stuff at home. But as with a general week to week, I was taking very little work home and I was leaving, I would get there at like 8:00 and leave at say, 4.00, 4.30 and I got everything done. That was really good.

Back to that first year, another pivotal moment was, I remember driving home one day, and just feeling so overwhelmed and unhappy, and just thinking, "I can't go on like this like," but it was, I look back on that now and just think, well, I think that's inevitable to some degree for many people in

that first year because you just simply have to work out your boundaries and you have to work out when is enough. It started for me, I remember learning, I had this countertop where there were different stacks of paper or whatever, and when I started fiddling with fine detail with the piles of paper, that became my little red flag when I went, "Nope, that does not need to happen, go home."

There's always more you can do and so I had to learn when to call it good enough. I've gotten better at that. That's continued to be something that I use now through life but I don't think there's any-- everybody would have their own standard and their own habits of working and stuff. You have to work that out on your own, I think, with support, but it's individual. Another really tough time was when I felt. Well, there was a Principal I worked with once who didn't say, good morning.

[laughter]

Which I know, but I would walk down the corridor from her, we will be approaching each other like this, only two people around and I would say, "Morning," and she literally would say nothing and walk by me. It drove me wild. I was so, and also she was a mean and a bully on a bigger scale, but that kind of meanness in the workplace, definitely affected me. Likewise, there was a different Principal that just, I thought didn't value what I was doing at all. This was right before I moved to [different school] and I saw I was very nearly done with my [specialist teaching] qualification.

Jackie spoke in detail about how her specialist position was important to her, and the positivity it gave her in her career.

I gained a huge range of skills I didn't have before. I was gathering all this data, because a big part of being a [specialist teacher] now is proving that you're worth your salt and whatever the phrase is. Like, you're proving that you're good and making a difference. Every time I would do something with a class, let's say, I would go in for a few lessons and teach, team teach, search strategies for how to find things quickly online. Maybe it was a standalone lesson, or maybe with another class of grade level.

I remember I went in for a series of weeks talking about note taking. We do some practice lessons and I gradually built up their skills and then the teacher

was there. At the end of that little collaborative time, I would give the teachers and the students a survey. How much did you learn? What was hard? What do you think? Anything else you want me to know? How was it having a [specialist teacher] in with you? What did you learn? What went well? What could have been better? That whole thing.

The results I was getting for those were like, off the charts. We're talking like five out of five with what they had learned. How much did you? "I love when Mrs. Jackie comes in. Oh Jackie, I learned so much from having you in the classroom." Like, we're talking, it could not have been more glowing. I was saying I want to do more of this. This is the best practice model and they just wouldn't. They had me timetabled to the eyeballs, with a-- What do you call it? Like a firm timetable as opposed to a flexible timetable because you have to have a flexible timetable so that you can go with different classes at different times in that role, and like, for whenever they need you for a certain thing, and I was completely locked in.

I might have had an hour a week that was flexible. The classes they put me with were the kindergarten [specialist group]. That's where I was doing [covering other teachers] release with those groups. It was literally like herding cats. I don't know if you know anything about a kindergarten [specialist group] but they have never been in school before, ever. They were literally running around the room and I'm up there doing my little signals like [clapping]. They are completely are ignoring me. They don't know any of that language, that school language.

I just remember standing there and just laughing and be like, "Okay, well this is ridiculous, like, what am I going to do." [laughs] None of the tricks work because they were completely sort of *unschoolified* and that's what they needed. I thought that is a complete waste of what I'm able to do right now and I'm not belittling that role, because I mean, [specialist kindergarten] teachers are some of the most remarkable people that I've worked with.

That's such an important role. They have to learn how to operate in a school these children, and they're only there for three times.

It's a high-pressure situation where you got to get them skilled up so they can go into a mainstream classroom. It's critically important but I wasn't the right person for that. I had all these other skills that nobody else in the school

could do and yet they had me doing that for most of my time. It was heart-breaking for me and I felt like I was an eagle and I was trapped in a box. That's all the only way I can describe it is I just felt like I had all this capability and I was I was completely contained in this tiny little box. Then this opportunity opened up to go to the [other school] and I ended up-- one thing led to another and I ended up getting a job as a permanent position. I have freedom there, completely flexible timetable. They think I'm great. They love what I do. They give me freedom to plan my own programs. We've started up this whole information literacy skills because there's another [specialist teacher] there as well and we work really well together. We've created this whole ... program to boost the skills because of course, the students that are coming through don't have those skills because most of them haven't had a [specialist teacher] all the way through. This we presented at a national conference about this program last year, and we're writing up for journal articles about it this year. Like it's highly-- it's getting lots of interest.

She also expanded on the level of recognition she received from her supervisors and peers, and what this looked like for her.

My school's just a 100% supportive, like "Go for it Jackie, that's awesome." Now I have this feeling of expansiveness and I'm soaring through the sky, I'm getting national recognition for the work that I'm doing. That feels great, I feel like I'm reaching my potential. The only other thing that was negative, was interesting, last year for the very first time, I felt the burnout feeling that I've seen in teachers that are at the end of their career and they're just over it. That was when-- because I picked up with the broader issues of wage stagnation for my partner, we needed some extra money because we wanted to go on a trip or wanted to get a new fridge and like whatever, so I said, "Okay, look I work part-time I'll just pick up some relief teaching days." I've taught in primary schools 15 years like no problem. I put my name down at some different primary schools because initially I tried to get work in colleges and I never got called. Anyway, the primary schools eventually called me but there were some days when I was working as a relief teacher, rocking up as total stranger and in

year three where I'd had all these beautiful year three experiences as when I was full-time in the classroom, plan out these great lessons for the day, a little bit of this, a little bit of that. There's another program that I found very rewarding that I've been trained in, called Philosophy for Children, which is a phenomenal program.

I'm doing some stuff like that, finally, and I'm like "This is going to be great." Kids eat it up, this philosophy stuff. But anyway, they don't know me, maybe the school was a little bit tough, I don't know, they're giving me backchat, they don't want to sit down, they're like fiddling with the thing while I'm trying to teach them. Again, one of the students who is that is like a really hyper-energetic little boy, is literally running in circles around the room with the others were like working on something, I was just standing there thinking "Oh my god, this sucks, why am I here?"

I felt like crap when I left, I had tried to teach them but maybe some of them might have learned something, but I came away feeling terrible and it's because, well, I think it's that relationship thing. Way back, one of my very first schools that I taught at was super tough school down in [specific area in the ACT]. They offered professional development about behaviour management but a tackling it from a philosophical whole school point of view, wasn't a packaged program from a book.

They said over and over again, the Three R's usually reading, writing arithmetic but the number one R is relationships. If they don't think you care then they're not going to care what you know, something catchy like that. But I just consider that now to be common sense for me and my practice is that, of course, it's the relationship that comes first. Therefore, coming in as a relief teacher is one of the hardest jobs because you haven't got that, unless you're like a full-time person and you get a relationship with a particular school, and the kids start to get to know you, that's different.

Also, in some of those schools where I was doing relief, nobody would talk to me. I was sitting at the table, "Hi, you mind if I sit down with you?" at lunch, teachers, I'm talking about, and they are literally not talking to me at all, and they're having this like bitchy gossipy conversation about like "And then--" This kind of thing and I'm just like, "I'm going to get up now." Went out and sat in the foyer and looked at my phone because I was like, "I don't

want to sit in there" and plus, I'd be tired and zapped from the over stimulating day.

That sucked and that was the first time that I ever, for the career path that I'm on, I make \$390 dollars a day I think it is for relief teaching, and I'm literally standing there going through the motions and thinking to myself, "\$390, \$390." That's it. That was the only reason I was there that made me keep going with it, and that was not good. Especially everything I've just said. You can see that that's completely against my deep principles of life and professional contribution, and stuff, but that's where I was. Yes, figuring out how I'm going to deal with that this year.

Then I found another way to make extra money, which is marking for a university, for [specialist teacher courses] and so that pays about the same per hour and, because I'm at the [different school] now, it's benefiting me to have a bit of Uni experience as a teacher or not, I'm just marking, but still for that higher level standard. That is good. I feel like I'm in the zone there and offering them really good for feedback because it wasn't that long ago that I was a student myself, so I can put some little tricks and then try this or try that, or whatever.

Jackie also presented her feelings around why she thought other teachers might be leaving the profession, based on what she had seen in her years as a primary school teacher.

As for others, I think its workload that I would say pushes people to the edge of wanting to quit, maybe combined with a lack of appreciation. My experience is that, that is dramatically worse in primary schools than in college, like night and day, where I would say things got worse because of timing. I had my first child [and] after that, I was never in the classroom full-time again, so that role of the classroom teacher, the burden on my colleagues is not what it used to be.

I think that that whole thing about finishing your work by 4:30 and not taking anything home, I don't know that that's possible now. Especially with the number of meetings I have to go to and just all the extra paperwork and stuff that's required now, and the lack of planning time that they get in primary schools.

It's not fair and it's not enough. I would say that it was a regular occurrence for people to be in tears in meetings or in their classroom by themselves or talking with a friend and a colleague. I saw people breaking down all the time and we're talking really talented, excellent teachers too, not people that maybe that person doesn't really belong in the profession after all because it's not for everybody. But I mean people that are really deeply respected, and the kids loved, were learning heaps in their classroom, and they are brought to their knees from stress.

I remember doing a little survey in our school in a primary school, about how many hours do you spend working outside of school and how many of them are-- Like, "What are you doing?" People were spending literally hours every week resourcing their curriculum. I was like, "I'm supposed to be able to help you with that." But I was timetabled up to my eyeballs. What was I supposed to be resourcing their curriculum for them at home? I work part-time for a reason.

I recognise that teachers have to do some work outside of school. I consider it reasonable to do marking, lesson planning and report writing from home, in my own time. I reckon that's culture, but I'm not going to do other stuff at home. I needed in my role to be given time to do that during the school day, and also to discuss it with them, so I make sure I'm getting them the right thing. It's a flow-on effect and it's all interrelated.

It's a serious issue, though. I'm particularly sensitive to new teachers. I feel deeply distressed by those statistics of their drop-out rates. I try, especially because my own personal experience was so wonderful, having that mentor teacher who was so effective and supportive for me. She set me up for a successful career. I try to offer that to teachers, to new teachers especially. Just checking with them, "Hey, how's it going? You come see me and have a little bit of chat, too, anytime. I can brainstorm lesson planning."

This is something of my own professional practice that I need to work on, it's how to time those things and how to make that work. If you say that to them when you first meet them, they're totally overwhelmed. It's week 0, they just met 100 people and they're trying to remember where the toilet is. Just those basic things. Some random offer for help, it can sound like lip service or



maybe they forget, or whatever-- You can grab that. They don't come back. Either they've forgotten or they-- Maybe they don't think I mean it.

That's often what people say. For me, as a [specialist teacher], I find that ironic, [laughs] because any work that you do with me will save you time in the short and long run. Anyway, that is what people say, so that's part of my role too, how to figure out-- I don't know. I just have to make myself more available and pop in at lunchtime, "Hey, do you want to have a chat about something?" It's about visibility, too. Sometimes it can be forced, but mostly, I have found that it's organic how that works.

It was easier at a primary school, because we only have one staff room. We'd all be in there, making a cup of tea, and just in the course of having a random conversation with people, something would come up, "Hey, how's it going?" And they would start talking about something, and I go, "Actually, I can help you with that." They would mention such and such topic or, "I'm having a difficulty with this kid who's got this situation." Then, I just have that in my mind, and then, one or two weeks later as I'm going through my little life with my networks, I go, "That would help Suzie." who I was just talking to about that kid and I pass it on.

That's a little bit harder-- That is harder in secondary school because everybody's got their own little staff room, and, where I am, we're totally on the edge of the campus. Just physical proximity is an issue. That won't help with that. Anyway, coming back to what makes it rewarding, that it's that kind of gratitude, nowadays, with my specific role, as a [specialist teacher]. If I had to call my job one thing, it's problem solving. Generally speaking, people only come to me when they're stuck. That's a student or a teacher. Sometimes, I find that easy, because, maybe, I've done it before with 10 other people or just because I happen to know the answer. Other times, it's really hard, and I have this panic inside me like, "Oh my God, I don't know what to do." [laughs] "They're coming at me for help and I have literally no idea." Now I've been in the role long enough that I know that that's okay, I just have to keep breathing and keep persisting. Maybe I think out loud and we try this, and we try that.

Sometimes, I just have to say, "Leave this with me for a little bit. I'm going to think it over." Then I tap in to my network, "Hey, can anybody help me with

blah, blah, blah?" One way or the other I get there, at least well enough, if I can't hit a bull's eye. Then the people are so grateful, because their problem is solved, and whatever it might be.

Yes, it's really rewarding. Even if it's just a quick little thing, they're like, "Thank you so much." "Yes, no worries." I get my little buzz for the day.

Jackie had taken time off work when she had children and had then returned to the workforce part time. She was asked how she found the return to work and answered,

Yes, that was fine and it was convenient for them because the current [specialist teacher] was cutting back at that time, so yes, it worked out really well. It suited me, I was very happy to have that role because it was a standalone role as opposed to sharing a class, which I think would have been a nightmare. Like if I was point five, there's no way I could actually do point five hours, with the communication you'd need to do with your teaching partner.

The type of management style and the role of school leaders was something that Jackie had found to be different across different school settings she had worked in.

I've also noticed a difference in culture of the school in power dynamics from executive, principals, to teachers where at the college level and again you can take this with a grain of salt, but this is what I've seen. I have talked with other people about this, that at the college level and I don't know about high school, but I think it's probably similar. That it's more collaborative, and that the classroom teachers, and maybe heads of department get much more like, "Actually, that doesn't sound good," or, "No, no, we're not going to do that, we're going to do this."

Whereas in primary school it's just like, "Do it." Everybody goes, "Okay."

That's from the principal doing this. If your principal tells you to do something, you do it. If you're going to-- I remember the first primary school I worked at [in this city] and I said, "At what day do you have your meetings?" They're like, "We have a meeting every day." I started laughing. Like, "You're kidding." "No, Monday we've got our staff meeting. Tuesday

we've got our team meeting. Thursday we've got our curriculum planning committee. Tuesday morning we've got special needs.”

They literally had a meeting every day after school and one before and when you're supposed to get your work like your planning done? It was just all this training and discussion, and working out the athletics Carnival or whatever. We did in those meetings and I go now to my college and we have a staff meeting once a month. I tell people that like, "Did you know? This is what we do." They can't believe it.

I heard at the last public education dinner I was walking by the table where other people for my old school were sitting and one of them literally turned around me and said, "Help us, like save us. Do what you can to help us." This thing in the latest EBA about reducing their face to face hours and increasing specialist teachers like art, music, PE, teacher librarian. I feel so hopeful that that's going to come through for them because they're just absolutely buckling.

Very few primary schools have specialist teachers anymore, so they're having to do things that all that art and music, and you're really uncomfortable singing, do it anyway. Or you're a terrible artist like, "Oh, that's tough." But you got to teach them art and PE. Some people are really bad at all that stuff or at least maybe they have one or two that they are pretty good at, but they're not so much with the others.

On reflecting on her current position as a specialist teacher, Jackie summed up her views by saying,

That's the whole point is helping everyone. You can't be that surly stereotypical *shusher* because then you can't get your job done because everybody hates you, and you're not going to have any impact on what they're learning.

#### **5.3.1.6. Participant 6: Jane**

Jane (early 30s) had been teaching for eight years and was, at the time, in a primary school with a high proportion of students from difficult backgrounds. She was full time and permanent. In her role she specialised in working with students with backgrounds of trauma, abuse, neglect and abandonment.

When speaking about her initial reasons for entering the profession she stated,

My background is-- I come from, I'm an only Christian in an atheist family, and my family has slowly turned around because they've seen what I've done over the years. I have a very strong sense of the idea of serving the community. What I've done in my last eight years, is I've put three men in jail who should be in jail. I have counselled over 90 families. I have done, I don't want to think how many reports. I know in the last year alone, I've done 100 care and protection reports. I have saved four children from suicide. These all under eight. I've done huge amounts to save kid's lives.

The reason that I stick in this profession, I am a workaholic, but it's-- the things that I love most is when I have parents or kids come up to me at the end of the year, and I just get that, "You're my favourite teacher." Or I get, "You saved my life." I've had a few mums come in and tell me that they don't know if they're going to make it to the end of the day, so I invite them into my room, and then I've had coffee with them at lunch time. Then we've gotten them into the counsellor, and I've looked after their kids while they've had counselling in the afternoons. Knowing that I can make that difference and seeing like it's missions. Last year my mum came down, and we're out in the shops, and these random old folks just walked up to mum and started talking, "We're the grandparents of one of your children."

I've gone nodding, "Do you know that she actually stopped slashing her wrist because of you?" It's like, "I didn't know that one." Yet another one to put on the watch list [laughs]. Because of the clientele I work with, it's very hard, particularly at my present school. There are so many kids that I start with who tell me that they have no chance in life unless they're going to be prostitutes or druggies, and getting them to say that they can be much better than their parents and that they can, they've got the skills, but they're going to have to work hard. Getting them to say that they can, that's why I stay here.

Jane was pregnant and was reflecting on what she would be doing after the baby was born. She also spoke about why she was excited to return to teaching after maternity leave. She said,

I need a bit of time off to look after the baby, but it's seeing the difference I can make with the students, that's been huge. I think working in [low] socio-economic schools, you do a lot more than people when they're nicer schools and such, because I have a much more impact on the personality of a child and their life choice. The other reason I love staying in is, I love counselling and working with teachers.

I've been a mentor now to 15 different teachers. Both beginners through uni for the first two, three years of their teaching and people have come from other sectors and territories. I'm currently counselling one who's come down and said after four years of horrific teaching experiences, and she's trying to work out whether she wants to stay in the profession or leave it.

She's done a lot of volunteer work for me last year, so being able to show people what teaching is, and if they do want to work in special Ed or low socio-economic [schools] and trying to work out if teaching is you, it needs also to be the right setting, and that's the really important bit. Because some people just aren't cut out for it, and it's good to say to them, "Look, is this really what you want? This is the reality of it. If you want to teach, do you need a management setting or the private system, or Catholic system?"

And helping people who are really good teachers become what they should be. I love seeing that and seeing them actually so proud and challenged. It's just amazing, but that's why I stay.

She recounted stories of working with students with challenging backgrounds and experiences which validated her choice to teach.

One is stroking on your leg. It's just-- I love what they do. They go, "You haven't shaved today." It's like, you're the one that's lifting at my pants to pat my leg. [laughs] Boundaries.

Yes, and if you've got indigenous kids they have to touch. It's one of their connection points. If they are Koori kids, which is what I've always specialised in, it's different when you've got the Murray kids and the [other indigenous] kids. They don't like touch, but Koori kids, yes, touch.

[when asked if there was issues with young students being so tactile] What do I do? It's much easier for females than males.

I use a lot of touch in my teaching, but I've always been very clear with students and parents, because they're a lot younger. They like to come up to me and give me cuddles and things, and I've always been clear. If you're comfortable with shoulders, I will touch your shoulder. If you lean to me, that means a hug, its fine. You can quickly learn to read their body language and which ones like high fives and nothing else.

Yes, and in your younger years, you'll have kids when they're just stressed they'll come and sit in your lap and they'll need to cuddle. All sorts of weird things like, [mimes as if to another teacher] "Stay in the room, I need another witness, thank you." [laughter] This is too awkward. Yes, You're staying right here, thank you teachers' aide. Had a few of those, got that out of the room. I just wouldn't want to risk anything, but the amount of kids in there are deeply distressed if they've lost a sibling or a parent. They'll often just climb on you because they just need to hide.

She spoke of one student she had taught.

My [student] he lost his baby brother two months ago. He's out of school, and in the hospital, he was holding him when he suddenly went [passed away], and was brought out and the dad said, "You killed your brother," and then vanished. He left, didn't come back for nine months. My little boy, he didn't talk. He refused to speak, and then one day I was teaching my maths lesson and he just cried, [laughs] grabbed my shirt, he didn't like [let go]—[mimes to another student] Go get the teacher next door. He just cried then he started talking about his little brother. I was like, "We need your mummy, quick, bring mum. Oh, my goodness." Had some amazing experiences where it's like, yes, I don't like kids on me, but sometimes, the little ones, they need it.

Jane also spoke about why saw chose to work in schools and with students with difficult backgrounds.

In my fourth year of uni, I did my 10-week prac because I come from New South Wales, and back in those naive days, I had to do an area of child assessment for one of my things, and I found a child that was neglected, and I went, "This is terrible." This child doesn't get to eat much, and had a rip all the way down her dress and showed her undies off. I thought that was severe

neglect back in those days. How innocent I was. Getting to meet her, and getting to meet her mum who was a druggie was quite interesting for me. I'd come from a low socio-economic family, but back in the day everyone was just happy, and you all got around with the food stamps, and you helped each other.

I didn't really see any darkness in society. After working with her, I said, "No, that would be really interesting to work down those areas." I applied to come down to the ACT because they were doing a big recruitment drive, and I filled in for low socio-economic schools, and [School Principal] went, "Sure, If you'd like to have a look at what neglect looks like, we have a population here." You beauty, I'll come down for a contract for you and see. He gave me the start down here which I'm grateful for [laughs].

[when asked whether she had specialist training to work in the roles she has] At Uni, we did one course for six months. We did one thing on that and that was it. Since I came down, I did a lot of research myself because I like psychology anyway... I did a lot of reading and research. I met a few friends online who counsel and are psychologists in Australia so I spoke to them a lot. My dad is very, very talented and he's very smart. He's also very good at talking people through.

Principal put me through a course I love. It's something I recommend to every teacher. It helped me hugely in my first year. I've done that course three times now, and happily pay to do it myself.

As the interview progressed, I made the statement "It sounds like you do an absolutely incredible job for these kids." Jane responded to this comment by gesturing to a framed certificate on the wall saying, "That's why I was nominated for that."

Out of 3,000, I was quite happy to be [of of] 25 [finalists]. I was nominated because of the work that I do. Well, it's good because they contacted my last school, which I didn't know they would. They happened to speak to 10 people on the P&C, and they said yeah, pastoral care you've got to put her up for that. That's why I got that.

[asked if that award made a difference to Jane] Mentally, it did. What I used to always say to people was I want to be a good teacher. I don't have to be

great because great teachers go on to be execs and all of that. I just want to know I'm good. Because I'm a workaholic and I've been brought up in a Christian idea that you don't put yourself up, you let other people raise you. For me, earning that, that was huge. Just the fact that my Principal came up to me one day and said, "You know, you've never been nominated. I'm nominating you." I went, "They've got the most intake, and I've got no chance." "No, no, you deserve it." When I got through, that just changed how I saw everything because I actually feel like it's being recognised.

That was two years ago. That was really huge getting the Public Education Award. Particularly, I looked at what they had actually put in it which was, she's on committees and she helps people. Then, the winner is all of these people doing these huge massive things that I would never have time to do. Then to actually know the school and not just my school, but the parents at both schools thought so highly of me. That really helped.

She did reflect that working in these types of schools over her eight years of teaching has not always been easy, however, she reported that she felt a strong sense of camaraderie in most schools she has taught in, finding that the staff were supportive of each other despite challenging student behaviours.

Like I said, [current school] is, we've got difficult kids. We've got a hard population of clientele of parents. The staff are amazing, I love them. I love them to bits, particularly when I got pregnant, I was so sick that she [the Principal] employed a teachers' aide and a teacher in the room with me because I couldn't stand up. I just went, "You could just tell me to go," and they went, "No, no, if you feel you need to be here". This was the last week of school before I was going and I was desperate to be there for my kids." Then she forked a lot of money just to keep me safe in the room. I went, "Oh." Showed you what's the people there are like.

It is not [the norm]. The harder the school is, the better the staff. So, that's generally-- if you want to find beautiful staff, you go to the hardest of schools, because you have to band together. You can't survive otherwise, and you'll notice tough schools, if someone is a bit more *clicky* or they're, [pause] not necessarily strange, but they're not quite in the right mind set, or we need to band together with these kids to fight against the world, they tend



to leave fairly quick because they just don't connect as well with other teachers, they just go "nah, it's not for me", and they'll swap. We had a few teachers do that.

Generally, my school is very, very supportive. I found last year they were even better than the year before, because we actually had a new deputy come in and she was just amazing because she knew exactly who to contact.

Because, she had the contacts. So, rather than me just working with care and protection, I got to work with the police, I got to work with the sexual assault office. That was huge, and because she was really a forthright lady, she was quite willing to ring them up to go, "This is not good enough, you're going to do more, and you're doing it today," which is stuff that I'm just not comfortable enough to do.

She just put such emphasis on it, and she was able to get all the family in, because this was a split family, which is something I have very rarely managed to do, because I'm normally told by a particular part of the family, I can go get stuffed because she's too drunk. The fact that she was actually able to do that and was able to sound threatening enough to make her come in, was just amazing going, "Oh, my goodness, I wish I could do that," but that's just not me. That was really good, and she was always ready to go because there's a teachers' aide involved as well.

After every meeting, she gave us an hour just to sit and have a coffee and chill, because coming out those meetings you're shaking and it's like, "Oh my goodness, had to be so calm and that's they're telling, me all this terrifying stuff." It's hard because you have parents are sitting there and going, "My child would never do that." It's like, "What? You've been in the classroom when this has been happening?" They would just suddenly have a go, and that's what's really hard when you're trying just to go, "Well, I have video footage here, we're now going to watch it." They go, "No, no that's also faked." It's like I can't prove it anymore.

Now my school has been so amazing with the support there, and my execs are great. They know that if I know it's going to be a rougher day or if they go, they seen on the playground, and it's going to be rough, they'll come and let me know, and they'll do check ins. Our office lady is someone who loves hugging same as me, so if it'd been a bad session and she'd [a student] had a

psychotic episode, [front office lady] would be told to come down, "I've been told to come down and give you a hug, okay, here."

No words are required, just hug.

I've got an amazing supportive staff and is not just at the exec level and the principal level and the front office, but it's the teaching staff as well. If I need to evacuate my room or something the other teachers are quite happy to just, "Hi, you guys, you come with me." You come and I'll take them as long as they need. We do it for other teachers too because we've got a few children with very high needs. They're just so supportive, I love them.

I love working in difficult schools because you make such an impact, but when you have supportive staff, the difference you can make in a community... In two years, if you have an amazing staff, you can do astronomical things. It's huge.

She also had strategies she implemented to help her deal with and process stressful situations at work.

We've got the employee system program, which I've used. That's the great, I contact [employer provided counselling services] and said, "I just want to check in and check that everything is going fine in the head." I'm always happy to go to them... I do [sports] so I normally will do things like that. I've got avenues to get rid of the stress. I'll have a massage. I try and put things in perspective, but there are some things that are really difficult to deal with.

I've had three children, but the last one's been the hardest because I've had them for two years. When you don't know if a child is going to come back to you with all their limbs intact, when you call the police [because you] think this child might be killed tonight. That sticks with you, and it's very, very hard to breathe properly. You're very calm in front of them, you've got to be, but the second they're gone, the shaking starts and it's very hard.

I've got a very supportive hubby, he's a pretty good lad. I've got a very supportive family, but they have worried many times from what I take on, and I understand that and that's why I'm so cautious. The job that I do and the kids that I've chosen, I don't recommend for many people because it does take a huge toll. I couldn't work with this little girl again for a quite a few years, she's now in a really good spot, and it's taken a very painful 18 or 24

months to do it, but I couldn't work with her again for quite a few years because it's really taking a toll.

Jane reported that she worked, on average, sixty hours a week, but it did not appear to be a negative point for her unless it was completing tasks that she did not feel were important.

At my current school, I don't have the issue [of excessive workload] because I'm quite strong, and I'm a third of the workload committee. My last school was before they brought in the workload reduction things. On average I would spend my 60-hour work week, 40 hours will be in meetings and then I do 10 hours of planning, and 30 hours will be doing what execs wanted, such as after I've done all my PM's [reading tests] then putting them into three different then diagrams to show the comprehension level, then the PM level even though I already had [data]. Doing that and the amount of times we're asked to collate our data, [and present it in different ways] "This is a waste of my time."

About 30 hours a week it was taking me to do all these little shitty bits of paper work or it'd be things like we'd finish doing [numeracy analysis]. Then we have to sit down for a four-hour meeting with our executive to look at how we can improve it, even though as you teach it you make your pencil marks of "this one works well, hey this would be a good activity." ... This is torturous, but we have to do that for every maths lesson because we do it every fortnight. One week could be math's, next week would be English, and we have to do it repeatedly all through the year.

I stop at 60 hours a week. For the last two years, 20 hours has been care and protection meetings. It's been the extreme level, but I've had an extreme child who's had a lot of police intervention and things.

She also reported that she felt her hours had dropped with the implementation of a workload committee at her school.

It's done a huge difference and my school's really adamant about it. All primary schools have a team meeting which would go for one to two hours a week and then also the staff meeting that goes for one to two hours a week. Prior workload coming in, I used to have meetings five days a week and on

Tuesdays it was before school and after school, the afternoons all went to 5:00 or 5:30 and the morning one went from eight o'clock, right to the bell. The idea of actually being able stop to eat food in the day was just no, if you want to go home before six o'clock. Because workload [committee] has come in and gone, it's ridiculous just to have your staff and yes, school meetings. Workload [committee] has done a huge amount to ease [the workload] for us. The fact that we don't have to laminate a piece of paper anymore or do tons of photocopying. It's still easy if you do it yourself but if you know a week in advance you need X, Y and Z. It's been really good for us. It's not so good for office staff because they get a ton of extra work and that's the next issue that workload committee is having.

Jane reported one school experience in which she did not have a positive relationship and experiences with her school leader/s.

I have been, like at my last school, I know one of the reasons a lot of teachers leave is the attitude of the executives. I had a very bad relationship with my last deputy, to the point I had to actually go to a racial discrimination board about him.

I also had to go to [another section in Education] about him and a few other things. I've had issues with [a Principal] as well. As much as I can respect him, he's a very good principal, he's not a good leader of teachers. The attitude that both of them were able to give me, and tell me how stupid I was and how useless, and then turn around to parents say, "We're trying to keep her." That really sent my head into a spin because I was so angry at them. Getting out [leaving that school] was great, and then knowing that ... he'd always said, "You'll never be good enough because you're only a [low performing teacher]. You're not an [high flying teacher]."

Yes. I didn't ask for it [to be nominated for a teaching award], one of the execs put me up for it. He cut it out and said, "No, you can't. You're only a duck." I just went, "Why are you telling me this? I didn't even know it was happening. You just crushed me." That's what he did to teachers quite a lot unless they're a favourite. A very good principal, great for getting the PR in the community, not good as a leader of teachers. I know a lot of teachers who

have taught there, escape the school. Those who've stuck have left and never returned to the profession because of him.

This experience led to her moving schools; however, she found the transition process from one school to another quite simple and easy. She also reported that not all her peers had the same experience and it depended on the approach of the school leaders.

It was easy. I was so surprised because [a Deputy Principal] was filling in for [the Principal] at the time because we'd just had the huge issue at another school. He was off for six months dealing with that. It was really great because I spoke to [Deputy Principal] and said, "Look, my six years are up. I've got to transfer. How do I do it?" He went, "Well, I'm going to get you all the paperwork. You fill it out and then you just get me to look over it. I'll check and if I end up being the principal of the school, I'd love to have you." Which is great because I know him very well.

One of my new people on my team who's become a very close friend, she just transferred to our school the year beforehand. She gave me hers so I could see the writing they want, because it's only two pages of writing and then just your details. It was so easy because I was going, "Now, I have to put together a CV, I've no idea. What if I need portfolios? I can't do this." It was so easy. The whole thing took me an hour to write. Then, I had two people look over it and adjust a few little bits where they went, "Oh no, must make a little bit tidier," and that was it. Then, I got my first choice.

Yes, I waited deliberately [to the end of a period where she would have to transfer schools]. I wanted to get my six years because that was my maximum, because [the Principal] had actually given me the chance and got me a permanent position so that was my way of giving back.

A lot of my friends who are six and fifth years, very easy. If you're younger, it's harder, purely because particularly, if you're a third or fourth because it's normal to not get it [a transfer position]. If you're a fourth and the school [community finds out] that you want to leave, a lot of teachers can become quite rude about it. It depends on your leadership. In my current school, our boss is amazing about looking at what's hard. If you can't cope, that's fine,

we'll help you find a new spot and she will back for you to go to other schools. She's just amazing. I love her to bits.

At my last school though, there was a tendency, even though you're meant to keep it private, they would conveniently let it leak so that people would turn on them, and they would encourage people turning and being cruel to them. It was very cliquey and that's one the reasons I wanted out. There are other schools I know, like [local school] is amazing. If someone wants to leave then the rest of the staff are like, "Oh well, you're just going to have to come out and have more coffee dates with us now before you go."

One reflection that she gave around attrition was that she felt she had seen "a bunch" of people leaving at the 6-7 years of teaching mark and she felt, from observations and discussions with colleagues that a lack of leadership opportunities in the primary setting was a major contributing factor for many of them.

There's a huge range [of reasons people want to transfer schools]. Some of it's just because our time is up, and we have to go. A lot of the ones [teachers] that I came through with, they wanted to eventually become execs, and so the school would only ever give them K-2 or three to six positions. You need both to apply for exec work.

Got to do a year in both. A lot of them are going, "Well, the principal keeps saying he's going to give me the other section," and after two years, they don't. They get really quite angry because for them they'd been lied to. It's not like it's impossible to adjust people around. That's when they want to transfer and get out. Even if I wasn't up for transfer the year that I needed to, I was getting out because I couldn't work with a particular individual anymore. Sometimes it is personality clashes, and like I've said at my new school, if a school is very, very hard and you got a great principal, they will support you to get out as well.

We've had one of ours come for a year, because he was going to be with us for four years, and it wasn't his cup of tea... Because sometimes schools just don't fit, so because those schools have their own ethos and it can be different to what you read on their little website and the interview thing. You have to be in there and the culture. I don't know many who've left for kids or for families. I know a couple of kids who follow their teachers to other schools.

Jane was asked about her peers that she had said were thinking about leaving but were sticking around. She spoke about the challenges that they had as primary school teachers looking to apply for leadership positions.

Yes, I've got three of my girlfriends at the moment who have been teaching between eight to 10 years, so they're out about basically the same time as me. One of them wants to leave because she's been going for an exec job for five years and she's really ticked because every time that an exec is away for a bit she's put in the position. As soon as the job comes up, every time the principal goes, "No, you're not ready yet. We really need to have you on the junior part of the school."

She's gone, "I've waited four years now and you still haven't given it to me," so she's very angry about it. So, she's sticking out at the moment because this is her fifth year, and then she can get out and go to another school and actually apply for other execs jobs. She's frustrated, but she's sticking in because she knows as soon as she gets out, she should be able to apply for K-2 jobs and she'd be able to continue her career.

The reason she's told is you're too good to lose [from her team], even though the exec's position is for [that team]. So, she's pretty angry. But, it's a thing I know that her principal does and he does it a lot. I've got two other friends who don't know if they're going to stay on or not, and it's primarily because they've again, at 10 years quite experienced and they're finding it very hard because their executive has had one year of teaching experience and failed. In fact, one of my friends, she comes from [another state], she's come over here to the ACT after five years, so she's been here five years. She had a student from the university that came out and she mentored him for the first year of his teaching, and he was bad. He just couldn't get things together, he couldn't do his paperwork, and so the school decided, "Put him as an executive." He's now her executive, and she can't cope with that, because this is a person who couldn't do his paperwork, can't cope in a classroom, and yet he's now technically her superior.

So, that's made her very disinterested. So, she doesn't know whether or not she wants to stick in the profession if this is allowed. I understand that because I've seen it a lot. It's no issue if someone's got less experience, if they're capable, but when they're not, it's very hard. I've got another friend

who has decided to stay in, but she's decided rather than staying mainstream, she's going into special ed, because she can't put up with the execs anymore. She's had enough of them.

She also spoke of the process that teachers move through to gain increased levels, against the Teacher Professional Standards and the additional pay rise that came with the yearly progression. She also spoke about progressing to Lead Teacher classification.

I jumped up another pay scale from the one I should have been on [based on years of experience] which is lovely. If you do really good work they [the Principal] can do it, they don't have to, but it's one way that your principal can show that, "Look, you've actually done a lot of work." That's also nice for them to now go, "Now you have a new pay scale and you're in this new bracket, you can do more work."

There is a catch to it too, but at the same time it's quite nice to actually be recognised for it, and extra money is always lovely because the work you really do doesn't change because it's what you've already done, you're just continuing and now getting a pay recognition.

It's the acknowledgment [that is positive].

It's really good because now it's really clear for our graduates [what they need to do to progress against the Teacher Professional Standards].

The final reflection that Jane explored around the job satisfaction of teachers was having a positive or negative relationship with their School Leaders (SLC/B/As).

It's one of the biggest areas for teachers. Teachers will go to ridiculous lengths for students. We will go to crazy lengths for parents and families, because we love the kids and we know that the family relationship is essential. On my cell phone, a lot of my friends who are teachers, we've all become disenchanted with the leadership. I'm lucky I'm in a brilliant school. I love my leadership, it's fantastic, there are some great execs out there. There are some great deputies and Principals, but there is also so many bad ones out there, and they seem to just stay in the system and that's really depressing. Particularly when you work hard and really the whole point of the



exec is to have the teachers back. They're meant to be the ones who the principal say what they want. The execs will show the teachers how to do it. If the teachers go, "It's not working, we'll try, these are our problems," they're meant to go to the Principal and say, "This is why they're saying it's not working. Can we look at something else or how can we adjust?"

What normally happens in schools is they go, "Well, it's your own fault, what's wrong with you?" It's done not as a professional looking to help you, it's something wrong with you personally or you don't work hard enough.

Which is very hard when a lot of teachers work 60 hours a week and the exec works about 40, and you watch them come after you and leave before you, and have long coffee breaks. That's very, very hard... it's not a pleasant experience because while there are some great ones, there are so many bad ones.

I've had a few that have gone to [another school], and I just found it hilarious. It's terrible for the school that they can fortunately go to, but hilarious from my side because I don't know how [they won the position]-- but so often people are very charismatic so they can write themselves, they can do interviews, they'd be great at Questacon. They'd be amazing presenters. They're so charismatic and so happy, and it's not just male ones. There is female ones that do it too. I get the feeling a lot of execs [are like that]. If you're a brand-new exec you're quite grateful to your principal, so you become very much a yes man or a yes woman. I tend to think that's where it comes from.

In her school at the time of the interview they were implementing a process where teachers could give feedback to their supervisors. This was something very positive to her in light of past experiences with school leaders.

For fixing, and I think one of the things is like, I know that they've now got the 360 reflection tool. It was a really good tool because it actually showed them if the teachers weren't feeling supported, or what the teachers actually saw as being false, or what they needed to actually feel confidence in them [the school leaders].

Having tools like that gives them feedback. I know the other thing that's now happening through the workload committee, is that we can now actually

approach the principal and speak about the fact that teachers are feeling under-supported or overwhelmed because of what execs are demanding. That's another avenue that's coming in as well.

It often comes down to, if you have a good team of beginning and more experienced teachers, the experienced teachers will speak out because they know at the end of the day there's nothing wrong with them. They're a good teacher and they've had experience, and they get results from kids. While beginning teachers, I guess are so much more malleable. It's so easy for them just to be crushed with the thumb, because I've been there, I've gone through it. Having those mixed teams is really important.

The other things that I can see starting to work, is having exchanges and having your reflective tools, and having another avenue even to the Principal so that they can hear that, "Look, I think they're lovely people, but they're not doing the job in the way that they need to.

She also spoke at length about the positive impact some of her school leaders had on her in different ways.

If my principal's still there [she would want to return to the same school after maternity leave], because she was only there for a certain amount of years, I'm hoping by 2019 I can go back to three days a week. That would be nice because I love working. I love it. While she's there, she said that she'll keep the position for me if I want part time or full time and she will adjust.

She's been supporting me even when I applied for the position. I said, "Look, we're trying to get pregnant. If I get pregnant straight away, is that going to be an issue?" She went, "No, it's all good." She's one of the first people we told that we were pregnant. She's just an amazing lady, very charismatic.

She's very good at upping our morale and quite often we'll have, "was there any wine and cheese around? Just cheese. I need cheese." You'll see she used to randomly appear at meetings and she just gets so happy and it's very infectious thereafter. She's someone who if you're having a crummy time, she'll might take your day off.

She's somewhat busy but then she will make a point of coming in and chatting, sitting with you, "If you want to go and have a coffee, or go and

have a beer outside, or do you just need some time to chill or do you need to take time off?" She's really good about it.

Jane recounted a situation in which she had a family emergency and she was worried about how she would support her family, while working. She reported that her Principal was very supportive.

When I rocked up at school at seven o'clock, my boss saw me, and I was just pale, and I couldn't talk properly [after the incident].

She went on, "What's happening?" She went, "Okay. What are you doing here?" I mean, we had four staff away sick that week. It was myself, one in kindergarten, one year six, and we were trying to cope with all these extras. Wasn't a good spot and I knew, I couldn't take time and she went, "No, go." She literally grabbed me and shoved me out the door and locked the door. I ended up having two weeks off because I had to go and look after my Grandmother at the hospital but she [the Principal] was great. Then after Gran got out of the hospital, I had to bring her down here for a week because mum had unfortunately [got sick]... because of that she [the Principal] actually covered all my duties so I could come back here at lunchtime to feed Gran because she needed someone to feed her.

I could pop back at recess really quick because it's only 10 minutes to work just to check turnover, tapes, check if she had enough order. She actually covered all my duties for another two weeks just so I could take care of Gran because she knew that I had to do that. That's the sort of Principal I have.

### **5.3.1.7. Participant 7: Jacob**

Jacob (early 40s) was a permanent secondary teacher who had been in the profession for 18 years. He was working part time to balance his work and life commitments. Jacob always thought teaching was an option for him as his family members had been teaching and he thought it would be a rewarding career.

I ended up as part of my units at college doing the Qwestacon lecture series thing, which was a night-time lecture. I didn't like the sports stuff, so it was good to be able to do the [alternative unit]... At the end of it, you could be a principal explainer.

I did that. By the end of year 11, I was a principal explainer and that was my part-time job all the way through, from college through to University when I started teaching. There came a time where I was, "How am I good at this?" I was explaining stuff. I didn't realise that. It put me out of my comfort zone. That's when I was at Uni and it was like, "What am I going to do? Maybe I should try teaching." And then that's when you start looking at your family. I'm going, "Two of my uncles are teachers, and an aunt's a teacher and this is people in my family." They worked in a little newspaper and, "Okay this is communication, educative, type of thing."

My grandfather was a relief Principal in Western Australia, so when a Principals' gone on leave, he then went to small country towns. My mom was always the daughter of the relief Principal.

I was good at it, and that felt really exciting. Sometimes it still does feel exciting because I know that I can, with almost 20 years of experience under my belt, stop and change and do stuff on the fly, in a good way. When I'm planning, I feel like I try to draw on that kind of stuff.

He said that there had been challenging points in his career,

There have been a number of experiences where people have gone, "Why have you not left teaching?" Maybe not heaps recently, but, for me, the big decision stuff has been about conflicts between family life and the job. For example, for many years, people have been saying I should step up on the SLC positions, but I'm not in the least bit interested, because I know how hard I work, and that my family will suffer.

Jacob reported that working in schools with challenging student behaviours was something that was a positive for him. He also spoke about how he grew and learnt from his experiences.

At [first school] I loved that. It was tough, super tough, but then I was, "Are you interested? We've got a new adviser position?" "Sure. Try that out." That was a very confronting experience for me. I wouldn't say that I didn't have support or anything. It was just the emotional toll of working more closely with those kids, had, I'd say, a pretty significant impact on the dynamics of my relationship at that time, at home. I found it very hard to leave stuff at

school. It was even more of the "24/7, can't stop thinking about this kind of stuff."

Thankfully, in some ways, I know I did a good job and plenty of people told me that as well. There was no way I was going to do any role like that again. Leading up to that, there were a couple of situations at [first school], with me learning behaviour management. I think in my first couple of years, like anyone, it was difficult to find a position [when dealing with students]. It took me reasonably quickly to realise that escalating conflicts, that stuff doesn't work with kids. It makes it worse. One of my strategies was trying to keep myself out of the situation and take notes to be accurate and to just not escalate.

With one student, I escalated things. That student clearly was used to getting their way, I think, and he was hoping that "if I conflict cycle I'll get exited from the room." But I didn't have a bar of that. In hindsight, with more teacher experience, I'm not sure anything would have worked with that kid, but me just taking notes and trying to continue with the class actually heightened him significantly and he threw a punch at me. It was meant to scare me. It didn't connect. It was one of those [situations]. He was hoping that I would flinch, which I did. That was dealt with. That was in my first year. I think the school dealt with it really well.

The school did deal with it well and parents came in and had interviews, and I assume all the protocols were followed. It felt like I was supported, but that is one of those life experiences that happen in the school that made me think, "What am I doing?" I did do an undergraduate degree first, and then I did the Grad Dip. I was a little bit older than other beginning teachers, but [first school] was one of those school where there's high turnover of staff. They've got young staff.

[when asked if he thought teaching was going to be like this] No. My instant response is no, but I fell into teaching in the sense that there is no way that I would have predicted, that I would have done it. I knew there were naughty kids, and they scared me, and I didn't know how teachers could deal with that.

I certainly did question what I was doing in that situation. That was quite scary. Subsequent situations with violent students or drunken students have

been quite formative. When I was the year adviser, we had one of the teens in the school grounds drunk. I can't remember the whole situation now, but it was like the end of a long chain of things. To be part of the meetings with that student and the family and the deputy principal and saying, "I'm sorry, you can't come back." We've just taken too many steps, and it was so many steps. That was distressing as well. I have seen people say, "Now, that's it," and walk away. I don't.

As Jacob has progressed in his career, he had seen his role in the school shift and was frequently approached, as a strong teacher, to take on School Leader C (Executive) teacher positions. He reflected that he enjoys supporting his SLCs and working with his team, but he is not interested in becoming a permanent SLC.

Some leaders don't know [what supports, and processes, are available]. I would agree with that. One of the things that I had to push myself to do sometimes is to try to talk more to people I could see don't really have support from their leaders. One thing is that I haven't needed much support in my career. I'd quite happily say that. I have supported other teachers, and one of the things that I like to do is support my SLC because [I see it as] it's teamwork. Certainly, some SLCs know the ropes better than others...

It would be much more challenging, if I didn't have the nerve and guts to speak out about stuff for the team. That's actually an interesting little side story. In my first years of teaching, I was inspired by a couple of teachers who were quite outspoken, not negatively, but pointed things out, that I would have been embarrassed to point out. I remember thinking, "How can you say that? That's sounds really challenging," without realising that they were quite targeted comments, in order to draw people's attention to issues that could affect everyone and [they were] done in a relatively respectful way. In subsequent years, I realise that that was just one part of the stuff that they did, and how they helped around that school.

I try to do that. I'm quite happy to say the controversial thing, if I think it might be worth talking about. I don't mind bringing up a contentious issue in a staff meeting in front of everyone, and then having a member of the executive going, "You haven't got that quite right," and then me asking for it

to be explained because it's for the benefit of other people, even if I know [what they are talking about].

So that is a targeted thing that I do. I think, if you felt you couldn't do that, that would make things really challenging. I know lots of people feel like they can't speak their mind. I do know that.

Jacob spoke positively of his experiences in teaching and was planning on remaining in the profession, however, he did recall a period at around 6 to 8 years of teaching where he had seriously considered leaving. He recalled friends and colleagues also having a similar reflection point at around the same time.

I'm not particularly interested in going any further either. I have always done that stuff in the non-confrontational way, in a way of the thing about support, and information, and helping other people out. I get a lot of joy out of doing. That's another thing that's kind of enabled the longevity of my career in the sense that, you know some people say you should be doing leadership stuff, and to me, this is like leadership stuff. It's that kind of leading from below, making people feels supported. That keeps me there.

I'm not sure career-wise. I've had two big times in my career I think, "Should I keep doing this?" One of them was at about the eight-year mark. I remember that it's the eight-year mark, because I've spoken to quite a few teachers in the last 20 issues that stay around six/seven/eight years, is when they start going, "What am I doing?" I actually applied for some public service jobs and some other things. It was funny when I was looking at the applications. I [thought], "I could probably do all of this stuff easily, but I've got no experience doing any of this stuff except for within the realm of teaching." There's a certain part of me that feels, if it got to be all too much, I'd actually be a bit terrified about doing other things just because I know that within the role of a classroom teacher, there are so many skills we have and we're often told they're easily transferable, but I *kinda* do feel [as if], "I'm this old and I haven't done much else since I've been teaching apart from just teaching. I don't know how dead-end I am."

So, there's certainly a later year type of thing that I'm starting to think which is, "Am I stuck? Am I stuck here? If I actually needed to desperately get out,

could I?" And, that's another thing that at the back of my head is keeping me in my job.

The realism of it, I don't know how much it is, but it's certainly something that takes you there. I am, currently, I'm just thinking about now, I am currently least excited about what seems to be a never-ending thing of administrative stuff. I do wonder about younger teachers who are grappling with all of that kind of stuff, because there's certainly more.

It's lovely that everything's online, because that's me. I love doing that kind of stuff. The upkeep and management of that kind of stuff is really tricky. I find that challenging. I find that some schools are much better than others in having systems for parent contact around little things like absences and what have you. Different schools responded to the change in face to face teaching hours a few years back. Only just now, some schools are looking at revisiting timetables and changing things, because that was a school-by-school basis of how we deal with that and that left different amounts of time free or for teachers to catch up and to do things. I've certainly been at a couple of schools where inbuilt relief was one of those options for having greater face-to-face teaching time, and there are incredible benefits of face-to-face inbuilt relief because you meet more kids in the school which is great. Usually, I enjoy that kind of stuff, but there is a low-level panic about preparation, if you're not sure that you might have some idea about free lessons.

I see younger teachers really struggling with that. "I've just got my head around this and now I've got inbuilt relief."

Jacob also reflected on changes he has seen in the demographics of teaching and the role of leadership in schools.

One of the things that I've noticed as I've been aging, I think there are more male classroom teachers than when I started, but certainly not the majority. It troubles me that there are lots of men in leadership positions. It seems [as though], I don't know the stats right now, but certainly earlier in my career the proportion of men who were in SLC positions compared to those in the classroom versus women in the workplace, that was an imbalance. I've seen a number of situations where men that want to keep teaching and be classroom teachers like career [long], are not looked at so highly. There have been times



where I've thought, "I'm I going to be one of those old male classroom teachers that people look at like, "You didn't get a leadership position?" From an actual logical perspective and what have you, I know that's way more emotive than being something that might be a risk.

I do feel that, if you are performing well as a young teacher, and you show leadership capabilities, that if you reject those opportunities, people look at you differently. They certainly wonder why you haven't. I've had subsequent conversations with older teachers saying, "If you don't take those opportunities now, you might not get offered them again."

I can think to myself and think, "Yes my thoughts and opinions about many things have changed as I've grown older." I can think to me being younger going, "No, I'll never have kids." On the one hand, me saying I don't want a leadership position that takes me out of the classroom, and then ends up being more administrative than supporting, more administrative than curriculum, that's what I see a lot of. If my thoughts change in the future, will I have locked myself out? I'm not too concerned. I'm really not too concerned. I enjoy the teaching, and as I said before, I've always worked with and supported my SLCs.

Jacob was asked how he felt about other leadership opportunities, such as specialist positions, or the lead teacher positions in ACT schools.

I haven't seen those positions [lead teacher] work particularly well, but that might just be the schools that I've been at. Certainly, when I looked at the details when the lead professional practice stuff became available, it seemed like all the kinds of stuff that made me not want to apply. If you win one of those, you might need to move to another school. There weren't very defined things around teaching versus working with other teachers. In a lot of ways, when I looked at the comparison between the two roles, it looked like in some ways, a much less defined role which was open to-- abuse isn't the right word. It did seem like that they would be steppingstone positions for some people that wanted to get into SLC positions. If it was actually, it might attract some people who are really interested in that kind of stuff. Would the work be at a level where the remuneration was in line with the kind of work that we're doing? That's an important thing to me as well.

I'm not out there thinking we're underpaid in the big scheme of things. I get that there's an idea that we should be competitive with other systems. I think our salary is pretty reasonable for an experienced classroom teacher. I'm not sure that that's commensurate when you move up to the SLC leadership positions, and that would just put another layer of stress on my head, because I know that if I did one of those, I would spend more time at school. That would be important for me, both personally and professionally and for the people I was working with, and those sort of formal positions. There's a weird sticking point right there, and I guess anecdotally, conversations about other kinds of roles and things that SLCs and higher do, is the pay and the process attracting the right type of people to that across the system.

That's another thing people have thrown back at me. "Well, if you think they're not attracting the right people, maybe you should go for it." Guess what? Maybe the right type of the person isn't the person that wants to be there, or are we giving the right kind of management training to people who do move into more managerial roles? Do we expect people to pick that up from great leaders, or do you actually have experience with that kind of stuff? That's some of the reasons why I'm steering clear of that, and I'm happy right now, but I don't know that there's much more for me unless I went and did something like that. Yes, it's like it's a dead end where I don't want to risk it. I don't want to risk to my joy of the job, even though I complain, have bad days, but generally, I like it.

I have had a little bit of a joy in our professional learning teams. Last year, for some reason, we had SLCs managing those, and I can understand why structurally, because we had, a new principal and some new direction. In the previous two years, that was an opportunity for teachers to say, "Hey, would you like to either run some little action research or would you like to do some specific work with a group of teachers?" In those two years, I took on a leadership role. One year we just focused on [embedding digital technologies], before we had Google Classroom across the whole system. Some schools were experimenting, and we knew it was going to come to us and other schools out there, so we were in this grey zone. I was like, "I love all that stuff." I ran a team which was "let's experiment." It was me just

saying, "Hey, did you know you can do this? Now let's all do things in our different faculty areas." I loved that. That was really good.

[when asked if he was given time to do this work] Not really... It was done in line with the part [of the Teacher Professional Standards] that shows what kind of roles you should be doing as you progress through the levels, right? So, I'm an ET two. So, one of those things, it's grey areas as it should be taking on school wide roles. I always look at those things and go, "Yes, I know I should be taking on school wide roles." That's a school wide role. That's me working with teachers cross-faculty. I think we had meetings once every three or four weeks, and they were supposed to be discussion and that kind of stuff and some observations of each other's classes, which, that's still ongoing and happening right now. That was manageable. Sometimes it was tricky, but it wasn't me saying, "I have to be an SLC or whatever." That was a way [to work in a leadership role] that was nice and rewarding.

A lot of stuff is about knowing what we're supposed to do and finding a way to do that. That's good for yourself personally and professionally. I'm pretty good at doing that, but I don't think everybody is. I guess with some of the informal mentoring stuff, I do have younger teachers, that's some of the stuff I like to talk about. I do like to talk about how you can make your job better and more rewarding and easier. We're doing some mentoring stuff at school this year and changing it slightly, and there's a push to have some in-faculty mentors and some extra faculty mentors, so that those ones outside of faculty won't be talking about curriculum, because you don't have the overlap on purpose. It will be, "How do we manage time around reporting? How do we deal with behaviour management? "

Also, career type stuff as well. I put my hand up to say that I'd love to do that more formally. I think there was a like an afternoon a week we've talked about having a short half hour, 40-minute thing, and that I would love to work with a new teacher who is not in my faculty. That's the bigger picture stuff. Little initiatives like that, the kind of things that keep me in the job and I make sure that I'm looking for those [opportunities].

Jacob spoke about his workload and how being a teacher had the ability to impact on his home life as well.

My children see me being a teacher.

There are just some nights where I just wish I could stop thinking about the job, and I can't. If anything, that's when I'm feeling low about the job, which isn't often, but when it happens, the not being able to not think about my students, I find very challenging. That base level mental load, if I'm doing anything for myself, having fun or playing computer games, watching a movie or reading a book, part of me is thinking, "Have you done enough prep? Are you ready for that? What about this? Have you finished your marking?"

I'm sure every job has that, so I'm not 100% sure if it's my personality or the job. Most of my friends that I've met through teaching say that they have that. This Christmas break is the only time I don't have that. My family mentions it because I don't have, in my head, a picture of my classes, the kids that need my support. It's a [down] time. It really has, as I age, highlighted the difference between the term breaks and the Christmas break. I wouldn't want my kids to always have those thoughts in their head. It might happen with any career, I don't know. If anything, another significant event without support and having this mental load, that would be what would make me leave.

I'm certainly worried about the federal government's idea of how much longer people should work. I love high school. I've had people trying to get me to teach in colleges for years now. I still have the time for high school kids. I don't know how old I can get and keep doing [high school teaching]-- I don't want to be then shuffled into one of those icky roles in the school, as an aging teacher.

Absolutely. I think that's not healthy [taking work home], which is why I don't. For many years I took work home. I was marking at home. I'm not sure I saved any more time. There's certainly report writing time, I know I am going to be doing work at home. Some major assessment periods, I try to work a little bit later, rather than bringing it home, but [pause] I kinda feel like the minority. I feel that lots of people do take work home and mark

heaps. I might be a bit blinkered to that because I do feel like having a lot of teaching experience, there are lots of workflow issues that are just automatic. So, I don't actively need to think about that as much anymore and I'm helping younger teachers to find workflow ways, to do things, it's really helpful but that could be another thing. I certainly feel like I should be taking work home sometimes, but I actively choose not to.

[when asked if the "take work home" culture came from above or a general culture in teaching] Maybe indirectly from above. It's that horrible Australian Tall Poppy syndrome. Yes, I know that I am good at my job, so I don't know what it feels like if you're finding it tough. If a teacher had heaps of behaviour management in the classroom, or tough classes or is that a school where [behaviours were] a high-level thing, then there'd be more admin stuff related to that. We know that one of the best ways to work with students that might be more challenging is to make sure that they have timely and good and helpful feedback.

Thus, if you're all involved in admin and the restorative stuff, if the school did that, with those students, then there might be less time to actually do that capably within the prep time that you had in your lines off. It is something that I make an active choice to try not to. That's a self-preservation thing. I've got much better at going, "no, you've done enough," rather than, "I need to do everything." I know caring about kids is tough. That's why you do it. That's why one does it.

No, I don't think it's a positive at all [taking work home]. I try to challenge it. We don't do that enough [tell teachers to not take work home]. I don't think we do that enough. I don't think that's formally done enough. I'm even going to jump in and hesitate to say that some schools would be terrified if some teachers that they're worried about, that aren't working at capacity, teaching them how to not do extra work, would be problematic. I'm jumping to conclusions because I think that within the way we manage our schools, we're not very good at managing underperforming teachers. We don't give them the support. It's sometimes very much easier to move underperforming teachers on and have somebody else deal with it.

I've seen that happen a few times, but there's always part of me that's going, "Should they be in teaching, anyway? Are they under-performing because there's a real discrepancy between what one needs to do?"

He has found that at times there have been conflicts for him between his "life and the job" but he has taken an approach that the school stand down period is a time for him to reflect and unwind.

I like the holidays, I'm not going to lie. That's silly too, but I know if anybody questions me and says, "Holidays. You're so lucky." Then, I can throw that quick back, "Do you want to be a high school teacher?" "No, no. I wouldn't be a high school teacher". I know that's not why I chose the job, but if it wasn't for the holidays, I suspect I wouldn't have lasted so long either.

This block right now, feels maybe a little bit too long, because it's making me nervous about going back to work, because it's been such a break. This extra week ... allows me to keep going as well. Some of that is the nature of the job, the on/off makes it bearable. One of the things I was thinking about on here, key life experiences, I've grown up as a teacher. From when I started teaching, my wife and I were seeing each other, and so in the course of that time, I've had ... children. I've [lost family members]. I've had students commit suicide. It's all those kinds of things. I have to say that the workplace support for all of that has been incredible. Surprisingly, solid and incredible. That would be another reason why facing some of those big things, I've stayed rather than gone.

I don't know if it's just that [supporting each other] in the teaching profession. Maybe there's a type, there's a personality, working with people that want to work with other people, and the collegiate nature of the job means that people look out for each other a bit more. Certainly, in my experience, I try to do that for other people, but there's structural stuff as well. I did do the purchase leave scheme before my son was born, and we did our best to plan that, as best as we could. I had a whole term off when he was born. The two of us were off together, and that kind of encouragement to do that from my workplace, I know it makes it easier on everyone as well, but having a job where I was able to purchase leave and have time off, was great.

Then of course, the structure around how the hours of schooling work, meant that as a young parent, I was much more able to get away and to childcare and do those kinds of things. After a personal loss in my family and the loss of a student at my school, I did have a very troubling period at work. The reason why I ended up seeing the employee assistance program and getting further support for that was purely because of the structures in the school. It was set up to look out for and support teachers as well as students, and so what really made me get the help that I needed to get through that, were people who I'm not easily friends with, saying, "Are you okay? What's going on?"

I feel for that side of things, I wouldn't have listened to friends. What I listened to were people who had working in roles in the school who knew that that was supposed to do that kind of thing for their peers. As much as that was terrifying, on reflection, that's yet another thing that has kept me in this kind of job.

#### **5.3.1.8. Participant 8: Betty**

Betty (mid-thirties) was a full-time teacher in the ACT Education Directorate, working in a high school. She had been teaching for over ten years and was working in a specialist position within her school.

Betty spoke about choosing to become a teacher, saying, [when asked "you always wanted to teach?"] Yes, I think so, but I don't know really why. My partner asked me this the other day. I really liked school as a kid. I was really good at school. I think what I really liked and wasn't aware that I liked, was the idea of bossing people around. [laughing] That's what I thought it involved. I remember playing school with my little sister, I was always the teacher. [laughs] She was never the teacher. Nothing else ever really interested me.

Overall, Betty's reported that her teaching experience had been positive, however, for a number of reasons, and at different points in her career she wanted to leave.

I thought about quitting lots of times, lots and lots of times. Primarily, because of behaviour management stuff and constant confrontations with kids

all the time. It changed a little bit over the years, and I might get a bit emotional at times [when talking about her experiences].

In my first year of teaching, I think it was early 2002, there was one in particular kid that I had in the class. You know when you have that one kid in your class who totally changes the dynamic and not really knowing how to handle it properly and not feeling -- I was supported at my school, lots of suggestions, but I think I'd already started with some bad habits in terms of behaviour management skills in the classroom, and so trying to overturn those habits I found really hard.

I also I had moved, I had no family in Canberra, I'm not from here originally. I had a couple of friends but not that we were close enough that I could turn to --The truth is that I was very isolated here. That made it harder. I also had some ongoing mental health stuff as well, so I didn't know, that affected it...[pause]. That made it really hard and why I'm reacting like this at the moment [Betty got upset recounting her experiences]. That did get better slowly. Sorry.

[pause] My first placement was for three years. I did have a lot of support at that school. I wasn't left on my own. I was the only first year out there. There were some other younger teachers but they all seemed to have at least a year's experience under their belt and so I think if I've had someone else who was also a first year around, who I could talk to, that would have made a lot of difference.

After that first three years, I took a year off and went [overseas] and taught for six months, which was horrendously awful for a whole range of reasons. I worked for the first six months of that year and then travelled around the last six months. Having that massive break was really good but I remember coming back thinking, "Okay. I'm going to give teaching one more shot and if this doesn't work, I have to change things."

That time in my first year when I was seriously thinking about quitting, I was in a really bad place. The only thing that stopped me from quitting was ... financial kind of stuff.



Betty returned to Canberra and started at an ACT Education school. She recounted her experiences at this point,

It was the best year of my life. It was a really tough school to work at. I had some really tough classes. There were fights in my classroom, and there were all sorts of full-on things, but I had an awesome Level Two [SLC / Executive teacher] who was really supportive. I had very good experienced teachers who were happy to work with me. The class that I was having difficulty with, everyone was having [difficulties] in this class. They were having the same difficulties with those kids, so I knew it wasn't just me.

I also had, in terms of my colleagues, the right people there at the right time... and my best friends now, we were all working at that school at that time. It was just chance and luck that we were all there at the same time. That to me was peak in terms of professional growth and also personal growth, just a really important year for me.

It was really hard, but I thought, "No. I'm going to stick it out anyway." I stayed at that school for [more than 5] years. It was during that time I took on a new subject area but then also I was [working in a roll supporting other teachers]..

I'm not naturally a people-person so being a teacher is hard work for me. I guess I've stuck with it because I find it really satisfying. I think it's a really important job. The times when it's good, it's really good, kind of thing. At that time, it was those constant confrontations with kids. I'm not very good at that stuff, maybe no one is. I think that other people might be a bit better at handling it. It was just really getting me down.

Also, [I got] a little bit bored. Even though you're dealing with different kids, it's the same shit, different faces. I wanted something else, but I didn't-- Even now, when I still think, "I don't want to do this anymore," there's nothing else that I really feel passionate about that I want to go and retrain in or something like that. Maybe if there was, I would have quit a long time ago.

Anyway, about halfway through my placement at my last school, I started a Masters in [specialist teaching], so I've retrained to be a [specialist teacher]. I wanted to do something different, but I was not interested in a promotion. It's not work that I particularly want to do, and there is nowhere else to go, unless you do something that's a bit different? So, I reached out to my [specialist

teacher] I was really lucky at my school that one of the [specialist teachers] was retiring, and so I could just slip into her job, and she trained me. I was really lucky there.

I've always, particularly at my last school, taken on lots of those extracurricular things and those extra jobs that are actually done at school. The last year I was there, so it was my sixth year I'd taken on too much stuff. I had a bit of a meltdown, at a really busy time and had about two days off. Then I just realised I can't be at this school anymore. I've had enough of the confrontations and the-- Constantly feeling like it's a battle.

I had a class where I just felt sick every time I had to go and teach that class, like a tired stomach and I realised this is not normal, I don't have to be like this. I applied for transfer, didn't get that job but got another one. Now I teach at a college and I've been there for five years and that's much better. Because the kids are that little bit older, they're not so naughty. I still, now and even after five years, get surprised when you ask kids to do something and they go "Okay" and they just do it. I'm like "Well, okay, that's all right, I don't have to have an argument with you about this." Still I'm pleasantly surprised when there's nice things like that, it's just so much less stressful. I can go from my office to my teaching space without going "Get your hands off that kid, where's your uniform, pick that up--." You can just really focus on just teaching and getting to know the kids, and I'm so much less stressed than I used to be. Less angry about stuff.

I was getting to the point where I was just hating kids and had no patience for kids, even kids who are really nice and not a problem. The last five years there's been a few times where I've thinking I don't want to do this anymore, but it hasn't really been because of behaviour of kids, but just more about I want to do something different, but not really knowing what else I want to do.

Her biggest reason for staying was due to job security and a feeling that she wouldn't be qualified to do another job at the same level of pay she was receiving. She said,

What else has made me stay is, not just not having a passion for other thing but also I'm aware of the good things, other good things about the job in

terms of a permanent government job in a workforce that's becoming more temporary and you're only getting contracts, that job security is really nice.

She also spoke about the importance of job security in the future for her, and how she might consider another career at some point.

I still have this thinking that I'd like to do something else but I'm still not really sure what. I'm also hoping that--I'm hoping that babies will be on the cards in the next few years. If that occurs having some maternity leave up my sleeve rather than just going, "I'm going to try something else now." If I was giving up all that job security for something I was really passionate about that would make sense, but giving up something really good for I don't know what, is a bit-- I'm not naturally a risk taker and that's probably not really me.

Betty considered the pathways available for experienced teachers to move to positions that were not only focused on classroom teaching.

Bare minimal. That's why I became a [specialist teacher]. Some of that lead-teacher stuff in terms of supporting other teachers to become better, that's part of that job. Really as a [specialist teacher] to collaborate with other classroom teachers and help them become better ... and all that kind of stuff. I think this lead-teacher or there's another term for it as well, highly accomplished or something, it's something like that. I think having that is a good opportunity for teachers but for me personally, I haven't gone that path because I don't really see what the point is. You put it on your [resume]-- The rigmarole you have to go through to get it- because I've got a colleague who is a lead-teacher. He got that classification. he did some rigmarole to go through it. At the moment we get a one-off payment and that's three and a half thousand dollars or something. You've got to pay \$3,000 to get this qualification or something. There isn't necessarily [a purpose] -- Like our school is very good at wanting to do new things and try new things. If people are going, "Hey can I do this thing across the school?" Then no one is trying to give you the opportunity to do that. There is no official position for those people to do anything necessarily.

I feel like if I didn't have a principal who is very supportive or a very flexible structure in the school, or you're in a high school that's really tough and all the teachers are running around like lemmings because you're running detention for this kid and sorting out this fighting, sorting out this bullying or whatever. There's not enough space for those people to really do anything. A lack of promotions or lack of other options for things to do within teaching, I think, is probably something that a lot of people would find frustrating. I think it's an incredibly complex issue though because of the way things are structured. People could get jobs in the office doing whatever, but then if that job doesn't last forever then they have to get spat back out into schools. Where do you find long-term placements for people who don't feel comfortable [with challenging behaviours], they still might want to work in education? About my fourth or fifth year teaching probably, there was a definite push that all schools had to be, all things to all kids. It was at my second school. When I first got there, we were allowed to have three levels of streaming within our classes, and it was fantastic. We were able to have level three classes, who were incredibly hard work but there were like 12 kids you could really target those particular needs, and then apparently the school was told, "No, you're not allowed to have level three classes anymore." So, we had these merged mainstream classes of 32 kids, and it was just an absolute nightmare. Where they used to have the school without walls and different types of schools, and so, I think, having different types of schools would make it possible for teachers who want slightly different things out of their jobs to fill those roles.

One reflection that Betty gave for what she perceived as an inability to retain teachers in the profession was the lack of permanent positions available. As a beginning teacher who was considering leaving the profession, her permanent government position was a major factor that kept her coming back each term.

Even within the education department, the fact that they're really not offering permanency straight away anymore, people are on contracts and on contracts and on contracts and then getting permanency-- The way it works now, they can only get permanency if there's actually a job in that particular school,

rather than when I was first employed 15 years ago or whatever it was, you were offered permanency and then were placed in a school.

There's talk of it in other industries as well, a friend of mine works in law, but does government work and she can't get a permanent job, she gets contract after contract. There is a term for that, but I can't think of what it is.

I know a few people who have quit teaching. Someone at my first school, in my first year, he had only been teaching for about three years and he quit, it was behaviour management stuff. He was just sick of dealing with teenagers and not feeling like he was getting anywhere, so he pursued other stuff. As far as I know, lately we've lost touch, but as far as I know he's never come back to teaching.

As a beginning teacher, Betty had some positive experiences with her colleagues and supervisors and remembers having a mentor in her early teaching days. However, the quality of those relationships did not always help her navigate some very difficult classroom settings as well as she would have liked.

For me it's of a combination of stuff. That first year I worked at my first school, that was definitely the best situation that it could be. Where my level two was really supportive, there were really clear processes involved in terms of a card system and traffic lights. Also, the Principal ran a really tight ship. The kids were a little bit scared of the Principal. The kids all knew who the Principal was, which, later Principal's I had kids who had no idea who that person is, and I think that's really bad.

The school was tough because of low socioeconomic situations and lots of kids coming from really horrible backgrounds, and so you totally understand why those kids are behaving like they're behaving. But the way the school was run was that, this is the stuff that we don't put up with, and if you can't do what we ask you to do with this, then you can't be here.

If you swore at a teacher, you went home and that's it. That really clear line about, this is what we don't put up with. That Principal ended up going on sick leave or retiring or something. We went through some changes [details omitted] the whole situation was handled by the department terribly and has caused a whole lot of stress on everyone and the school was just a bit of a mess. That Principal left, we got another one who came in and said, I

remember very clearly in their first speech to us, we need to improve the corporate image of the school and reduce the suspension statistics, not look at what we do with kids who are suspended all the time. It was all about appearances. That's when things went down. Apparently things, I still have friends who work there still, things are better than they were, but I don't think in any school, even if you've got kids who come from homes where the parents are really supportive of school and that have all that cultural capital to do well at school [would run well without structure]. What frustrates me and one of that things that makes me want leave is the politics of it. That we're not actually going to take a stand and say, "We're not going to accept this at school." We just acquiesce to the parents who complain about stuff or we'll just do this, or let this happen because we don't want to have a hard conversation with someone about it.

I'm terrible at having hard conversations with people and that's one of the reasons why I never became a level 2, because I see the further up the chain you, part of your job is to have those difficult conversations with people. I don't enjoy it, I'm not good at it, I don't want to do that job, that's why I never applied for one of those jobs.

Thinking about it now, a friend of mine who's sort of in and out of teaching, quit because he said that schools are being run like a business instead of like schools. It's the politics, how things look, all about selling the school rather than actually going "This is what we do on the ground and this is where the line is, and if your child can't stand behind the line they can't be here," kind of thing.

Just about all my friends are teachers and a lot of them got to a point where they've sort of had enough. It's not been the money that's made them [feel that way], "I know I'm not being paid enough or whatever," it's been stresses to do with behaviour management or workload or just bureaucratic or political crap that happens at schools, and combinations of lots of little pieces of that, like professional learning where they band you around whatever the latest jargon term is. It's awful.

The way professional learning is handled, it's better than when I first started teaching. "No we're going to send you on this course for a day," and just talk at you for a whole day, not let you figure out how to apply this or give you

any time when you go back to work to figure out how you're going to apply it. I took out an after-school PD for two hours about happiness. "So we're focusing on teacher wellbeing and we're going to make you stay until 7 o'clock- [laughs] - to talk about happiness." I'm like, "Really you're missing the irony." No, I don't think they did. Little things that put people off are seeing staff members who are in positions of promotion or have got promotions, not because they're very good at their job but because they obviously talk the talk at the interview.

We had a bit of a rebellion at my school a few years ago where a Deputy Principal was trying to force this new way of doing things onto us. One of the teacher's kind of protested it about, "Well if you want us to do this extra thing what are you going to take away, in terms of the workload?" He said something really offensive like, "Unless you don't want to take it on then you obviously don't want to change how you are or something like that." It caused nearly a riot in our staff meeting.

This Deputy is always about appearances. He had basically no experience at being a Principal and got a fulltime Principal's job. I've worked with lots of great people in school leadership positions but also some who got their promotion because they worked on some literacy thing in the office and then they come back as a level two. Or even Deputy Principal when they can't even control their own classes. Then they have to support you, controlling your class and it's just disastrous. I think that also puts a lot of pressure on classroom teachers having SLC's who are not very good at their job.

Betty recalled behaviour management issues in some of the schools she taught at, in a wider context of how to support them and the teachers who are working with them.

I also used to have, ... kids who were suspended a lot, were on their way to jail kind of thing. Went to these places and they had small classrooms, the right kind of staff. That job is not for me, but for some teachers, they really love that stuff. Those really pointy end kids, small classes, a different kind of set up that really worked for those kids. Then I think at my second school they tried having a suspension centre for those kids who get suspended all the

time. You can't just send them home and they not come to school. Or the parents aren't going to come for the suspension re-entry meetings, or they don't actually care that their kid's suspended because they don't want to. It's too much hassle. I'm not sure what happened to suspension centre. I think it fell apart. Nothing was working. Having different opportunities for teachers, I think, would be a good idea.

I think it would be about Principals running tight ships in terms of, "This is the behaviour that we expect." Having structures in place and the Principals and Deputy Principals and level twos being willing to do what's needed to support the teachers so that they can just concentrate on their teaching. Not just saying that those teachers should be allowed to do whatever they like. I've worked with teachers before who were like, "I don't like that kid. Just get out." They kind of pick on them. That's not appropriate at all, but Principals running tight ships and having really clear expectations about workload on their teachers, I think, is the most important thing.

I guess it's hard to say what that one thing is. How do you pin it down to a small change that can happen? I think there's a lot of pressure on Principals now with this move to autonomy and they have to be these foremost qualifications in business management as well as running school stuff, so it's harder for them-- I think it's a money saving thing. We're going to give you this bucket of money so we don't have to employ people in our department to do that, but then Principals are going, "Okay. I could have 20 experienced teachers for this amount of salary money, or I could have 40 inexperienced teachers and have smaller class sizes." Then so a lot of experienced teachers are getting [moved on]

In Victoria, a friend of mine moved down there. I think she's only just recently got a permanent job after five years. She got contract after contract and she was explicitly told at least twice, "We would like to employ but we can't because you're too experienced and you cost too much money." That's a really hard thing for Principals to manage when they want to run a school and do their job, but the situation, they have to be runners of businesses as well as principals of schools.

I think if the structures are in place so that they can run tight ships with reasonable expectation about teacher workloads and high expectations about



student behaviour and structures in place. To say, "No, this is what's going to happen," and not being afraid of standing up to parents and going, "Actually, it's not acceptable for your child to behave like this." Being willing to put their foot down on that stuff, I think, that made a huge difference in my teaching life.

Yes, definitely [it's variable and good luck whether you get a good Principal or not]. The principal also needs really good people under them for that to happen. They can't do it all. They need really good deputies and really good level two's to help make that happen.

One final reflection that Betty had was around salaries and conditions of teachers and her role in the union.

I'm a strong union member... I've gone to union council meetings and all that kind of stuff, and so seeing- not consistently though- but seeing bits and pieces of the process of negotiating on enterprise agreements. It's a democratic process.

They have a sub-branch so that each school has a sub-branch and then when it comes to negotiating a new enterprise agreement, generally the process is each sub-branch has a council rep and then they have council meetings twice a term. Then in the lead up to the negotiating with the department, actually starting, they discuss at council the things that are probably going to be on the table like what we want to put down. Then that stuff goes back to sub-branches for discussion, and then they'll vote on things. If we want extra holiday pay or whatever it's going to be then that's all voted on and negotiated.

The last few times there's been a really big push for sub-branches about wanting more money and about us staying competitive in terms of offering salaries for recruitment, and I'm in a different position to a lot of people. I don't have children, I don't have dependents, I don't have a joint mortgage, so money's not as important to me as it is for other people, but I think the focus on salaries that's been around for the last eight years or so has been to the detriment of conditions. The democratic process of the union has led to that, where lots of people who have got crazy Canberra mortgages are going, "I need more money. We want more money." From my experience, it's not

about the money. What's kept me here or wanting me to go somewhere else. Definitely it's not about the money, conditions are what make the difference. It's conditions particularly around behaviour. It's complex there's not a quick fix for it.

For example, training new educators. When I first started, I think we had to go to a one-day sort of thing where they just talked at us about legal requirements, and it was a bit strange. When I first started teaching if there'd been compulsory things where I could go and meet other new educators and talk to them that would be really valuable. A lot of times enforcing days or enforcing things on people it's not always great because it doesn't work for them. Finding that balance between requiring something, making it compulsory but giving people choice about what works best for them is really hard.

Betty is an effective teacher, as evidenced by her promotion to a specialist position, where she, at the time of the interview, trained and supported other teachers in her school. In the interview Betty had said that she initially had not wanted to take on the specialist position, however, in a follow up email one reflection she had since the interview was that as the year has progressed, she had enjoyed it more than previously and was very happy in the role.

### **5.3.2. Summary of the Teachers' Experiences**

As the interview transcription and analysis was completed, using IPA as an underpinning structure, themes began to emerge. There were some themes which were consistent throughout all the participants, whilst there were some that were specific to beginning teachers and others that only emerged as significant to the experienced teachers. These themes are my interpretation of the participants experiences, through an IPA lens, which allows the experiences of the researcher to be linked with the experiences of the participants. In this section, it is my exploration and analysis of the participants experiences which is presented.

#### *5.3.2.1. Beginning teachers*

The results of the interviews suggested that there is a difference between the experiences of beginning teachers compared to experienced teachers. This is in

support of the quantitative data, which suggested that beginning teachers had higher intentions of leaving the profession compared to the experienced teachers.

The experienced teachers remembered some of the issues that the beginning teachers reported, however, they also stated that there has been a considerable shift in how beginning teachers are recruited and placed. They reported that the “old” model was for teachers to either receive permanency offers immediately out of university, or to get a long-term contract placement which were to fill in for absent staff. However, both beginning teachers reported that in their experience, and what they had observed with their peers, was a greater focus on “doing relief work first” and that long-term contracts (>a term) and permanency were rare occurrences.

There were themes that centred around the start of teaching which also included a feeling that there was a lack of adequate preparation in the pre-service education courses they covered. Some of the teachers reported that they did not study any behaviour management, whilst others said that they had only taken a single semester unit prior to graduating.

Another topic that was raised across multiple interviews was the presence of a mentor once they had gained a teaching position. The quality of that relationship was reported as having a direct impact on the overall positive or negative experience of teaching by multiple participants. For some, that mentor relationship was with another classroom teacher but for many the relationship between themselves and their supervisor was seen as more of a mentor/mentee relationship rather than a strictly school leader one. Those teachers who spoke of their mentors in a negative context also reported lower overall job satisfaction and an intent to leave teaching.

The final theme which emerged when speaking to beginning teachers, or experienced teachers reflecting on their start in the profession, was a difference between the overall culture of education compared with their previous working experiences. This was separate to experiences in dealing with students, instead it was centred around the staff culture as well as the workforce management structures and policies. The beginning teachers in this study all had previous long-term careers which they had left to start teaching. This was also the case for some of the experienced teachers who reflected on their experiences at the start of their career. The experiences that were discussed were around a “shock about how things are run” in the context of staff interactions and how paperwork and workplace specific processes were conducted. Some participants spoke of this in the context of not

feeling that their past skills and experiences were valued, whilst others directly spoke of hostile or unsupportive environments where they felt they were treated much like children themselves by colleagues or supervisors. This could be considered as an induction process issue as well as an organisational culture issue. Teachers who did not experience this negative interaction did not discuss induction or culture beyond some participants who spoke about transferring schools. This is discussed in the next section in more detail.

### 5.3.2.2. *Experienced teachers*

The more experienced teachers reported that they had many positive experiences, and those who reported negative experiences were mostly linked to feeling a lack of support or pathways for them as they progressed in their careers.

Some of the key topics that the experienced teachers spoke about were:

- A lack of a career pathway or being pushed to a pathway (staff or student management such as executive teacher roles) that they were not interested in. A feeling of “you’re experienced so you need to be an executive” rather than options to work in other specialist roles or even to remain as a high achieving classroom teacher.
- Teachers in specialist roles reported higher levels of satisfaction in that role than at other points of their careers.
- Feeling a lack of support in other endeavours, such as personal goals, businesses, or family commitments.
- When they did get support and recognition from their school, supervisors or peers it was a significant experience for them. Nominations for awards, or recognition through supervisors who they felt respected them were all discussed as highly positive.
- All the experienced teachers had something “new” or specialised that they did which all reported gave their job meaning. Some examples of this were:
  - Sharing through new teaching innovations outside their job.
  - Working with new teachers.
  - Being in a specialised role within the school where they work across the school in a particular area.

### 5.3.2.3. *Shared across teachers with different years of experience*

There were some themes which were not specific to the level of teaching experience of the participant. The topics which appeared to be shared across the participants, or specific to an individual are listed below.

Multiple participants reported that transitions between schools was a factor that impacted on them in the profession. Some teachers reported that they found it easy to transfer across schools and that allowed them to move to a school that was a “better fit” for them. This was either due to students, staff or even location in some instances. Other teachers reflected that the transfer process was difficult and a point at which they had considered leaving the profession. This was largely reported as due to difficulties in finding a school to move to, stress over not wanting to move from their current school and “being forced to go,” or complications with dealing with processes and Human Resources (HR). In some of the interviews there were reports that some school Principals take transfer requests very personally, whereas one participant reflected that her Principal understood that teaching at a school with very difficult student behaviours “isn’t for everyone” and was very supportive in assisting those teachers in finding a school that was a “better fit” for them.

The relationship between school leaders and classroom teachers appears to shift over time. Beginning teachers (and experienced teachers when reflecting on the start of their teaching career) all reflected that they needed support, mentoring and induction. Experienced teachers instead chose language such as respect, freedom and trust when they discussed what created a positive work environment for them. Participants spoke of their school leaders, and mentors, and a theme of feeling that their school leaders need to have in many cases more training to recognise this. They reported that they felt their supervisors needed to better understand how you work with newer teachers is very different to how you need to work with experienced staff. They also reported that they often felt that their supervisors and mentors lacked the time needed to effectively manage this.

This leads into another major topic that came up in multiple interviews, the quality of relationships with supervisors. This included School Leader C, B and A (also known as SLCs, Deputy Principals and Principals) as well as assigned mentors. Participants spoke of supervisors who had changed their lives, those that had helped them grow but also some that had bullied them or created work environments that felt toxic or unsupportive. Some teachers raised the question of how effective and

supportive environments are created, or how you allow teachers to have enough flexibility to make their classroom their own, while still building a shared culture.

Both experienced and beginning teachers presented a feeling of not having their past experiences outside of teaching be valued. Even participants who were overall very happy in their roles and felt a strong sense of worth in their role reported that at various points in their careers, they felt that they were seen outside of the context of the teaching profession. Some teachers found this when starting a career in teaching after experiences in other professions, whilst others reported it in the context of having other experiences outside their role which could have benefitted their school but were seen as a distraction or of no value to the classroom. One teacher said they felt a sense of “this is how education is, so you need to fit” rather than “you’re a professional who brings a wealth of knowledge and skills, how can we use those and benefit.”

Student behaviours, and a perceived lowering of expectations towards students, were raised by multiple teachers. The behaviours were often reported alongside a feeling of a lack of support when dealing with student issues. Some teachers felt it was a deficit in their preservice education, and others felt that there needed to be a greater focus on induction into their specific school’s behaviour management processes. There were also discussions around a perception of schools lowering of standards in behaviour and academic expectations. For many they said they felt that this was linked with a removal of autonomy in what they were teaching and assessing, but it was not tied to national testing - rather a reflection of a lack of trust in what grades they gave students, or in the behaviour management processes they used in their classes.

Each of these points, along with those raised in the participant summaries were considered, analysed and reflected upon by the researcher. The topics were grouped into major themes and considered from an underpinning IPA approach. From this, the proceeding emergent major themes were determined. They are presented below and are then considered against philosophical theories in the proceeding chapter.

#### **5.4. Emergent Themes**

The analysis of the experiences of the participants, through the lens of the researcher, determined that there were three major emergent themes in this study

under which the proceeding experiences were grouped. The themes were not directly linked to teacher attrition, but many were relevant to retention, job satisfaction and motivation.

The three major themes which emerged in this study are the motivation behind the teacher choosing the profession, the perceived level of support (beginning teachers) or recognition (experienced teachers) and the perceived effectiveness of the relationship between them and their school leaders (including mentors).

#### **5.4.1. Motivation - Why did they become a teacher?**

Each of the teachers in this study had different reasons for wanting to become a teacher. In most cases their initial motivation was either linked with some form of wanting to impart knowledge to others or it was tied to a want to give to the community (in their time and experience). This difference may, at first, appear to be slight but as the interview transcripts were analysed further it became clear that, while related to each other, the impact of the difference was significant for teachers. This theme was not as strong as the following support/recognition and relationships trends that emerged, as it required the interpretation of the participants reason for choosing teaching, which was not a specific topic which was initially addressed in the semi-guided questions. However, it was a trend that ran through many of the interviews and each group had different responses to their experiences. The need to have a stronger model to connect a teacher's initial reason for joining the profession is presented in section 6.2.1.2. where the FIT-Choice scale is offered for future research as a means to further explore the findings presented in the following section.

##### **5.4.1.1. *Imparting subject knowledge***

Many of the teachers, experienced and beginning, joined the profession as they had experience of knowledge that they wanted to impart on others.

Veronica: I dressed my sister, there's six years between her and I, so I used to dress her in my school uniform and make her do worksheets. I would fret, and I would sit her in her highchair and make her do all these worksheets. Probably that's when I started to think about this idea of being a teacher, but at first, I absolutely refused to be a teacher. Everyone kept saying, "I think you'd be a great teacher." But, no, no, no. I pushed it all away.

I did my honours in [first subject area], took it and went overseas. Actually, that's where my teaching started. I'm an [specialist] teacher, I worked for [resource writing company]. I did curriculum resources modifying [professional educational resources], doing a lot of that sort of thing, then I got into emergency education. I worked with [aid providers] helping set up schools and doing trauma education for [for countries after catastrophes], and those types of things.

Sally: Then they can get an E or whatever grade. But of course, that's the worst-case scenario, Stacey. There are some lovely kids who give it their best shot. I really enjoy working with those kids who are willing to give it their best shot. They're challenging and exciting, and a lot of them are a lot smarter than me... And a lot more agile. I might be more experienced in maths, but they have more agile minds. They're great fun. They are really good fun to work with.

James: I'd had a lot of experience prior to teaching, coaching [sport], so I've had a lot of experience dealing with kids. And I had the 2 and half years overseas ... teaching.

These teachers, when given roles in which they were able to teach their subject area to eager students, reported high levels of job satisfaction and intent to stay in the profession. However, these same teachers reported their lowest moments in job satisfaction all tied to some form of not being able to achieve this. They chose language such as "to see my students finally understand is amazing," or expressed frustration when outside factors impacted on student academic outcomes. For example, Sally reported that one of her greatest frustrations came from not being able to award a student an academic grade that she felt they deserved. In this example the frustration was tied in with a feeling of not being given enough scope to use her own professional judgement, with the feeling that she was not doing the right thing for the student from a knowledge acquisition standpoint. These teachers are well suited to college level positions, and this is also shown in the quantitative data in the next section. Teachers who enter the profession with a want to impart knowledge to their students, due to a passion for a subject themselves, do not always see negative student behaviours as barriers to success. Instead they were much more



focused on these as areas which needed to be addressed by their schools and school leaders. They did not see improvements in student behaviours as important as the improvement in student academic outcomes.

Sally: Of course, I'm told from the higher ups, that it's my job to engage them. Well, until we say that this is a fail, getting seven percent on a test is a fail, until we say those sorts of things, kids are not going to step up.

Betty: I think it would be about Principals running tight ships in terms of, "This is the behaviour that we expect." Having structures in place and the Principals and Deputy Principals and level twos being willing to do what's needed to support the teachers so that they can just concentrate on their teaching.

Teachers who were knowledge imparters, reported that negative student behaviours that impacted on their ability to teach and the ability of those around them to learn were major issues that decreased their job satisfaction. They used language like "real teaching," or "finally able to get to teach" when speaking of their experiences with negative or challenging student behaviours.

Sally: That's not teaching. That's behaviour management.

If they were given a class that they could actually teach, they might have actually enjoyed it.

I've been in a college since 2001. There were some lovely moments at high school, and I just perhaps can't remember them really. But of course, there are also some real [difficult classes in high school]. I think it [high school] is very different. In fact, I don't know many people that I've worked with a long time who are still teaching. A lot of my friends have retired, but I think high school is much, much more difficult. Because we have a real engagement problem.

We have to cater for all [student issues] much more, I think, than we used to.

Veronica: Those kids [college students in her current classes] are such a delight, and there is not a chance I wouldn't leave teaching, if I was moved to another college or to a high school. Because I'm not going to have that again. [When asked if other colleges have behaviour issues] I think yes, they are reports back from other colleges that they get a bit of that. That's definitely, I

think, what makes me stay and do the [part time load] is the kids that I have. So, I teach [first and second subject areas] and I think sometimes that I am the first person to really tell them about the civil rights and how that came about and they get into those conversations and that's a really great responsibly to have. Then they come back with, "Well we're gonna fix it because we would just do this this and this." I'm like, "Yes, you do that because I'm pretty sure we thought we were going to fix it in 1996 and we didn't." So, like passing the baton, here we go...

I think that's what teaching is, and I love the conversations I have with my team. That's fantastic and for that I will do the marking. If I had to deal with any of the other stuff, or if I had to do that full time, no way.

Betty: I thought about quitting lots of times, lots and lots of times. Primarily, because of behaviour management stuff and constant confrontations with kids all the time. It changed a little bit over the years and I might get a bit emotional at times.

I guess I've stuck with it because I find it really satisfying. I think it's a really important job. The times when it's good, it's really good, kind of thing. At that time, it was those constant confrontations with kids. I'm not very good at that stuff, maybe no one is. I think that other people might be a bit better at handling it. It was just really getting me down.

Also, a little bit bored. Even though you're dealing with different kids, it's the same shit, different faces.

Now I teach at a college and I've been there for five years and that's much better. Because the kids are that little bit older, they're not so naughty. I still, now and even after five years, get surprised when you ask kids to do something and they go "Okay" and they just do it. I'm like "Well, okay, that's all right, I don't have to have an argument with you about this." Still I'm pleasantly surprised when there's nice things like that, it's just so much less stressful. I can go from my office to my teaching space without going "Get your hands off that kid, where's your uniform, pick that up--." You can just really focus on just teaching and getting to know the kids, and I'm so much less stressed than I used to be. Less angry about stuff.

I was getting to the point where I was just hating kids and had no patience for kids, even kids who are really nice and not a problem.

I feel like if I didn't have a principal who is very supportive or a very flexible structure in the school, or you're in a high school that's really tough and all the teachers are running around like lemmings because you're running detention for this kid and sorting out this fighting, sorting out this bullying or whatever. There's not enough space for those people to really do anything.

Where do you find long-term placements for people who don't feel comfortable [with challenging behaviours], they still might want to work in education? About my fourth or fifth year teaching probably, there was a definite push that all schools had to be, all things to all kids. It was at my second school. When I first got there, we were allowed to have three levels of streaming within our classes, and it was fantastic. We were able to have level three classes, who were incredibly hard work but there were like 12 kids you could really target those particular needs, and then apparently the school was told, "No, you're not allowed to have level three classes anymore." So, we had these merged mainstream classes of 32 kids, and it was just an absolute nightmare. Where they used to have the school without walls and different types of schools, and so, I think, having different types of schools would make it possible for teachers who want slightly different things out of their jobs to fill those roles.

Just about all my friends are teachers and a lot of them got to a point where they've sort of had enough. It's not been the money that's made them [feel that way], "I know I'm not being paid enough or whatever," it's been stresses to do with behaviour management or workload or just bureaucratic or political crap that happens at schools, and combinations of lots of little pieces of that, like professional learning where they band you around whatever the latest jargon term is. It's awful.

That job is not for me, but for some teachers, they really love that stuff. Those really pointy end kids, small classes, a different kind of set up that really worked for those kids.

From my experience, it's not about the money. What's kept me here or wanting me to go somewhere else. Definitely it's not about the money, conditions are what make the difference.

It's conditions particularly around behaviour. It's complex there's not a quick fix for it.

The beginning teachers who were in this category commented that they were unprepared for this side of teaching and felt unsupported, whereas experienced teachers reported it was challenging, disheartening and frustrating to deal with difficult student behaviours. All the experienced teachers who had reported this, had moved on from “difficult schools” or were in positions where behaviour management and dealing with student issues was no longer a key component of their daily work experiences.

Betty: Someone at my first school, in my first year, he had only been teaching for about three years and he quit, it was behaviour management stuff. He was just sick of dealing with teenagers and not feeling like he was getting anywhere, so he pursued other stuff. As far as I know, lately we've lost touch, but as far as I know he's never come back to teaching.

For me it's of a combination of stuff. That first year I worked at my first school, that was definitely the best situation that it could be. Where my level two was really supportive, there were really clear processes involved in terms of a card system and traffic lights. Also, the Principal ran a really tight ship. The kids were a little bit scared of the Principal. The kids all knew who the Principal was, which, later Principal's I had kids who had no idea who that person is, and I think that's really bad.

The school was tough because of low socioeconomic situations and lots of kids coming from really horrible backgrounds, and so you totally understand why those kids are behaving like they're behaving. But the way the school was run was that, this is the stuff that we don't put up with, and if you can't do what we ask you to do with this, then you can't be here.

If you swore at a teacher, you went home and that's it. That really clear line about, this is what we don't put up with. That Principal ended up going on

sick leave or retiring or something. We went through some changes [details omitted] the whole situation was handled by the department terribly and has caused a whole lot of stress on everyone and the school was just a bit of a mess. That Principal left, we got another one who came in and said, I remember very clearly in their first speech to us, we need to improve the corporate image of the school and reduce the suspension statistics, not look at what we do with kids who are suspended all the time. It was all about appearances. That's when things went down. Apparently things, I still have friends who work there still, things are better than they were, but I don't think in any school, even if you've got kids who come from homes where the parents are really supportive of school and that have all that cultural capital to do well at school [would run well without structure]. What frustrates me and one of that things that makes me want leave is the politics of it. That we're not actually going to take a stand and say, "We're not going to accept this at school." We just acquiesce to the parents who complain about stuff or we'll just do this, or let this happen because we don't want to have a hard conversation with someone about it.

Teachers who went into teaching to share a passion for a specific content area did not report frustration in completing standardised testing or assessment tasks. Some reported that there were times in a school year in which they were busier due to assessment or marking, however, this was not linked as a negative. It was seen as part of teaching. They also did not mention school stand down periods or needing time away from a school setting.

I'm actually really happy with the NAPLAN test. I don't have a problem with the test, I don't have a problem with the data. I have a problem with what is done with that data... because no one has actually really explained, what do you do with literacy scores in geographical areas? We're looking at five, 10 years of data now, so what do you do with that data, because we have life skills and stuff from the '80's. We've been doing these tests forever, what do you do with that?

In this section the experiences of teachers whose initial motivation for choosing teaching was connected with a want to impart a love of a specific topic or

content area was presented. These teachers reported little negative to positive interactions with standardised testing or moderation and they reported they greatest enjoyment when students succeeded academically. Conversely, they reported the highest levels of dissatisfaction over negative student behaviours. In the next section, the experiences of the participants who had a stronger focus on imparting social and emotional learning are presented.

#### **5.4.1.2. *Imparting social and emotional learning***

Teachers who had entered the profession to “give back” or to work in the community all focused their experiences on student relationships and the relationships between themselves and their supervisors.

Jane: I have a very strong sense of the idea of serving the community. I have saved four children from suicide. These all under eight. I've done huge amounts to save kid's lives. the things that I love most is when I have parents or kids come up to me at the end of the year, and I just get that, "You're my favourite teacher." Or I get, "You saved my life." Because of the clientele I work with, it's very hard, particularly at my present school. There are so many kids that I start with who tell me that they have no chance in life unless they're going to be prostitutes or druggies, and getting them to say that they can be much better than their parents and that they can, they've got the skills, but they're going to have to work hard. Getting them to say that they can, that's why I stay here.

Edward: Actually, project work is one of the areas that I'm interested in as a teacher. A large part of that is the age that I am and coming into teaching late, I have a lot of life experience as well as, obviously, my formal education, and I really enjoy connecting dots between things. Coming at the teaching that I do from a real life aspect view kind of thing

I think that's important to be able to ground the learning that's happening in experience. For the students, they don't have that experience yet, but if I can say, "In this piece of work that I did, these are the things that I needed to know and this is what I learned, then I think that adds to the students kind of being able the ground their learning and to connect the dots between what

they're learning in the real world which ultimately where they're going to end up.

Jackie: They said over and over again, the Three R's usually reading, writing arithmetic but the number one R is relationships. If they don't think you care then they're not going to care what you know, something catchy like that. But I just consider that now to be common sense for me and my practice is that, of course, it's the relationship that comes first.

Jackie could have, in some contexts, been viewed as motivated by a love of teaching a subject, rather than SEL, as she discussed a few times how she did not like working with very young students as she could not teach them. However, when considered overall, she reports more on the overall building of children, rather than a set focus on specific subjects or skills.

Jacob: That's when I was at Uni and it was like, "What am I going to do? Maybe I should try teaching." And then that's when you start looking at your family. I'm going, "Two of my uncles are teachers, and an aunt's a teacher and this is people in my family." They worked in a little newspaper and, "Okay this is communication, educative, type of thing." My grandfather was a relief Principal in Western Australia, so when a Principals' gone on leave, he then went to small country towns. My mom was always the daughter of the relief Principal.

Jacob was another participant who could have potentially been connected as a subject imparting teacher. However, the overall themes in his interviews were around pastoral care and student connection type roles and experiences, such as the comments below, which is why he has been included here.

At [first school] I loved that. It was tough, super tough, but then I was, "Are you interested? We've got a new adviser position?" "Sure. Try that out." That was a very confronting experience for me. I wouldn't say that I didn't have support or anything. It was just the emotional toll of working more closely with those kids.

When I was the year adviser, we had one of the teens in the school grounds drunk. I can't remember the whole situation now, but it was like the end of a long chain of things. To be part of the meetings with that student and the family and the deputy principal and saying, "I'm sorry, you can't come back." We've just taken too many steps, and it was so many steps. That was distressing as well. I have seen people say, "Now, that's it," and walk away. I don't.

They reported very challenging student behaviours, but when they felt they were handled appropriately by their supervisors they saw it as a positive experience overall. Comparatively, when they were not addressed in a way in which they felt supported it was a major source of frustration and potential attrition for them. In the retelling of these teachers' experiences there was little focus on the knowledge side of teaching. It was referenced in the telling of preparing work or classroom delivery, but it was as a side note as part of a bigger picture of watching students grow overall. These teachers were mostly primary and high school teachers.

Jackie: Way back, one of my very first schools that I taught at was super tough school down in [specific area in the ACT]. They offered professional development about behaviour management but a tackling it from a philosophical whole school point of view, wasn't a packaged program from a book.

They said over and over again, the Three R's usually reading, writing arithmetic but the number one R is relationships. If they don't think you care then they're not going to care what you know, something catchy like that. But I just consider that now to be common sense for me and my practice is that, of course, it's the relationship that comes first.

Jane: I love working in difficult schools because you make such an impact, but when you have supportive staff, the difference you can make in a community... In two years, if you have an amazing staff, you can do astronomical things. It's huge.

Jacob: That was dealt with. That was in my first year. I think school dealt with it really well. The school did deal with it well and parents came in with



interviews and that was all. I assume the protocols were followed. It felt like I was supported, but that is one of those life experiences that happen in the school that made me think, "What am I doing?"

Edward: It had been building up and I had voiced concerns about some of the things that were being said to me as a male teacher. That culminated one day in [a specific incident] and I then stopped teaching basically for a year. Went out on a leave ... and only went back to teaching [the following year]. I basically had a year off of teaching... It was ... a really horrible exit. I guess part of that was clouded by a friend from South Australia, who'd been a teacher, who had had a similar thing happen to him in one of the schools he was at where he had a female student stalk him. Somehow, he moved house, changed his phone numbers, everything and she still managed to find where he was which he still doesn't know how she did that. The school and the department in South Australia didn't support him in that either. He was just left to deal with it on his own and he left teaching permanently.

With all of this at the back of my mind, the day that the incident happened I managed to catch my deputy in the corridor and told her what had happened. She said, "Oh, just put in Maze [online data collection program] and tell your executive on Monday," because my executive wasn't there that day. In fact, my executive had been away for a week and so on the Monday-- I didn't put it into Maze that afternoon because I was just too shaken up.

I came in on Monday and in my free lessons put it into Maze and wasn't actually able to catch up with my executive because having been on leave, they had a lot of stuff to do as well and it just never happened.

There was no follow up from the deputy on the Monday. How are you going? Have you been able to catch up bla bla bla. When I went to a meeting, during the time that I was on leave, just following up, she said she didn't even remember me telling her the story in the first place. Yes, it was just horrible.

This difference in the motivation behind teaching was apparent when discussing workload. The knowledge imparters all reported spending significant

amounts of time preparing work for students, marking and assessing as well as reporting on student growth (see section 5.4.1.1.). The SEL imparters all reported a similar willingness to work, often extreme, long hours. However, in their case this workload was viewed as positive and “part of the job” when it was directly correlated to student social and emotional needs. This included attending parent meetings, dealing with external agencies, speaking with colleagues about particular students and designing lessons directly targeted to those students.

Jane: When speaking about testing and compliance-based workload issues Jane reported that this was work that she found highly negative, but she also reported spending comparable hours at her new position, which were more focused on student wellbeing. In this role she said that workload was no longer an issue.

At my current school, I don't have the issue [of excessive workload] because I'm quite strong, and I'm a third of the workload committee. My last school was before they brought in the workload reduction things. On average I would spend my 60-hour work week, 40 hours will be in meetings and then I do 10 hours of planning, and 30 hours will be doing what execs wanted, such as after I've done all my PM's [reading tests] then putting them into three different then diagrams to show the comprehension level, then the PM level even though I already had [data]. Doing that and the amount of times we're asked to collate our data, [and present it in different ways] “This is a waste of my time.”

About 30 hours a week it was taking me to do all these little shitty bits of paperwork or it'd be things like we'd finish doing [numeracy analysis]. Then we have to sit down for a four-hour meeting with our executive to look at how we can improve it, even though as you teach it you make your pencil marks of “this one works well, hey this would be a good activity.” ... This is torturous, but we have to do that for every maths lesson because we do it every fortnight. One week could be math's, next week would be English, and we have to do it repeatedly all through the year.

I stop at 60 hours a week. For the last two years, 20 hours has been care and protection meetings. It's been the extreme level, but I've had an extreme child who's had a lot of police intervention and things.

Jacob: I'm not going to complain about reporting because it's part of job. It's a stressful thing, but everybody has to do it, and that's we're accountable to the parents and the carers of the students we teach. That's part of the job. I find that when reporting happens and everyone knows it's happening, that some schools are much better than others at managing meetings and other events around those times.

That would be the management of other events around the reporting time is problematic. I have to say, in the last year the school I've been at, that's been really good, but not always. Talking about reporting though, my family goes away in the weekend before reports are due. They're just like, "We can't be near you. You are very stressed and we know that they're important and that you really intend on having them great.

Edward: I went in and signed the contracts the last day of the previous year and was asking questions like, "Can you give me some stuff to work on? Can I prepare over the holidays?" They're like, "No, just chill out of the holidays, you'll be good, we'll get you going when we get back to school. The first week or so is just get to know your stuff anyway and all that type of thing." That's not helpful. For a new educator that just made me worry because it was always in the back of my mind, not knowing what I was actually going to be doing... Then I left that school at the end of my first year of teaching and went to another student schools and was told the same thing. At the end of the year before I started there. "Oh don't worry. We've got a lot of set up. Just come in day one. We'll sort you out." Which again didn't really happen. From day one that made life difficult as far as me being sure of what I was doing in the classroom and it was my first time in [teaching a different subject area].

This group of teachers also frequently mentioned the need to separate themselves from their work. They spoke of the school stand down period or "holidays" as a time in which they needed to mentally remove themselves from their

role. They used language such as “emotionally drained,” “need to step away for a bit” or “I need that time to refresh myself and focus on my family and friends.”

It is important to note that both categories were highly focused on building student growth. Both groups took their role as building young people very seriously, however, each group saw how their role fit into that puzzle in a different way. When there were roadblocks to them achieving this growth, in the KI’s due to negative student behaviour and in the SEL’s due to a greater focus on curriculum, they reported the highest levels of frustration and the lowest levels of job satisfaction.

In this section the experiences of teachers who joined the profession with a focus on imparting social and emotional skills, over specific subject knowledge, have been presented. It has shown that teachers who joined the profession with this view of their role view experiences involving student behaviour less negatively than the teachers who wanted to focus more on imparting content knowledge. It is also been noted that this was the weakest theme that emerged, as it required the analysis of why a teacher chose the profession alongside the experiences the participants discussed. The need for a stronger method to determine initial motivations for joining the teaching profession was reported and is discussed in detail in section 6.2.1.2. In the next section the second emergent theme, support versus recognition is presented.

#### **5.4.2. Support versus recognition**

The major difference between experienced and beginning teachers was in the beginning teachers need to be supported compared to the experienced teachers need to be recognised for their work. Both are different, but linked, as they both tie to the strands in which individuals progress through as they master a skill or new job. As a teacher moves from beginning to proficient their requirements to feel fulfilled in their role shifts.

##### **5.4.2.1. *Beginning teachers - a need for support***

When reflecting on the early years of teaching (the first 3 years) there was a theme that emerged around a beginning teacher’s need for support. Support was a word that was raised multiple times, across interviews and in different contexts. The beginning teacher participants all spoke in depth about feeling supported or not, and it was often in the context of a positive or negative experience in the profession. The

experienced teachers also spoke of support when they reflected on the start of their careers. Positive support, in the eyes of the participants, looked like:

- Providing access to teacher resources.
- A well written and easy to understand curriculum.
- Regular meetings to “vent,” share ideas, listen to problems and brainstorm ideas.
- Support with concrete behaviour management processes and practices.
- Negotiating staff relationships where required.
- Making them feel like they were part of the team.
- Valuing their past experiences and inducting them into school specific processes and practices.
- Explaining the HR processes.
- A permanent position (or a move towards one).

The key theme of the support came through with experienced teachers who were reflecting on their own experiences from their early teaching years. They reported similar needs for support.

Jackie: It's a serious issue, though. I'm particularly sensitive to new teachers. I feel deeply distressed by those statistics of their drop-out rates. I try, especially because my own personal experience was so wonderful, having that mentor teacher who was so effective and supportive for me. She set me up for a successful career. I try to offer that to teachers, to new teachers especially. Just checking with them, "Hey, how's it going? You come see me and have a little bit of chat, too, anytime. I can brainstorm lesson planning."

This is something of my own professional practice that I need to work on, it's how to time those things and how to make that work. If you say that to them when you first meet them, they're totally overwhelmed. It's week 0, they just met 100 people and they're trying to remember where the toilet is. Just those basic things. Some random offer for help, it can sound like lip service or maybe they forget, or whatever-- You can grab that. They don't come back. Either they've forgotten or they-- Maybe they don't think I mean it.

Betty: In my first year of teaching, I think it was early 2002, there was one in particular kid that I had in the class. You know when you have that one kid in your class who totally changes the dynamic and not really knowing how to handle it properly and not feeling -- I was supported at my school, lots of suggestions, but I think I'd already started with some bad habits in terms of behaviour management skills in the classroom, and so trying to overturn those habits I found really hard.

My first placement was for three years. I did have a lot of support at that school. I wasn't left on my own. I was the only first year out there. There were some other younger teachers but they all seemed to have at least a year's experience under their belt and so I think if I've had someone else who was also a first year around, who I could talk to, that would have made a lot of difference.

That time in my first year when I was seriously thinking about quitting. I was in a really bad place. The only thing that stopped me from quitting was that I had always been able to do what I want, financial kind of stuff.

The two beginning teachers, James and Edward, had similar themes even with different experiences in their first years of teaching. The theme of a need for support came through in a number of ways. An overall level of support around teaching from supervisors, a lack of support from colleagues and then a lack of support from the Education Directorate.

James: But now I am wondering if I've done the right thing. I don't feel very supported, I don't have a lot of good things to say about the Directorate, I thought the teacher training [location removed], the graduate diploma, now that I'm teaching, left me totally unprepared for teaching. So, I am wondering if I've done the right thing essentially.

I had a mentor at [first school], she was the executive teacher. She was good. Um at [second school] ... I had a mentor teacher; this was in the [James' main subject] area. At [second school] I had three lines of [main subject area] and two of [out of subject teaching area]. So (drawn out), my mentor was [first subject area], which is my strength anyway. I just found him though, he was just so busy you know. So, to find the time to talk with him [was

difficult]. It would have been better, to have mentor in the [second subject] area, because that wasn't my strength."

I think the fact that, um, (pause) [mentor at first school] was an executive teacher so she didn't have a full teaching load. So, we tried to organise weekly meetings and I could, she just seemed less busy. And, perhaps more approachable, and so I could go to her and ask her things, clarify things, and get suggestions.

Edward: I went in and signed the contracts the last day of the previous year and was asking questions like, "Can you give me some stuff to work on? Can I prepare over the holidays?" They're like, "No, just chill out of the holidays, you'll be good, we'll get you going when we get back to school. The first week or so is just get to know your stuff anyway and all that type of thing." That's not helpful. For a new educator that just made me worry because it was always in the back of my mind, not knowing what I was actually going to be doing... Then I left that school at the end of my first year of teaching and went to another school and was told the same thing at the end of the year before I started there. "Oh don't worry. We've got a lot of set up. Just come in day one. We'll sort you out." Which again didn't really happen. From day one that made life difficult as far as me being sure of what I was doing in the classroom and it was my first time in [teaching a different subject area]. My executive came in twice in that time and one of the deputies came in once for 20 minutes. At the end of that 20 minutes, she got up and told the class that they were being really disrespectful and being rude. Basically, had to a big rant at them and then walked out. Leaving me to pick up after all of that. ...[in a semester block] I had four visits from people observing me teach. Again, it's ineffective. It doesn't help a new educator to ground themselves and to be able to learn from more experienced teachers when nobody can see what you're doing.

The school and the department in South Australia didn't support him in that either. He was just left to deal with it on his own and he left teaching permanently.

With all of this at the back of my mind, the day that the incident happened I managed to catch my deputy in the corridor and told her what had happened.

She said, "Oh, just put it in Maze [online data collection program] and tell your executive on Monday," because my executive wasn't there that day. In fact, my executive had been away for a week and so on the Monday-- I didn't put it into Maze that afternoon because I was just too shaken up.

I came in on Monday and in my free lessons put it into Maze and wasn't actually able to catch up with my executive because, having been on leave, they had a lot of stuff to do as well and it just never happened.

There was no follow up from the deputy on the Monday. How are you going? Have you been able to catch up bla bla bla. When I went to a meeting, during the time that I was on leave, just following up, [the Deputy] said she didn't even remember me telling her the story in the first place. Yes, it was just horrible.

I ended up finally the week before term three again at a different school in [specific] area and they were just so supportive, the execs there were just fantastic.

I had a Year 10 and they were doing some project stuff for their last major assignment for the year really, and I had booked a lab at one stage and had about half the class just mucking round and I went spoke to my exec and she said, "Well, the next two times you have that class, we'll just split them in half, and the half that want to work you can take them to the lab and the other half I'll do the other stuff with in the classroom."

All the way through last term, the two execs that I was working with on, because I was doing [second subject area], so those two execs worked with me really closely to help me in that sort of situation, to come into the classroom, they did observations, they both observed classes, they had other people, other senior staff observe classes with me and give feedback and yes.

The level of support received from his more experienced colleagues and mentors was important to both participants.

James: Yeah, so the hours I've been putting in. I've been putting in a lot of hours. You know, preparation, stuff like that and yeah, at times I've felt a bit unsupported and all the other teachers are so busy as well. It's hard to try and get a chance to sit down with them and consult with them.... I used to stay to



probably 6 or 7 [pm]. Four nights a week, between preparing classes, you know marking, yeah. That wasn't expected, but I had to do that for myself to prepare and to stay on top of things. So, I mean I feel pretty guilty and I don't want to go into the classroom unprepared, so it was mainly preparing lessons and marking. I found as well that there wasn't a lot of stuff that was already existing. You know that I could use. So, I was pretty much reinventing the wheel I thought. To prepare my own lessons and stuff like that, and again, with it not being my area of strength, [first subject area] I have no problems, but the [second out of area subject] at [first school], the [third out of area subject] at [second school] they call it there. Yeah so, I just felt that I had to do that to stay on top of things. [When asked whether the resources did not exist or where just not shared with him] I think it was more the latter. More that they weren't willing to share and ... I think it was really that everyone was just so busy. I found it really hard to get anybody to actually sit down and have a chat with me because everything, everything just seems so frantic.

I mean, I've been generally okay with the supervisors and the support, but I still feel a bit thrown in the deep end and unprepared... I think the training should have been better, the initial training. Um, I think it should have been made clearer just how difficult it is to get full time positions. You know, I didn't realise that it was going to be this challenging. I don't think the information given to, and I don't know if all the other people in my class feel the same way, but I don't feel the information that you're given when you finish your training, as to what the next stage is, is good enough.

I think the difficulty I've had, I didn't think it was going to be this difficult to get a permanent position. I did some research before I embarked on this and they always said "oh, you'll have no problem's getting a job." Well it hasn't worked out like that.

Edward: Probably the biggest thing that's impacted on my last three years has been the ad hoc way that the Directorate does mentoring in schools for new educators. At my first school, I was [teaching in a specialist setting]. For the program that I was teaching in, I was overloaded with students. I had too many students for what is recommended for experienced teachers... I was supposed to be working with and be mentored by an experienced [teaching]

person. That didn't really work, that relationship. There were a lot of things behind that... It was a tough year for me for a number of reasons, but ultimately the mentoring that I should have had, I didn't feel like I had. It wasn't until maybe, June, May, June that I got an email from the person who was mentoring me to say I'm starting this email thing. I'm going to mentor few [teachers in this specialist program], but this email thing can be a discussion backwards and forwards, but I'm going to do this thing. For a start, that was too late for me. Second, that was not the sort of help that I need. I needed the setup help from the start. I hadn't ever had to build relationships with students over that long period, over a year before, which was a difficult thing for me in managing those relationships and those ... kids given that we were together for [the majority of the teaching load]. That's a lot of time together, just me. From what I've seen in other schools, other [schools with specialist programs], it really works well to have a team-teaching situation with two teachers there that the kids can bounce off. If I was going to make a suggestion to them to what to do next is make sure of the mentoring end and put a new teacher with an experienced teacher to team teach from day one... [asked if "was that person assigned to you or do you get to choose people?"] No, they were assigned to me mainly because that was [an experienced] person who had a lot of experience and was very good at what they did. It's just that the mentoring didn't happen.

At [a second school] school, I wasn't included on the new educator list, email list. It wasn't again until May that someone said, "How long have you been teaching?" I said, "It's my 2nd year." "How come you haven't been going to the new educator meeting?" I'm like, "What new educator meeting?" They're like, "Well, do you have mentor?" I'm like, "No." They said, "Well you're working with this person pretty closely so they can be your mentor."

They [the assigned mentor] said, "Oh, I didn't really want to be a mentor this year..." because they were teaching a few different things, doing some new [out of their teaching area] stuff and that sort of thing and wanted to really concentrate on their own stuff. The mentoring there was ineffective as well because of that-- so between February when we started and September, [they] only came into my classroom once.

So, they did [meet with me] mid-year when my probation was supposed to be over. There was no mentor support when my probation was supposed to be over... Yes, I guess that's all a very long story to say the mentoring needs to be fixed across the system because it's so ad hoc.

[at his new school] It was a complete contrast to what I had had in the other two schools. I think it's intent. That, to effectively mentor someone, you have to be of a mind that that's what you are doing, that is the part of your role to build peoples capacities. And I feel like in my first two jobs that there was an expectation that as a 40 something year old guy, that I had it all, that I would be able to just walk into a classroom and do it. Whereas, we know from other research that it takes up-to eight years for a new teacher to become proficient. Yet here I was, walking into classrooms with no army supporting me, it was like one soldier walking out into the battlefield against somebody else's army and turning around and everyone else has stepped back...

There was also a lack of connection between the pre-service program and schools which increased the feeling of a lack of support for James. The quotes below are from James' follow up email.

Supervising teacher made comments about lack of differentiation, despite the fact that at the time of the placement this concept had not been covered/addressed in University course. Shouldn't they know what I was studying?

I think that my education qualification left me completely unprepared for classroom teaching (yes, my teaching placements whilst studying went well, but there was always the supervising teacher in the classroom).

A lack of support from the Directorate looked different for each of the beginning teachers, however, the underlying theme of lack of support was evident in both experiences.

James: Initially messed up superannuation payments, despite the information given to them. Taxed too much because they didn't give me the tax-free threshold, despite the information on the form I completed. One union

negotiated pay rise did not happen – I had to email HR to inform them of pay rise.

Anecdotal evidence/comments I overheard in staffroom were that new teachers were not paid for weeks at a time due to delays in processing. This is outrageous – the first thing schools and department should ensure is that staff are paid promptly and correctly.

ACT Govt charge employees \$10 a fortnight if they want to salary sacrifice towards superannuation – absolutely ridiculous. HR are already sending the mandatory superannuation contributions to superannuation schemes – why should employees be charged if they want to pay extra superannuation via salary sacrifice?

Edward: To contrast that, when I came back to teaching, having fought for 12 months to not go back to the same school... [they] the whole time and still today, want me to go back to the same school. It's only through the support of the union, that over that 12 months, that I have been able to-- that I'm even still in teaching, because if the directorate had their way, I would have been back at the other school day one last year, having had no restorative conversations, no anything, no contact from the school.

He reported that he had to fight, through the union, to be transferred to a school which was advertising a vacancy and which he wanted to work at. He reported that this was a very difficult process when he was dealing with HR. I wanted to contrast with that, my experience over the last term... when I came back into teaching. Actually, I had a school that had a position for me that I could have filled at the start of the year, that both myself and the union asked the Directorate to place me [in]. They advertised for this position, they ended up filling it from a person that had been doing relief work for them at this school and even though I had requested [to be placed in the position]. I'd seen the Ad and requested that I be placed in that position as my return to work. That was-- I didn't even get a reply to that request...

The need for permanency in their position was something that was raised in a number of the interviews. Teachers reported that without a permanent position most

schools did not invest into them as beginning teachers. As casual or contract teachers they received limited, if any, induction and did not have access to mentors or many of the key aspects of support as listed above.

James: I asked what I needed to do to get a permanent position. Various teachers at various schools couldn't tell me. Asked about TQI requirements to move from 'provisional' to 'full'. School staff unable to tell me.

Um, I think it should have been made clearer just how difficult it is to get full time positions. You know, I didn't realise that it was going to be this challenging. I don't think the information given to, and I don't know if all the other people in my class feel the same way, but I don't feel the information that you're given when you finish your training, as to what the next stage is, is good enough.

I think the difficulty I've had, I didn't think it was going to be this difficult to get a permanent position. I did some research before I embarked on this and they always said "oh, you'll have no problem's getting a job." Well it hasn't worked out like that.

Do schools and the department realise that staff have financial commitments? Many of us don't want to be on temporary contracts – we want permanent employment.

this [casual teaching] seems the first step after completing a teaching qualification. I did casual teaching – why are casual teachers not given keys? I had to hunt down teachers all the time just to gain access to classrooms. I had to go on long journeys to near the school reception, because there was a toilet there where I didn't need a key. Why aren't casual teachers given email access and an ACT Education logon? I was left lesson plans that required me to use IT resources for which I needed a logon... I also found, after completing my education qualification, that it was ages before I was offered a contract. In the interim I just did casual teaching. So, I forgot loads about the national curriculum, etc etc, because you don't need to know this when you are just teaching casually and are implementing other teachers' lessons. I found this a big problem.

This was also supported by the quotes from Sally and Betty who reflected on how they saw contract teachers being treated compared to permanent staff at the end of the year when staffing decisions are made and conveyed and the connection that Betty made for own permanency and her intent to stay.

Sally: It's only the permanent members of staff that are treated like that because contract people are just not renewed. They know they're not going to be renewed anyway. It's only the permanent members of staff that are being moved on.

Betty: What else has made me stay is, not just not having a passion for other thing but also I'm aware of the good things, other good things about the job in terms of a permanent government job in a workforce that's becoming more temporary and you're only getting contracts, that job security is really nice. Even within the education department, the fact that they're really not offering permanency straight away anymore, people are on contracts and on contracts and on contracts and then getting permanency-- The way it works now, they can only get permanency if there's actually a job in that particular school, rather than when I was first employed 15 years ago or whatever it was, you were offered permanency and then were placed in a school.

There's talk of it in other industries as well, a friend of mine works in law, but does government work and she can't get a permanent job, she gets contract after contract. There is a term for that, but I can't think of what it is.

The experiences of beginning teachers, and the reflections and observations of the experienced teachers on beginning teacher experiences, have been presented. In particular, the emergent theme of a need for support has been shown through the quotes presented. In the following section the differing experiences of the experienced teachers is presented to support the theme of a need for recognition once a teacher is experienced enough to feel a strong sense of self-efficacy.

#### **5.4.2.2. *Experienced teachers - a need for recognition***

The interviews with experienced teachers had a thread running through them which correlated with a feeling of job satisfaction which differed from the beginning teachers. They spoke about a need to be seen and recognised in their roles. All the

experienced teachers interviewed were highly achieving classroom teachers, who held specialist roles in their schools or outside of teaching. These in school roles in the ACT can include school librarians, year coordinators, lead teachers, special needs coordinators and specialist program coordinators. They did not report that these roles increased their workload, but all spoke of them in a highly positive context. They used terms such as “self-worth,” “giving back,” “teaching other teachers,” “made me love my job again,” and “I feel like I’m making a difference” when speaking of the importance of these roles. These specialist roles gave the participants a chance to be recognised for specific skills they had developed, and the ability to then pass these skills onto others in their profession.

The following quotes connected the participating teacher’s perceptions of recognition in the workplace in the interpretation of the author, using an IPA approach.

Participant: “I went and started my own company where I can [feel recognition for my skills].”

Jackie: Even though I'm still a teacher, I went from being a classroom teacher to working in [a specialist position].

That's a very different way of thinking but it's really rewarding because I know that every time I help a teacher in any of the multitude of different ways that I do that, then therefore, I'm making their life a little bit easier or I'm giving them a skill that they can pass onto their students. Either way, their students are benefiting because their teacher is more relaxed or has more time. Therefore, can do a better job with their lessons, or they actually have different skills now that they can pass on.

I consider that to be-- that's just different. That's completely different from the way I was operating in the early years when I had my own class. I also operate now, right now, literally, before you got here, I'm coordinating a national campaign that's going to launch [that year to support specialist teachers].

Jane: I think working in [low] socio-economic schools, you do a lot more than people when they're nicer schools and such, because I have a much more impact on the personality of a child and their life choice. The other reason I love staying in is, I love counselling and working with teachers.

I've been a mentor now to 15 different teachers. Both beginners through uni for the first two, three years of their teaching and people have come from other sectors and territories. I'm currently counselling one who's come down and said after four years of horrific teaching experiences, and she's trying to work out whether she wants to stay in the profession or leave it.

She's done a lot of volunteer work for me last year, so being able to show people what teaching is, and if they do want to work in special Ed or low socio-economic [schools] and trying to work out if teaching is you, it needs also to be the right setting, and that's the really important bit. Because some people just aren't cut out for it, and it's good to say to them, "Look, is this really what you want? This is the reality of it. If you want to teach, do you need a management setting or the private system, or Catholic system?"

And helping people who are really good teachers become what they should be. I love seeing that and seeing them actually so proud and challenged. It's just amazing, but that's why I stay.

Jacob: Some leaders don't know [what supports, and processes, are available].

I would agree with that. One of the things that I had to push myself to do sometimes is to try to talk more to people I could see don't really have support from their leaders. One thing is that I haven't needed much support in my career. I'd quite happily say that. I have supported other teachers, and one of the things that I like to do is support my SLC because [I see it as] it's teamwork. Certainly, some SLCs know the ropes better than others...

I'm not particularly interested in going any further either. I have always done that stuff in the non-confrontational way, in a way of the thing about support, and information, and helping other people out. I get a lot of joy out of doing. That's another thing that's kind of enabled the longevity of my career in the sense that, you know some people say you should be doing leadership stuff, and to me, this is like leadership stuff. It's that kind of leading from below, making people feels supported. That keeps me there.

I have had a little bit of a joy in our professional learning teams. Last year, for some reason, we had SLCs managing those, and I can understand why structurally, because we had, a new principal and some new direction. In the previous two years, that was an opportunity for teachers to say, "Hey, would you like to either run some little action research or would you like to do some



specific work with a group of teachers?" In those two years, I took on a leadership role. One year we just focused on [embedding digital technologies], before we had Google Classroom across the whole system. Some schools were experimenting, and we knew it was going to come to us and other schools out there, so we were in this grey zone. I was like, "I love all that stuff." I ran a team which was "let's experiment." It was me just saying, "Hey, did you know you can do this? Now let's all do things in our different faculty areas." I loved that. That was really good.

Betty: That's why I became a [specialist teacher]. Some of that lead-teacher stuff in terms of supporting other teachers to become better, that's part of that job. Really as a [specialist teacher] to collaborate with other classroom teachers and help them become better ... and all that kind of stuff.

In some of the interviews the participants delved into how they felt when these roles, or their work in these roles, was not recognised or appreciated by their supervisors. This was a factor that, for those considering leaving the profession before retirement, was listed highly as for why they wanted to go. A feeling of not being acknowledged in their profession was highly demotivating for the participants. For some this was worded as "being trusted" but when this was explored deeper it became apparent that it was the lack of recognition of their skills and abilities that was the larger root cause for this frustration.

Betty: If people are going, "Hey can I do this thing across the school?" Then no one is trying to give you the opportunity to do that. There is no official position for those people to do anything necessarily.

I feel like if I didn't have a principal who is very supportive or a very flexible structure in the school, or you're in a high school that's really tough and all the teachers are running around like lemmings because you're running detention for this kid and sorting out this fighting, sorting out this bullying or whatever. There's not enough space for those people to really do anything. A lack of promotions or lack of other options for things to do within teaching, I think, is probably something that a lot of people would find frustrating.

Veronica: When I look at the people who I started teaching with in the ACT because I was older and had other experience, I probably found other teachers who were older and had other experiences as well, none of them are teaching. Out of a group of probably six or seven, not a single one of them is still teaching in a public school in Canberra now. All teaching in other ways, so working at museums, galleries, working in sports education. Working in education, they're still great teachers, they're still passionate teachers, but not in a classroom. I think that is a really key thing. When I look at people leaving, I really worry that it's people with a depth of experience, with broad experience, who also know what the world is a bit like and say, "Woah, this isn't it." I think that, that frustration and disrespect, and that sort of stuff just grinds over time.

I've got other avenues [her business she had started] I'm going to go and explore that. I think I do really like my time in the classroom, but my school wouldn't be flexible. Last year, I went in four days a week to teach a [part time load] alone, and that's stupid.

Veronica: People just don't feel respected. There's not really communication - - so no one is working here as a team.

Sally: I think if we said, "Kids fail," I think some of them would step up to pass. I have discussed that with the BSSS. In fact, a few years ago, [a section] on the BSSS manual talks about participation in the class. It says that to be marked present, you have to have attended and participated. I wanted to mark kids absent who didn't bring a pen and did no work in class. However, I was told by my then Principal that was not what it meant.

Veronica: I think there's also not a very mature approach to workload, to behaviour, to inter-staff relationships. So, I think in that way there seems to be a lot of-- You deal with the students in the same way that you deal with the teachers.

So, this is the workload, and this is what it is and if you can't do it then you're not professional, you've got this due date, you've got this thing. This is just how it is, and if you want to do something else on the weekend you're not committed. Or if you've got a problem with this person then you need to work

it out, or if you've got an issue with a class, I don't have an issue with that student. It's you again. I think actually that that's how you talk to the kids, not how you talk to a [mid 30]-year-old woman who may have dealt with people before.

Jackie: Jackie: Likewise, there was a different Principal that just, I thought didn't value what I was doing at all.

The results I was getting for those were like, off the charts. We're talking like five out of five with what they had learned. How much did you? "I love when Mrs. Jackie comes in. Oh Jackie, I learned so much from having you in the classroom." Like, we're talking, it could not have been more glowing. I was saying I want to do more of this. This is the best practice model and they just wouldn't. They had me timetabled to the eyeballs, with a-- What do you call it? Like a firm timetable as opposed to a flexible timetable because you have to have a flexible timetable so that you can go with different classes at different times in that role, and like, for whenever they need you for a certain thing, and I was completely locked in.

I might have had an hour a week that was flexible. The classes they put me with were the kindergarten [specialist group].

I thought that is a complete waste of what I'm able to do right now and I'm not belittling that role, because I mean, [specialist kindergarten] teachers are some of the most remarkable people that I've worked with. That's such an important role. They have to learn how to operate in a school these children, and they're only there for three times.

It's a high-pressure situation where you got to get them skilled up so they can go into a mainstream classroom. It's critically important but I wasn't the right person for that. I had all these other skills that nobody else in the school could do and yet they had me doing that for most of my time. It was heart-breaking for me and I felt like I was an eagle and I was trapped in a box.

That's all the only way I can describe it is I just felt like I had all this capability and I was I was completely contained in this tiny little box.

Then this opportunity opened up to go to the [other school] and I ended up-- one thing led to another and I ended up getting a job as a permanent position. I have freedom there, completely flexible timetable. They think I'm great.

They love what I do. They give me freedom to plan my own programs. We've started up this whole information literacy skills because there's another [specialist teacher] there as well and we work really well together. We've created this whole ... program to boost the skills because of course, the students that are coming through don't have those skills because most of them haven't had a [specialist teacher] all the way through.

This we presented at a national conference about this program last year, and we're writing up for journal articles about it this year. Like it's highly-- it's getting lots of interest.

Recognition was reported most meaningful when it came from school leaders, but also when it came from parents, colleagues, the Directorate or the wider community.

Jackie: Likewise, just getting praise from whoever; a parent, or a supervisor, or a colleague or a student. That makes me feel like, "Yes, I'm on the right track. I'm in the right field," but when it's genuine praise. More recently, probably, let's say the past five to seven years, the thing that is making me feel the most proud of what I do and that I feel like I'm on the right track for my life and with regard to my professional work, has been more bigger picture stuff. That is work to do with the union because I'm a union member too. Things that our union does that I feel really proud to be a part of that effect on a big societal level.

Also, I had a career shift after having children. Even though I'm still a teacher, I went from being a classroom teacher to working in [a specialist position]. That initially was out of convenience for myself and the school because I had come back part-time after having kids. Just was muddling along through that role, giving it my best shot. Then gradually overtime started reading a little bit of professional literature about what it means to be a [a specialist teacher] and had this frightening alarm reaction because I thought, "I actually don't know how to do any of that even though I'm calling myself a [specialist teacher]."

For Jane teacher, the recognition was through a financial incentive, but she reported that the money itself was not as important as the recognition behind it.

There is a catch to it too, but at the same time it's quite nice to actually be recognised for it, and extra money is always lovely because the work you really do doesn't change because it's what you've already done, you're just continuing and now getting a pay recognition.

It's the acknowledgment [that is positive].

The ability to extend into more specialised roles was raised by most of the experienced teachers through the interviews. Veronica spoke about her educational business which gave her recognition of her skills outside of her teaching employment, which was then viewed in a negative context when considering her teaching role. Conversely, the other participants reported that the ability to be recognised as having additional skills in the teaching profession was a significant positive for them overall.

Veronica: I'd thought, "Yes, I'm going to go back to Uni and get my specialist qualification." I did that part-time to get my Master's. I did it in four or five years. Now, I operate completely differently in the school than I did before. That's what I mean I had a career shift is that I'm still teaching but what I'm doing now is, while it's all targeted towards the benefit of the students, my target audience in my view is actually now teachers rather than students. That's how I have my biggest impact on the students.

Jackie: That's a very different way of thinking but it's really rewarding because I know that every time I help a teacher in any of the multitude of different ways that I do that, then therefore, I'm making their life a little bit easier or I'm giving them a skill that they can pass onto their students. Either way, their students are benefiting because their teacher is more relaxed or has more time. Therefore, can do a better job with their lessons, or they actually have different skills now that they can pass on.

I consider that to be-- that's just different. That's completely different from the way I was operating in the early years when I had my own class. I also operate now, right now, literally, before you got here, I'm coordinating a national campaign that's going to launch [that year to support specialist teachers].

It's because of the extra qualification that I got and because of my experience, and also just because of the kind of person I am, I wanted and needed more. Actually, I don't even know if that's true. Even if I was still in the classroom, maybe I would still be feeling really fulfilled, lots of people do. For me, the way that it's evolved with my life and my profession, feels like great. I feel really proud of what I'm doing.

Like, you're proving that you're good and making a difference.

At one point, Jackie was in a specialist role, but was not given recognition of her skills and trust to implement them effectively which was then perceived in a negative context.

I thought that is a complete waste of what I'm able to do right now and I'm not belittling that role, because I mean, [specialist kindergarten] teachers are some of the most remarkable people that I've worked with. That's such an important role. They have to learn how to operate in a school these children, and they're only there for three times.

It's a high-pressure situation where you got to get them skilled up so they can go into a mainstream classroom. It's critically important but I wasn't the right person for that. I had all these other skills that nobody else in the school could do and yet they had me doing that for most of my time. It was heart-breaking for me and I felt like I was an eagle and I was trapped in a box.

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This we presented at a national conference about this program last year, and we're writing up for journal articles about it this year. Like it's highly-- it's getting lots of interest.

One way or the other I get there, at least well enough, if I can't hit a bull's eye. Then the people are so grateful, because their problem is solved, and whatever it might be.

Yes, it's really rewarding. Even if it's just a quick little thing, they're like, "Thank you so much." "Yes, no worries." I get my little buzz for the day. That's the whole point is helping everyone. You can't be that surly stereotypical *shusher* because then you can't get your job done because everybody hates you, and you're not going to have any impact on what they're learning.

In the same way that a feeling of not having their skills recognised by supervisors lead to negative experiences and decreased job satisfaction or motivation, so to was this reported when the participants did not receive what they perceived as recognition by parents and / or the wider community.

Veronica: I think schools are just really scared of parents, really scared of departments. I think Principals are in this really shit position. I don't think that they even really know what their jobs are. What are they? Are they a CEO because they're not trained in management actually? They're being told they're kind of CEOs, but do they have those skills? How do you get that job? What is your life and strength really? Where is that respect coming from? [pause] I think most of us feel that we probably would be thrown under a bus any day to make a parent happy.

I think ultimately that-- I've worked at two schools now with just really, really weak leadership teams. I think when that happens, they have to sort of [acquiesce] to parents to wherever that comes from, and teachers are your easiest. I think we're sort of this resource that they can—you know. It's an expensive number on a budget sheet. If we can get a cheaper one, we can do that. There are heaps of teachers lining up to come in. So, if you're not respecting quality ... then that teacher becomes an expensive troublemaker. Let's get rid of that [the difficult teacher].

I think there's a whole lot of those things. I think I would want to see the department know, we're their team. We're not their enemies. We're not their adversaries. We are their team. We are their foot soldiers... If we take the example of Defence, they provide them with support, intelligence, and updates, and all of those things to help them run. I buy my own markers. [laughter] I mean fuck off.

I think all of those things, they end up saying, we don't respect you. We don't really know what you do. You don't know what we do. We don't want a fuss.

Sally: One of his colleagues was concerned because a kid had not done the assignment and was concerned about the kid not doing homework. The teacher rang the parent and said, "Freddy isn't doing his homework." The parent said, "That's your job. Do I tell you when he doesn't clear the table?" I'm not sure that you always get the greatest support you could from parents when you're in a private school either.

At college level, it is definitely [an issue]. I actually think that's one of the things that parents need to realise. You can't keep supporting your kids to do the wrong thing. It's time to toughen up.

Whist this comment could be perceived in the context of parental engagement or a shift in societal norms, in this author's interpretation it is another reflection on a lack of recognition and trust from parents, and the wider community, in experienced teachers being capable of doing their job well. This connected with other interviews which had more direct comments around recognition of their skills from parents and the community.

Veronica: I did my honours in [first subject area], took it and went overseas. Actually, that's where my teaching started. I'm an [specialist] teacher, I worked for [resource writing company]. I did curriculum resources modifying [professional educational resources], doing a lot of that sort of thing, then I got into emergency education. I worked with [aid providers] helping set up schools and doing trauma education for [for countries after catastrophes], and those types of things.

That was my education background. I think those two experiences, that's really shaped how I look at teaching. The thing is that I have always thought



everything I've done has been as a teacher in education, and I think no, here it's not [seen as teaching by others].

If you look at all the articles on education in *The Canberra Times*, like where are the ones from the department that say that teachers are doing this, teachers are doing that. How fantastic. There'll be something around Public Education Awards, but I don't think that they would know who any of those people were. There was a press release sent. There's nothing there that says— [that teachers are doing a good job].

If you looked at another entity, if you looked at [Department of] Defence, "Well, our guys are fantastic. We have all this technology. We are doing these things in Afghanistan, and here, and here, and here. We can only do that because of these soldiers who are doing awesome work in really difficult circumstances. Who we remunerating for their hardship, who we are doing all of these things for. They're doing that, which is fantastic. I don't have a question mark or two over [laughs] their outcomes and what they're actually doing for the Afghani children, but we're doing it for our kids."

I'm not getting any hardship, but I'm not getting the nice stories and the thank you's and the, "We understand that," either. People get aid, it would be same thing. People who are out there doing that, fantastic. People who are in emergency services, the people who are out there, thank you for doing that. Teachers just don't get that... Teachers are the ones that you can blame for whatever you need, "They are all whining, they are all X, Y, Z"

I think that at the end, you look around and think, "Why would I stay here for \$75,000 when I can literally walk across the street for \$125,000?"

People just don't feel respected. There's not really communication -- so no one is working here as a team.

You should have a chief minister and a minister and a department and a heap of teachers who are just pushing like hell together, because what are we going to do? I mean I look at this all time and I think, Trump and Brexit aren't accidents. [laughs] We've got people who can't read.

If we are not all pushing together, it's a really urgent issue. It's a really urgent issue that you have—you know, its huge amounts of money in an economy. It's huge amounts of social harmony. What do you get? That is why teachers are super important.

I think those are the sorts of things that no one is really looking at, but actually there's a huge picture on this huge, really, urgent social implications to be overcome here. If you just shit on me in the news, then why will anyone listen to me.

One teacher also spoke about a lack of recognition from her peers.

Veronica: Just recently, I had shenanigans with another teacher in terms of marking. When we moderated, all my As were turned to Ds and my Ds got turned to Bs. It has come on the back of some really passive-aggressive bullshit for about a year. At that point I was just like, "Huh?!" and then my executive said, "Well, I think the problem is that you're not really an [first subject area] teacher." I have a degree in [first subject area] and I've always taught [first subject area], and actually, four years of a PhD in [first subject area], and taught [first subject area] at uni. I think actually I'm an [first subject area] teacher.

Veronica also spoke of how the increase in workload that she had an issue with was largely due to a lack of recognition of her abilities to decide what was best for her classes. This is also connected with the next section on motivation, as it can be seen that her love of teaching her subject, connected with a feeling of not being recognised as an expert in her field was an area of conflict for her.

I think it's all of it. I think the workload is really going up, because you know, this idea of everything has to be these amazing project based *blah blahs*. Everything has to be this outrageously based in reality, argh. Those things just take so much time to do.

For fuck's sake, like, "How does your painting a picture of Ophelia in a bath, in a neo-noir context demonstrate to me that you understood the play?" Is painting really your skill? It's not. Go away from that and just write me an essay." Do a creative story. We have this crazy sort of fad [happening]. Before it would have been you write an essay. The next thing we do a piece of creative writing, you do some textual analysis. You show me some related text that demonstrates that. ...

The kids really demand now to be entertained, and that makes it outrageously exhausting as well, and I think that they also want everything to come to

them. Then they have a huge amount of support from family and community that says, "Yes, your teacher should have taught you that. Your teacher should have given you that. Your teacher should have provided that." It's, "No, no you've got Google. You've got a library system, you've got all these things, you need to go and use that." We had to use that. I'm not giving you everything."

Then there'll be a whole lot of, "My kids didn't do this, because, compared to the person over this school who did get this. So why didn't my kid get this?" I think that there is a lot more of demands, and pressure and those sort of things on teachers.

One theme which was recurrent in the interviews was around the transfer process and how it was handled by the ACT Education Directorate, or individual schools or school leaders. This was interesting as it also was a theme in both of the beginning teacher interviews as well, although in a slightly difference context around permanency and agency in choosing which schools to work at. In both groups, this author presents this theme as a support for a need to be recognised for the skills and experiences that the participants bring to their roles. Schools and systems that value experienced teachers should be finding them positions that suit their particular skills and valuing the contribution they bring to the workplace. When this does not occur in the transfer process, or when teachers feel that they are disposable or "another number" then this does not make them feel recognised and it was viewed as a negative aspect of their career.

Sally: I did discuss that with the union [being forced to transfer], and I decided in the end if I had been selected to go, then I didn't want to work at a place that didn't want me. I was very fortunate to get a job at [current college], and I've been very happy there.

I object to the five-year rotation business.

I think my Principal does a really good job. He spends [time], he comes and watches. In the fifth year, he came and watched a class of mine. Then he interviewed me. Then he made a decision [about staffing, contracts and transferring teachers to other schools]. In a big school with over a thousand,

I reckon that's two weeks full-time work watching people and interviewing them... I was given a three-year extension.

I object to that whole idea of not having control over your professional pathway... After five years, we need to move or ask for our job to stay in a particular place, because of the system of rotation

Very, very difficult. I'm not sure [of] the best way [to tell teachers that they have to move schools], but it certainly wasn't done the best way at the time.

The poor office lady, at 3:00 on Friday, put letters in pigeonholes and we were all standing around waiting to see who would get the letters.

Veronica: When I look at people leaving, I really worry that it's people with a depth of experience, with broad experience, who also know what the world is a bit like and say, "Woah, this isn't it." I think that, that frustration and disrespect, and that sort of stuff just grinds over time.

If I look at other jobs I've had, people would say, "Okay, this is your first time in [foreign country]. I'm going to mentor you and help you with the [new] culture and context and what you need to do, but I recognise that you have a background in [the specialist area of] education, amazing. I'm going to leverage that, and we will get these great results. I'll take your, [pause] this bit and you take my, that bit." Whereas, I feel that does not happen.

It is, "I've been in a classroom for 5 years, 10 years, 20 years, 25 years, this is how it works." We don't take any of those other experiences, and we're not actually interested in any of those. This is how it's done.

Another woman I started working with was a science teacher who had a background in research science, had a PhD in science, and super-passionate about being a science communicator. [pause] Not teaching anymore. I think actually there were things that she needed for a classroom that needed to be done, and there are things that the school and the classroom and the directorate should have plundered from her. Especially if we're saying our big issue is STEM.

One of the beginning teachers did speak about the staffing process from his perspective as well.

James: Five minutes before a lesson, I was told in the staffroom (not in a private situation) that my contract wouldn't be renewed due to staffing/financial reasons (nothing to do with my performance). Is this professional? At another school, I discovered my contract wouldn't be renewed (again, not due to my performance but due to teachers returning from leave) when an email was sent around with the proposed classes for the next school year. No discussion with supervisors, etc. Is this professional? Do schools and the department realise that staff have financial commitments? Many of us don't want to be on temporary contracts – we want permanent employment.”

This was also reported for teachers who wished to have more flexible working arrangements such as moving to part time workloads. This lack of recognition of the skills and benefits of experienced teachers was reported as a negative, and conversely as a positive when it was managed well by supervisors.

Veronica: It was a personal slight to them [requesting to go part time] that perhaps I wasn't really good enough, or not committed. I had that told to me, that, "You're not committed because you're doing this and pursuing other things." I have an [education based] company that I run as well.

I've got other avenues [her business she had started] I'm going to go and explore that. I think I do really like my time in the classroom, but my school wouldn't be flexible. Last year, I went in four days a week to teach a [part time load] alone, and that's stupid.

I was [part time] and someone was [part time], and they would not facilitate a job share.

And then they would say, "We don't think that there would be beneficial student outcomes for that. Every other bit of research on job share says that, if you have proper communication and a clear outline of what's happening, this actually is better for the kids, because they're getting input from two qualified adults.

Instead, the other guy who's [part time], he left teaching [pause] he couldn't-- he had elderly parents to look after, he couldn't do that.

In my office area, the last full-time teacher has gone to 0.8 this year. [when asked if the school was okay with this arrangement] You have no job shares. [you need to come in whichever days you have classes scheduled].

The Guardian did a series on it and they said they cannot-- that teachers were the worst at doing that so that so many teachers were going to at least 0.8 and 0.6s. To get paid less just to stay on top of everything. That's where it's this constant, let's keep turning up the heat, turning up the heat, turning up the heat. Let's push it a bit further, a bit further. I think ultimately-- Instead of think it's, "Oh, that person can't handle it or that persons not committed."

That is actually where we are losing teachers and teachers who then say, "I'm going to go and work at the War Memorial. I'm going to go and-- Take this job as the education director over here, because I really love teaching. I love what I do and it's like in my area, but I'm not prepared [to take these conditions]."

That's where you probably get people who are older, more experienced, have all this other resources and backgrounds and stuff that should be plundered and who want to—[teach]. The guy who was [part time]. We would have taught [subjects] together. Previously, he had been an education officer at the [cultural institution]. As a college, you lost that resource rather than facilitate a job change.

If you're him, it's really offensive, it's really offensive... Not only do you not give a shit about my experience and the relationships, and my knowledge and background, all those things I can leverage. You're not even going to give me enough respect to allow me to-- I'm already taking the pay cut -- to look after my parents.

When I said I was coming back, that I would come back as a 0.4, then I was actually told by my school, we don't need to be flexible because you don't have kids.

Many of the experienced teachers spoke of mentoring newer staff and passing on their knowledge as an important part of their role, but it was then discussed that in situations such as the transfer rounds that experienced teachers are viewed in a negative context.

Sally: If the enrolment fell dramatically, and you needed to get rid of teachers, somehow you would have to decide, as the Principal, who is going. Not everybody [can stay], it's too expensive in terms of points and accountability, and money, and school-based management to have more teachers than you need.

Veronica: I think we're sort of this resource that they can—you know. It's an expensive number on a budget sheet. If we can get a cheaper one, we can do that. There are heaps of teachers lining up to come in. So, if you're not respecting quality and that. Then that teacher becomes an expensive troublemaker. Let's get rid of that [the difficult teacher].

When considered alongside the beginning teachers responses about having positive mentors, and the comments from the experienced teachers about how important these people were in their own professional growth, it is easy to connect that not recognising this important skill, especially during recruitment or transfer processes could cause significant damage to the overall staffing profile over a long period of time.

Jane: I've been a mentor now to 15 different teachers. Both beginners through uni for the first two, three years of their teaching and people have come from other sectors and territories.

And helping people who are really good teachers become what they should be. I love seeing that and seeing them actually so proud and challenged. It's just amazing, but that's why I stay.

Jacob: Also career type stuff as well. I put my hand up to say that I'd love to do that more formally. I think there was a like an afternoon a week we've talked about having a short half hour, 40 minute thing, and that I would love to work with a new teacher who is not in my faculty. That's the bigger picture stuff. Little initiatives like that, the kind of things that keep me in the job, and making sure that I'm looking for those.

I'm helping younger teachers to find workflow ways, to do things. It's really helpful but that would be another thing.

Jackie: what I'm doing now is, while it's all targeted towards the benefit of the students, my target audience in my view is actually now teachers rather than students. That's how I have my biggest impact on the students.

That's a very different way of thinking but it's really rewarding because I know that every time I help a teacher in any of the multitude of different ways that I do that, then therefore, I'm making their life a little bit easier or I'm giving them a skill that they can pass onto their students. Either way, their students are benefiting because their teacher is more relaxed or has more time. Therefore, can do a better job with their lessons, or they actually have different skills now that they can pass on.

Betty: Really as a [specialist teacher] to collaborate with other classroom teachers and help them become better ... and all that kind of stuff.

Recognition for one teacher was through a formal nomination for a teaching award.

Out of 3,000, I was quite happy to be [of of] 25 [finalists]. I was nominated because of the work that I do. Well, it's good because they contacted my last school, which I didn't know they would. They happened to speak to 10 people on the P&C, and they said yeah, pastoral care you've got to put her up for that. That's why I got that.

For me, earning that, that was huge. Just the fact that my Principal came up to me one day and said, "You know, you've never been nominated. I'm nominating you." I went, "They've got the most intake, and no chance." "No, no, you deserve it." When I got through, that just changed how I saw everything because I actually feel like it's being recognised.

That was two years ago. That was really huge getting the Public Education Award. Particularly, I looked at what they had actually put in it which was, she's on committees and she helps people. Then, the winner is all of these people doing these huge massive things that I would never have time to do. Then to actually know the school and not just my school, but the parents at both schools thought so highly of me. That really helped.

There were some reports that there is a lack of support in progressing into leadership or specialist roles, despite this being something that all the experienced teachers reported was valuable to them, despite them being in different types of roles.

Jane: There's a huge range [of reasons people want to transfer schools]. Some of it's just because our time is up, and we have to go. A lot of the ones [teachers] that I came through with, they wanted to eventually become execs,



and so the school would only ever give them K-2 or three to six positions.

You need both to apply for exec work.

Got to do a year in both. A lot of them are going, "Well, the principal keeps saying he's going to give me the other section," and after two years, they don't. They get really quite angry because for them they'd been lied to. It's not like it's impossible to adjust people around. That's when they want to transfer and get out. Even if I wasn't up for transfer the year that I needed to, I was getting out because I couldn't work with a particular individual anymore. Yes, I've got three of my girlfriends at the moment who have been teaching between eight to 10 years, so they're out about basically the same time as me. One of them wants to leave because she's been going for an exec job for five years and she's really ticked because every time that an exec is away for a bit she's put in the position. As soon as the job comes up, every time the principal goes, "No, you're not ready yet. We really need to have you on the junior part of the school."

She's gone, "I've waited four years now and you still haven't given it to me," so she's very angry about it. So, she's sticking out at the moment because this is her fifth year, and then she can get out and go to another school and actually apply for other execs jobs. She's frustrated, but she's sticking in because she knows as soon as she gets out, she should be able to apply for K-2 jobs and she'd be able to continue her career.

The reason she's told is you're too good to lose [from her team], even though the exec's position is for [that team]. So, she's pretty angry. But, it's a thing I know that her principal does and he does it a lot. I've got two other friends who don't know if they're going to stay on or not, and it's primarily because they've again, at 10 years quite experienced and they're finding it very hard because their executive has had one year of teaching experience and failed. In fact, one of my friends, she comes from [another state], she's come over here to the ACT after five years, so she's been here five years. She had a student from the university that came out and she mentored him for the first year of his teaching, and he was bad. He just couldn't get things together, he couldn't do his paperwork, and so the school decided, "Put him as an executive." He's now her executive, and she can't cope with that, because this

is a person who couldn't do his paperwork, can't cope in a classroom, and yet he's now technically her superior.

So, that's made her very disinterested. So, she doesn't know whether or not she wants to stick in the profession if this is allowed. I understand that because I've seen it a lot. It's no issue if someone's got less experience, if they're capable, but when they're not, it's very hard. I've got another friend who has decided to stay in, but she's decided rather than staying mainstream, she's going into special ed, because she can't put up with the execs anymore. She's had enough of them.

In this section the experiences of experienced teachers have been presented, with a focus on the theme of recognition which emerged through the analysis of these interviews. Recognition looked different for different participants, and the different ways in which they described this feeling have been included. Some explicitly used the word recognised, others used respected, trusted or told stories with an underpinning theme of being recognised and, therefore, trusted as a professional. In the next section the final emergent theme of the impact of relationships across all the participants is presented.

#### **5.4.3. Relationships - how do they view their relationship with their school leaders and peers?**

In every interview the participants referenced relationships as part of the positive or negative aspects of their career. Some participants discussed their relationships with their supervisor, mentor and / or peers in depth, whereas others mentioned it only briefly. The commonality was in that every teacher did speak about it as having an impact on them in some way. In two of the interviews, the experiences shared around the impact the relationship between themselves and their supervisor had on their overall job satisfaction and intent to leave could not be shared as the quotes could potentially identify them. One of these experiences was positive and the other was negative. The overall theme of these two interviews, as well as the quotes that could not identify them are included in this section.

James: I had a mentor at [first school], she was the executive teacher. She was good.

I think the fact that, um, (pause) [mentor at first school] was an executive teacher so she didn't have a full teaching load. So, we tried to organise

weekly meetings and I could, she just seemed less busy. And, perhaps more approachable, and so I could go to her and ask her things, clarify things, and get suggestions.

Edward: Probably the biggest thing that's impacted on my last three years has been the ad hoc way that the Directorate does mentoring in schools for new educators.

I was supposed to be working with and be mentored by an experienced [teaching] person. That didn't really work, that relationship. There were a lot of things behind that... It was a tough year for me for a number of reasons, but ultimately the mentoring that I should have had, I didn't feel like I had. It wasn't until maybe, June, May, June that I got an email from the person who was mentoring me to say I'm starting this email thing. I'm going to mentor few [teachers in this specialist program], but this email thing can be a discussion backwards and forwards, but I'm going to do this thing. For a start, that was too late for me. Second, that was not the sort of help that I need. I needed the setup help from the start.

If I was going to make a suggestion to them to what to do next is make sure of the mentoring end and put a new teacher with an experienced teacher to team teach from day one... [asked if "was that person assigned to you or do you get to choose people?"] No, they were assigned to me mainly because that was [an experienced] person who had a lot of experience and was very good at what they did. It's just that the mentoring didn't happen.

At [a second school] school, I wasn't included on the new educator list, email list. It wasn't again until May that someone said, "How long have you been teaching?" I said, "It's my 2nd year." "How come you haven't been going to the new educator meeting?" I'm like, "What new educator meeting?" They're like, "Well, do you have mentor?" I'm like, "No." They said, "Well you're working with this person pretty closely so they can be your mentor."

They [the assigned mentor] said, "Oh, I didn't really want to be a mentor this year..." because they were teaching a few different things, doing some new [out of their teaching area] stuff and that sort of thing and wanted to really concentrate on their own stuff. The mentoring there was ineffective as well

because of that-- so between February when we started and September, [they] only came into my classroom once.

My executive came in twice in that time and one of the deputies came in once for 20 minutes. At the end of that 20 minutes, she got up and told the class that they were being really disrespectful and being rude. Basically, had to a big rant at them and then walked out. Leaving me to pick up after all of that.

...[in a semester block] I had four visits from people observing me teach.

Again, it's ineffective. It doesn't help a new educator to ground themselves and to be able to learn from more experienced teachers when nobody can see what you're doing. In the September just before the end of third term, there was an incident in the classroom...

So, they did [meet with me] mid-year when my probation was supposed to be over. There was no mentor support when my probation was supposed to be over. I was supposed to have a meeting with my exec. I found out that morning that the deputy would also be there and at that meeting they said they wanted to extend my probation because they didn't think that I was ready to be offered that. That I needed more help. All of this stuff and I obviously was upset about that because there had being nothing before that because no one had been in the classroom. You can't train someone in the way that you want them to teach if you are not observing them and effectively mentoring them. Yes, I guess that's all a very long story to say the mentoring needs to be fixed across the system because it's so ad hoc.

Sally: Usually when there are incidents, your peers support you.

I go in and after my [lower level] class, and say, "Oh, God. We're still doing these things." "They're still on their phones instead of doing some work." The other say, "Oh, yeah. Don't worry. It's all right, Sally. It's okay. It's okay. It's like that in our class too."

So next year, I'll go through the same process again, unless there's a different principal who does it differently. I know from the system there are principals doing it different. I object to that whole idea of not having control over your professional pathway... After five years, we need to move or ask for our job to stay in a particular place, because of the system of rotation.

I think my Principal is doing a good job, a better job than many other Principals are doing. Certainly, [he] came into my classroom, and he sent me immediate feedback about what had gone on. I thought that was very good. [first school in the ACT] got rid of two maths teachers, they had too many teachers. There were 10 staff moved on that year because in [the first school in the ACT] enrolment goes up and down dramatically. I'm not quite sure why, but it does. That means that sometimes a lot of teachers are asked to find alternative jobs. It [is] very difficult to do that. Very, very difficult. I'm not sure [of] the best way [to tell teachers that they have to move schools], but it certainly wasn't done the best way at the time. The poor office lady, at 3:00 on Friday, put letters in pigeonholes and we were all standing around waiting to see who would get the letters.

I don't know the best way to go about it, but certainly it's not to send the poor office lady with ten letters to put in pigeonholes... On a Friday afternoon. I know doing it on a Friday afternoon means you can go home and kick the cat, and shout at the dog, and frighten your husband, and it does remove it from the schools. I think perhaps that's a good idea, but I don't know how to do it [better]. If it's one person, you go up and tell them. But I don't know how you do when it's a big number.

Veronica: I think that's what teaching is, and I love the conversations I have with my team. That's fantastic and for that I will do the marking. If I had to deal with any of the other stuff, or if I had to do that full time, no way.

Jackie: I've also noticed a difference in culture of the school in power dynamics from executive, principals, to teachers where at the college level and again you can take this with a grain of salt, but this is what I've seen. I have talked with other people about this, that at the college level and I don't know about high school, but I think it's probably similar. That it's more collaborative, and that the classroom teachers, and maybe heads of department get much more like, "Actually, that doesn't sound good," or, "No, no, we're not going to do that, we're going to do this."

Whereas in primary school it's just like, "Do it." Everybody goes, "Okay." That's from the principal doing this. If your principal tells you to do something, you do it. If you're going to.

Jane: I filled in [her application] for low socio-economic schools, and [School Principal] went, "Sure, If you'd like to have a look at what neglect looks like, we have a population here." You beauty, I'll come down for a contract for you and see. He gave me the start down here which I'm grateful for [laughs].

[The] Principal put me through a course I love. It's something I recommend to every teacher. It helped me hugely in my first year. I've done that course three times now, and happily pay to do it myself.

It is not [the norm]. The harder the school is, the better the staff. So, that's generally-- if you want to find beautiful staff, you go to the hardest of schools, because you have to band together. You can't survive otherwise, and you'll notice tough schools, if someone is a bit more *clickey* or they're, [pause] not necessarily strange, but they're not quite in the right mind set, or we need to band together with these kids to fight against the world, they tend to leave fairly quick because they just don't connect as well with other teachers, they just go "nah, it's not for me", and they'll swap. We had a few teachers do that.

Generally, my school is very, very supportive. I found last year they were even better than the year before, because we actually had a new deputy come in and she was just amazing because she knew exactly who to contact. Because, she had the contacts. So, rather than me just working with care and protection, I got to work with the police, I got to work with the sexual assault office. That was huge, and because she was really a forthright lady, she was quite willing to ring them up to go, "This is not good enough, you're going to do more, and you're doing it today," which is stuff that I'm just not comfortable enough to do.

She just put such emphasis on it, and she was able to get all the family in, because this was a split family, which is something I have very rarely managed to do, because I'm normally told by a particular part of the family, I can go get stuffed because she's too drunk. The fact that she was actually

able to do that and was able to sound threatening enough to make her come in, was just amazing going, "Oh, my goodness, I wish I could do that," but that's just not me. That was really good, and she was always ready to go because there's a teachers' aide involved as well.

After every meeting, she gave us an hour just to sit and have a coffee and chill, because coming out those meetings you're shaking and it's like, "Oh my goodness, had to be so calm and that's they're telling, me all this terrifying stuff." It's hard because you have parents are sitting there and going, "My child would never do that." It's like, "What? You've been in the classroom when this has been happening." They would just suddenly have a go, and that's what's really hard when you're trying just to go, "Well, I have video footage here, we're now going to watch it." They go, "No, no that's also faked." It's like I can't prove it anymore.

Now my school has been so amazing with the support there, and my execs are great. They know that if I know it's going to be a rougher day or if they go, they seen on the playground, and it's going to be rough, they'll come and let me know, and they'll do check ins. Our office lady is someone who loves hugging same as me, so if it'd been a bad session and she'd [a student] had a psychotic episode, [front office lady] would be told to come down, "I've been told to come down and give you a hug, okay, here."

No words are required, just hug.

I've got an amazing supportive staff and is not just at the exec level and the principal level and the front office, but it's the teaching staff as well. If I need to evacuate my room or something the other teachers are quite happy to just, "Hi, you guys, you come with me." You come and I'll take them as long as they need. We do it for other teachers too because we've got a few children with very high needs. They're just so supportive, I love them.

I love working in difficult schools because you make such an impact, but when you have supportive staff, the difference you can make in a community... In two years, if you have an amazing staff, you can do astronomical things. It's huge.

On my cell phone, a lot of my friends who are teachers, we've all become disenchanted with the leadership. I'm lucky I'm in a brilliant school. I love my leadership, it's fantastic, there are some great execs out there.

There are some great deputies and Principals, but there is also so many bad ones out there, and they seem to just stay in the system and that's really depressing. Particularly when you work hard and really the whole point of the exec is to have the teachers back. They're meant to be the ones who the principal say what they want. The execs will show the teachers how to do it. If the teachers go, "It's not working, we'll try, these are our problems," they're meant to go to the Principal and say, "This is why they're saying it's not working. Can we look at something else or how can we adjust?"

What normally happens in schools is they go, "Well, it's your own fault, what's wrong with you?" It's done not as a professional looking to help you, it's something wrong with you personally or you don't work hard enough. Which is very hard when a lot of teachers work 60 hours a week and the exec works about 40, and you watch them come after you and leave before you, and have long coffee breaks. That's very, very hard... it's not a pleasant experience because while there are some great ones, there are so many bad ones.

For fixing, and I think one of the things is like, I know that they've now got the 360 reflection tool. It was a really good tool because it actually showed them if the teachers weren't feeling supported, or what the teachers actually saw as being false, or what they needed to actually feel confidence in them [the school leaders].

It often comes down to, if you have a good team of beginning and more experienced teachers, the experienced teachers will speak out because they know at the end of the day there's nothing wrong with them. They're a good teacher and they've had experience, and they get results from kids. While beginning teachers, I guess are so much more malleable. It's so easy for them just to be crushed with the thumb, because I've been there, I've gone through it. Having those mixed teams is really important.

The other things that I can see starting to work, is having exchanges and having your reflective tools, and having another avenue even to the Principal so that they can hear that, "Look, I think they're lovely people, but they're not doing the job in the way that they need to."



Jacob: Some leaders don't know [what supports, and processes, are available]. I would agree with that. One of the things that I had to push myself to do sometimes is to try to talk more to people I could see don't really have support from their leaders.

Certainly, some SLCs know the ropes better than others...

Maybe the right type of the person isn't the person that wants to be there, or are we giving the right kind of management training to people who do move into more managerial roles? Do we expect people to pick that up from great leaders, or do you actually have experience with that kind of stuff?

Those teachers who spoke of positive relationships in their teaching career linked them with an increased intent to stay and as a factor in dealing with difficult situations. It was difficult to pinpoint exactly what each individual determined to be positive about those with which they had strong relationships. Some of the participants reflected on the relationships and friendships whereas others linked them more as strong supervisory relationships.

Edward: I ended up finally the week before term three again at a different school in [specific] area and they were just so supportive, the execs there were just fantastic.

I had a Year 10 and they were doing some project stuff for their last major assignment for the year really, and I had booked a lab at one stage and had about half the class just mucking round and I went spoke to my exec and she said, "Well, the next two times you have that class, we'll just split them in half, and the half that want to work you can take them to the lab and the other half I'll do the other stuff with in the classroom."

All the way through last term, the two execs that I was working with on, because I was doing [second subject area], so those two execs worked with me really closely to help me in that sort of situation, to come into the classroom, they did observations, they both observed classes, they had other people, other senior staff observe classes with me and give feedback and yes. It was a complete contrast to what I had had in the other two schools.

I think it's intent. That, to effectively mentor someone, you have to be of a mind that that's what you are doing, that is the part of your role to build peoples capacities. And I feel like in my first two jobs that there was an expectation that as a 40 something year old guy, that I had it all, that I would be able to just walk into a classroom and do it. Whereas, we know from other research that it takes up-to eight years for a new teacher to become proficient.

Veronica: She is the reason that I am a still here. Her [an SLC she had in a high school ] and [another colleague].

Again, just amazing people. , but probably people I would also say [when speaking to that SLC], "Fuck, no, at 5:00 you don't go back. You don't add another job, you don't pick up another thing. You let some people crash and burn." I think there's a lot of that. That happens where you have a system that runs on the goodwill of a lot of people. How you put that on families, and their own health and a whole lot of things at stake just to be shat on.

Jackie: There was a pivotal moment towards the latter half of the end of that year, when somebody, a colleague said to me in the corridor, "Hey Jackie, what are you doing this weekend?" I'm like "Oh, I've got a lot to do and I'm going to do this and this, and this for lesson planning and marking, whatever." He looked at me in he just kind of said, "You know, you need to have at least one day off, right?"

Literally, that had not occurred to me. That's just me. Like, that's how I was at that time and everything but that was a revelatory moment where I went, "Oh, right, okay, yes, that kind of does make sense."

[laughter]

There was that. That's a pivotal moment looking back. Also, I remember I had an excellent mentor teacher that first year. That was a really tough school. It was in an inner city in [overseas] and I had an excellent [mentor]... we had that really good mentor program setup where she was buddied up with me in an official way, and they gave us some money so that we could each have days off through the year. One time we went to a PD thing together, another time we split it and took half a day at a time and I went in

and just sat in her class for half a day, and another day, she came in and sat in my class for half a day.

We were able to observe each other like that and also, I just went to see her every day, pretty much after school and debrief about the day but she at that time was working really strongly towards the goal. She, I think, had been teaching about 10 years and she said, "I don't want to take any work home, my goal is that all my planning and marking done while I'm here." That was her goal.

My school's just a 100% supportive, like "Go for it Jackie, that's awesome." Now I have this feeling of expansiveness and I'm soaring through the sky, I'm getting national recognition for the work that I'm doing. That feels great, I feel like I'm reaching my potential.

I try, especially because my own personal experience was so wonderful, having that mentor teacher who was so effective and supportive for me. She set me up for a successful career.

Jane: The staff are amazing, I love them. I love them to bits, particularly when I got pregnant, I was so sick that she [the Principal] employed a teachers' aide and a teacher in the room with me because I couldn't stand up. I just went, "You could just tell me to go," and they went, "No, no, if you feel you need to be here". This was the last week of school before I was going and I was desperate to be there for my kids." Then she forked a lot of money just to keep me safe in the room. I went, "Oh." Showed you what's the people there are like.

It was easy. ... It was really great because I spoke to [Deputy Principal who was filling in at her school from the school she was applying for] and said, "Look, my six years are up. I've got to transfer. How do I do it?" He went, "Well, I'm going to get you all the paperwork. You fill it out and then you just get me to look over it. I'll check and if I end up being the principal of the school, I'd love to have you." Which is great because I know him very well. One of my new people on my team who's become a very close friend, she just transferred to our school the year beforehand. She gave me hers [transfer application] so I could see the writing they want, because it's only two pages of writing and then just your details. It was so easy because I was going,

“Now, I have to put together a CV, I’ve no idea. What if I need portfolios? I can't do this.” It was so easy. The whole thing took me an hour to write.

Then, I had two people look over it and adjust a few little bits where they went, “Oh no, must make a little bit tidier,” and that was it. Then, I got my first choice [of schools to move to].

Yes, I waited deliberately [to the end of a period where she would have to transfer schools]. I wanted to get my six years because that was my maximum, because [the Principal] had actually given me the chance and got me a permanent position so that was my way of giving back.

A lot of my friends who are six and fifth years, [the transfer process was] very easy. If you're younger, it's harder, purely because particularly, if you're a third or fourth because it's normal to not get it [a transfer position]. If you're a fourth and the school [community finds out] that you want to leave, a lot of teachers can become quite rude about it. It depends on your leadership. In my current school, our boss is amazing about looking at what's hard. If you can't cope, that's fine, we'll help you find a new spot and she will back for you to go to other schools. She's just amazing. I love her to bits.

If my principal's still there [she would want to return to the same school after maternity leave], because she was only there for a certain amount of years, I'm hoping by 2019 I can go back to three days a week. That would be nice because I love working. I love it. While she's there, she said that she'll keep the position for me if I want part time or full time and she will adjust.

She's been supporting me even when I applied for the position. I said, "Look, we're trying to get pregnant. If I get pregnant straight away, is that going to be an issue?" She went, "No, it's all good." She's one of the first people we told that we were pregnant. She's just an amazing lady, very charismatic.

She's very good at upping our morale and quite often we'll have, "was there any wine and cheese around? Just cheese. I need cheese." You'll see she used to randomly appear at meetings and she just gets so happy and it's very infectious thereafter. She's someone who if you're having a crummy time, she'll might take your day off.

She's somewhat busy but then she will make a point of coming in and chatting, sitting with you, "If you want to go and have a coffee, or go and

have a beer outside, or do you just need some time to chill or do you need to take time off?" She's really good about it.

When I rocked up at school at seven o'clock, my boss saw me, and I was just pale, and I couldn't talk properly [after the incident].

She went on, "What's happening?" She went, "Okay. What are you doing here?" I mean, we had four staff away sick that week. It was myself, one in kindergarten, one year six, and we were trying to cope with all these extras. Wasn't a good spot and I knew, I couldn't take time and she went, "No, go." She literally grabbed me and shoved me out the door and locked the door. I ended up having two weeks off because I had to go and look after my Grandmother at the hospital but she [the Principal] was great. Then after Gran got out of the hospital, I had to bring her down here for a week because mum had unfortunately [got sick]... because of that she [the Principal] actually covered all my duties so I could come back here at lunchtime to feed Gran because she needed someone to feed her.

I could pop back at recess really quick because it's only 10 minutes to work just to check turnover, tapes, check if she had enough order. She actually covered all my duties for another two weeks just so I could take care of Gran because she knew that I had to do that. That's the sort of Principal I have.

Jacob: It was set up to look out for and support teachers as well as students, and so what really made me get the help that I needed to get through that, were people who I'm not easily friends with, saying, "Are you okay? What's going on?"

I feel for that side of things, I wouldn't have listened to friends. What I listened to were people who had working in roles in the school who knew that that was supposed to do that kind of thing for their peers. As much as that was terrifying, on reflection, that's yet another thing that has kept me in this kind of job.

Betty: It was the best year of my life. It was a really tough school to work at. I had some really tough classes. There were fights in my classroom, and there were all sorts of full-on things, but I had an awesome Level Two [SLC / Executive teacher] who was really supportive. I had very good experienced

teachers who were happy to work with me. The class that I was having difficulty with, everyone was having [difficulties] in this class. They were having the same difficulties with those kids, so I knew it wasn't just me. I also had, in terms of my colleagues, the right people there at the right time... and my best friends now, we were all working at that school at that time. It was just chance and luck that we were all there at the same time. That to me was peak in terms of professional growth and also personal growth, just a really important year for me.

It was really hard, but I thought, "No. I'm going to stick it out anyway." I stayed at that school for [more than 5] years. It was during that time I took on a new subject area but then also I was [working in a roll supporting other teachers]..

I think it would be about Principals running tight ships in terms of, "This is the behaviour that we expect." Having structures in place and the Principals and Deputy Principals and level twos being willing to do what's needed to support the teachers so that they can just concentrate on their teaching. Not just saying that those teachers should be allowed to do whatever they like. I've worked with teachers before who were like, "I don't like that kid. Just get out." They kind of pick on them. That's not appropriate at all, but Principals running tight ships and having really clear expectations about workload on their teachers, I think, is the most important thing.

I think if the structures are in place so that they can run tight ships with reasonable expectation about teacher workloads and high expectations about student behaviour and structures in place. To say, "No, this is what's going to happen," and not being afraid of standing up to parents and going, "Actually, it's not acceptable for your child to behave like this." Being willing to put their foot down on that stuff, I think, that made a huge difference in my teaching life.

Yes, definitely [it's variable and good luck whether you get a good Principal or not]. The principal also needs really good people under them for that to happen. They can't do it all. They need really good deputies and really good level two's [executive teachers / SLCs] to help make that happen.

Those who had negative relationships in their careers had said they directly impacted on their intent to leave, more than student behaviours or other pressures they were experiencing.

James: I don't feel very supported.

Um at [second school] ... I had a mentor teacher; this was in the [James' main subject] area. At [second school] I had three lines of [main subject area] and two of [out of subject teaching area]. So (drawn out), my mentor was [first subject area], which is my strength anyway. I just found him though, he was just so busy you know. So, to find the time to talk with him [was difficult]. It would have been better, to have mentor in the [second subject] area, because that wasn't my strength."

James (discussing reasons he was thinking about leaving): [When asked whether the resources did not exist or where just not shared with him] I think it was more the latter. More that they weren't willing to share and ... I think it was really that everyone was just so busy. I found it really hard to get anybody to actually sit down and have a chat with me because everything, everything just seems so frantic.

I mean, I've been generally okay with the supervisors and the support, but I still feel a bit thrown in the deep end and unprepared.

Five minutes before a lesson, I was told in the staffroom (not in a private situation) that my contract wouldn't be renewed due to staffing/financial reasons (nothing to do with my performance). Is this professional? At another school, I discovered my contract wouldn't be renewed (again, not due to my performance but due to teachers returning from leave) when an email was sent around with the proposed classes for the next school year.

No discussion with supervisors, etc. Is this professional?

Edward: It had been building up [the behaviours that lead to an incident] and I had voiced concerns about some of the things that were being said to me as a male teacher. That culminated one day in [a specific incident] and I then stopped teaching basically for a year. Went out on a leave ... and only went back to teaching [the following year]. I basically had a year off of teaching... It was ... a really horrible exit. I guess part of that was clouded by a friend from South Australia, who'd been a teacher, who had had a similar thing

happen to him in one of the schools he was at where he had a female student stalk him. Somehow, he moved house, changed his phone numbers, everything and she still managed to find where he was which he still doesn't know how she did that. The school and the department in South Australia didn't support him in that either. He was just left to deal with it on his own and he left teaching permanently.

With all of this at the back of my mind, the day that the incident happened I managed to catch my deputy in the corridor and told her what had happened. She said, "Oh, just put it in Maze [online data collection program] and tell your executive on Monday," because my executive wasn't there that day. In fact, my executive had been away for a week and so on the Monday-- I didn't put it into Maze that afternoon because I was just too shaken up.

I came in on Monday and in my free lessons put it into Maze and wasn't actually able to catch up with my executive because, having been on leave, they had a lot of stuff to do as well and it just never happened.

There was no follow up from the deputy on the Monday. How are you going? Have you been able to catch up bla bla bla. When I went to a meeting, during the time that I was on leave, just following up, [the Deputy] said she didn't even remember me telling her the story in the first place. Yes, it was just horrible.

Yet here I was, walking into classrooms with no army supporting me, it was like one soldier walking out into the battlefield against somebody else's army and turning around and everyone else has stepped back...

I've actually have applied, I have been applying for other positions outside of teaching... [asked if he would leave if the applications were successful] Yes, I would potentially step out of teaching at least for a while.

Veronica: People just don't feel respected. There's not really communication - - so no one is working here as a team.

It was a personal slight to them [requesting to go part time] that perhaps I wasn't really good enough, or not committed. I had that told to me, that, "You're not committed because you're doing this and pursuing other things." I have an [education based] company that I run as well.



If you're him, it's really offensive, it's really offensive... Not only do you not give a shit about my experience and the relationships, and my knowledge and background, all those things I can leverage. You're not even going to give me enough respect to allow me to-- I'm already taking the pay cut -- to look after my parents.

When I said I was coming back, that I would come back as a 0.4, then I was actually told by my school, we don't need to be flexible because you don't have kids.

Jackie: Another really tough time was when I felt. Well, there was a Principal I worked with once who didn't say, good morning.

[laughter]

Which I know, but I would walk down the corridor from her, we will be approaching each other like this, only two people around and I would say, "Morning," and she literally would say nothing and walk by me. It drove me wild. I was so, and also she was a mean and a bully on a bigger scale, but that kind of meanness in the workplace, definitely affected me. Likewise, there was a different Principal that just, I thought didn't value what I was doing at all. This was right before I moved to [different school] and I saw I was very nearly done with my [specialist teaching] qualification.

Also, in some of those schools where I was doing relief, nobody would talk to me. I was sitting at the table, "Hi, you mind if I sit down with you?" at lunch, teachers, I'm talking about, and they are literally not talking to me at all, and they're having this like bitchy gossipy conversation about like "And then--" This kind of thing and I'm just like, "I'm going to get up now." Went out and sat in the foyer and looked at my phone because I was like, "I don't want to sit in there" and plus, I'd be tired and zapped from the over stimulating day.

That sucked and that was the first time that I ever, for the career path that I'm on, I make \$390 dollars a day I think it is for relief teaching, and I'm literally standing there going through the motions and thinking to myself, "\$390, \$390." That's it. That was the only reason I was there that made me keep going with it, and that was not good.

Jane: I have been, like at my last school, I know one of the reasons a lot of teachers leave is the attitude of the executives. I had a very bad relationship with my last deputy, to the point I had to actually go to a racial discrimination board about him.

I also had to go to [another section in Education] about him and a few other things. I've had issues with [a Principal] as well. As much as I can respect him, he's a very good principal, he's not a good leader of teachers. The attitude that both of them were able to give me, and tell me how stupid I was and how useless, and then turn around to parents say, "We're trying to keep her." That really sent my head into a spin because I was so angry at them. Getting out [leaving that school] was great, and then knowing that ... he'd always said, "You'll never be good enough because you're only a [low performing teacher]. You're not an [high flying teacher]."

Yes. I didn't ask for it [to be nominated for a teaching award], one of the execs put me up for it. He cut it out and said, "No, you can't. You're only a duck." I just went, "Why are you telling me this? I didn't even know it was happening. You just crushed me." That's what he did to teachers quite a lot unless they're a favourite. A very good principal, great for getting the PR in the community, not good as a leader of teachers. I know a lot of teachers who have taught there, escape the school. Those who've stuck have left and never returned to the profession because of him.

At my last school though, there was a tendency, even though you're meant to keep it private, they would conveniently let it leak [that you were applying for a new school or position] so that people would turn on them, and they would encourage people turning and being cruel to them. It was very cliquey and that's one the reasons I wanted out. There are other schools I know, like [local school] is amazing. If someone wants to leave then the rest of the staff are like, "Oh well, you're just going to have to come out and have more coffee dates with us now before you go."

Betty: I feel like if I didn't have a principal who is very supportive or a very flexible structure in the school, or you're in a high school that's really tough and all the teachers are running around like lemmings because you're running

detention for this kid and sorting out this fighting, sorting out this bullying or whatever.

That first year I worked at my first school, that was definitely the best situation that it could be. Where my level two was really supportive, there were really clear processes involved in terms of a card system and traffic lights. Also, the Principal ran a really tight ship. The kids were a little bit scared of the Principal. The kids all knew who the Principal was, which, later Principal's I had kids who had no idea who that person is, and I think that's really bad.

That Principal ended up going on sick leave or retiring or something. We went through some changes [details omitted] the whole situation was handled by the department terribly and has caused a whole lot of stress on everyone and the school was just a bit of a mess. That Principal left, we got another one who came in and said, I remember very clearly in their first speech to us, we need to improve the corporate image of the school and reduce the suspension statistics, not look at what we do with kids who are suspended all the time. It was all about appearances. That's when things went down. Apparently things, I still have friends who work there still, things are better than they were, but I don't think in any school, even if you've got kids who come from homes where the parents are really supportive of school and that have all that cultural capital to do well at school [would run well without structure]. What frustrates me and one of that things that makes me want leave is the politics of it. That we're not actually going to take a stand and say, "We're not going to accept this at school." We just acquiesce to the parents who complain about stuff or we'll just do this, or let this happen because we don't want to have a hard conversation with someone about it. We had a bit of a rebellion at my school a few years ago where a Deputy Principal was trying to force this new way of doing things onto us. One of the teacher's kind of protested it about, "Well if you want us to do this extra thing what are you going to take away, in terms of the workload?" He said something really offensive like, "Unless you don't want to take it on then you obviously don't want to change how you are or something like that." It caused nearly a riot in our staff meeting.

This Deputy is always about appearances. He had basically no experience at being a Principal and got a fulltime Principal's job. I've worked with lots of great people in school leadership positions but also some who got their promotion because they worked on some literacy thing in the office and then they come back as a level two. Or even Deputy Principal when they can't even control their own classes. Then they have to support you, controlling your class and it's just disastrous. I think that also puts a lot of pressure on classroom teachers having SLC's who are not very good at their job.

In this section the different ways in which relationships impacted on the participants job satisfaction and intent to leave or stay has been presented. Overall, the types of relationships and the needs that each participant had for a relationship differed in many cases. However, the overall trend was that a perceived positive relationship and positive view of a supervisor, Principal, Deputy and / or colleagues was viewed as connected to job satisfaction. In the next section the summary of all the emergent themes is presented.

### **5.5. Discussion – Interviews**

The findings of the interviews demonstrated three keys themes which, in this context, are important factors that they feel are linked with teacher attrition and retention. The reason a teacher chose the profession (motivation), the need for support (beginning teachers) or recognition (experienced teachers) and the relationships they have with their supervisors and peers were the three major themes which emerged. These themes are best explained through the Social Cognitive Career Theory as presented in section 2.3 on page 46). In this theory, summarised below, a number of factors are important to an individual's career at different stages and for different reasons. This includes the factors discovered in this study, however, the importance of the relationship between the teacher their school leaders and their peers are not fully integrated into this model. Therefore, this study proposes that the SCCT is the best means to fully explore teacher experiences, why they choose to stay or leave, with the addition of a component to better explain the importance of relationships, especially between supervisors and teachers.

### 5.5.1. Motivation – why they become a teacher

Motivation can be considered from the perspective of the SCCT, in the context of this study, as the reason a teacher chooses the career is a key component of SCCT. In this study teachers chose the word “motivation” or “decided to become a teacher,” when discussing the initial choice, they made to join the teaching workforce. In SCCT this would not be named as motivation, it would be described through the model of career interest, which gives a background model to explore how an individual chooses, and then remains in, a profession.

In this study it was found that teachers with different reasons for entering the profession also had differing experiences. Teachers who chose the career because they wanted to impart their knowledge and interest in a specific learning or content area reported that experiences which they felt inhibited them in achieving this as reasons they considered leaving and points of negative experiences overall. In Figure 5.9 it shows the SCCT model of career interest as a loop of key variables which each impact on an individual’s career choice. In this example the teacher, who has chosen to teach as a means to impart their knowledge, has an interest in that area. They make the choice to undertake their teacher training (which is also part of the cycle) and then become a teacher. They plan their goals (lessons and units of work) and then teach them (activity selection and practice). If the student behaviours mean that this process is not successful (decreased performance outcomes as measured against their initial interests in the imparting of content knowledge) then it can be seen that they in turn have a decrease to their self-efficacy and outcome expectations. The more that this occurs, the greater the impact which in turn could lead to the individual considering leaving teaching. In this scenario the converse is also true, as the teacher progresses along the model, however if their outcome is positive (in that they see students with improved academic outcomes in their area) then they see an increase in self-efficacy and outcome expectations which would likely result in them affirming their decision to remain in the profession. This is also true for those teachers who enter the profession due to an interest in social and emotional growth in young people. These teachers report factors, such as increased paperwork or standardised testing, as negative experiences at work. In Figure 5.9 on page 302 it can be seen how this links with the stages of career interest model in SCCT.

In this example, as a teacher is disrupted, they see a negative effect on their self-efficacy and outcome expectations. As those key areas are impacted it has a

domino effect across various aspects of their career development over time as outlined in the literature review. One area a decreased self-efficacy and negative outcome expectations has been shown to have an impact on in the SCCT is in overall job satisfaction (Lent & Brown, 2006a; Lent & Brown, 2008). A decreased job satisfaction can then lead to attrition (Wang et al., 2015). If a teacher does not see these disruptions, the form of which is dependent on their initial interest area, then they see an increase in self-efficacy and outcome expectation. This in turn increases their job satisfaction, and in most cases their life satisfaction as well (Lent & Brown, 2008).

Teachers in both categories reported high workloads and periods where they were working over 40 hours. When the reason/s for these workload increases at different points were seen by the teacher as contributing to the imparting knowledge or social/emotional growth (depending on their group) they had no negative reaction to the workload.

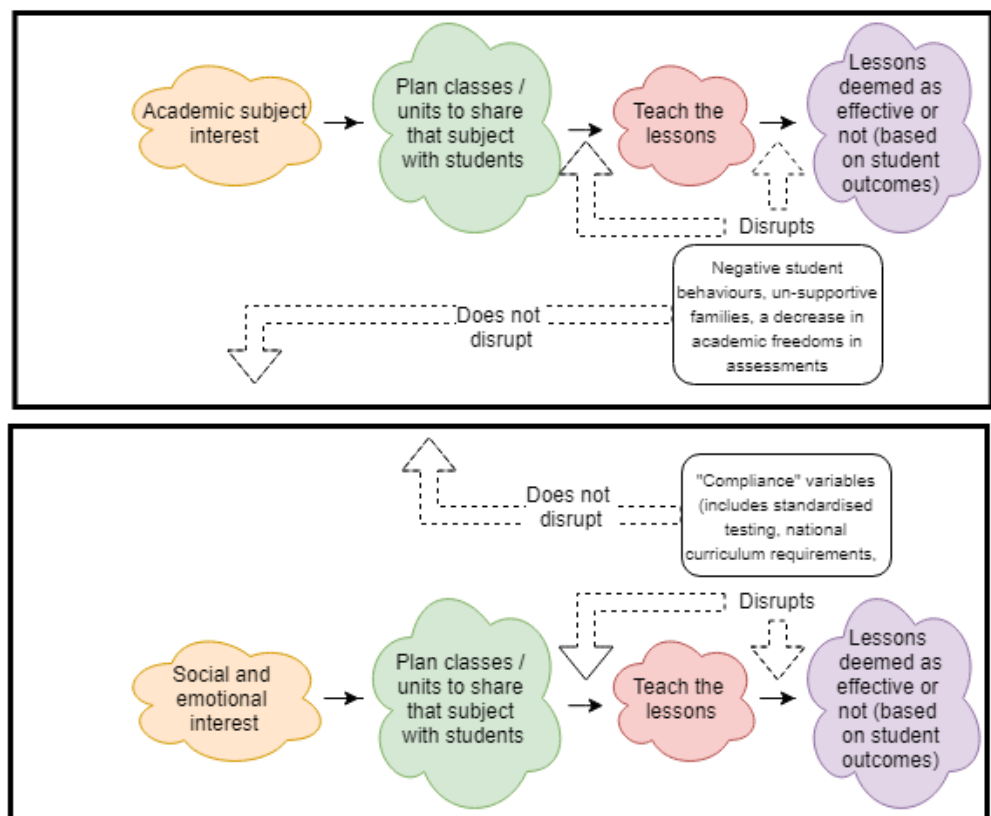
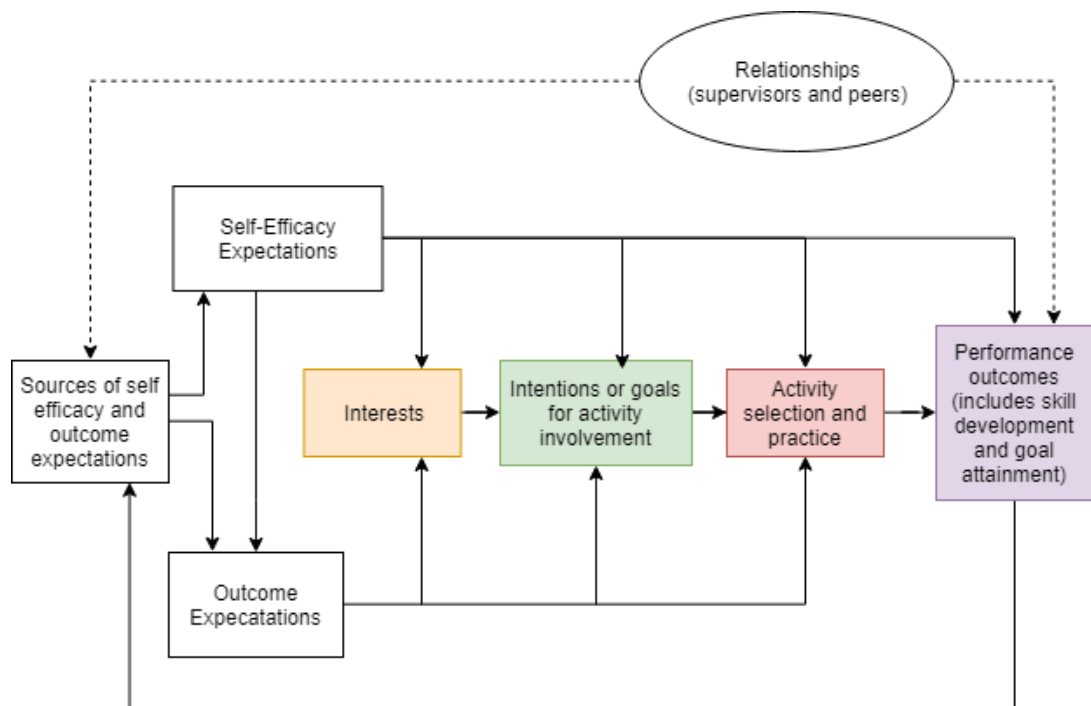


Figure 5.9 A summary of how a teacher's initial interest when choosing the profession is linked with how they perceive different variables as disruptive, or not, in line with the stages of SCCT's model of career interest development (Lent et al., 1994).

Motivation was the theme which will benefit the most from further examination in the future as the thematic analysis required exploring themes of challenging or affirming experiences alongside the exploration of why they became a teacher. This required the researcher to place their own interpretation on not only the teachers' experiences but also their reason for joining the profession. This could be further explored and connected with the work of Watt and Richardson (2007) in the FIT-Choice project which is discussed on pages 38 and 54. This research aims to better understand the motivation teachers have for joining the profession. This thesis has proposed that the initial choice in choosing teaching as a career plays a significant role in how teachers perceive experiences later in their career. Teachers who come with different motivational backgrounds will view the same experience through a very different lens. In this study it was found that those teachers who wanted to share their love of a subject/s viewed variables such as behaviour management as significantly negative (and as a potential reason to leave the profession), whereas those teachers who entered for a love of working with young people or a want to give back to the community saw behaviour issues as par for the course and, whilst they mentioned they occurred, it was not in a negative or significant context. As discussed on page 38, the FIT-Choice model is not directly considered as part of SCCT, however, it is underpinned by the work of Eccles (1987) which shares some commonality with SCCT through the exploration of motivations. Therefore, the findings of this thesis are underpinned by SCCT, however the links between it and the FIT-Choice scale are an area that could be further explored in future research. As the importance of why a teacher joined the profession on retention has been shown in this thesis, including how this then links across such a wide range of other career areas in the SCCT, it would be of value to consider how the FIT-Choice scale could be used in recruitment and retention policies in the ACT, and beyond.

### **5.5.2. Support vs. recognition**

The theme of support versus recognition was another that emerged as different across different groups. Beginning teachers reported that they felt they needed support, in navigating departmental policies as well as in the classroom. However, experienced teachers all reported some form of recognition as a positive (when it was received) or negative (when it was not). In the Australian Education



system teachers reflect on their practice against the Teacher Professional Standards. These standards were discussed in Chapter 1, as they evolved as a response to a suggested need for a more cohesive approach to teaching standards in Australian schools as outlined in the Melbourne Declaration. These standards also support the concepts of Mastery Learning as teachers move from novices (beginning) to experienced. In this study it is suggested that Mastery Learning is important to understand the stages a teacher moves through, in the form of the teacher professional standards. However, this difference in the needs of teachers with different years of experiences can also be addressed by SCCT. As SCCT best explains the wide range of experiences that teachers go through in their work life which have been discovered in this study, it is the chosen explanation for this progression and change in needs.

Mastery learning was discussed in the literature review as a means to explain how a teacher moves from beginning to experienced. It was also shown that Mastery Learning can also be closely linked with SCCT theory. One of the key aspects of SCCT, that influences all the four models that explain the different components of overall career development, is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as people's belief in their ability or capability to produce designated levels of performance or behaviour (Bandura, 1977) and is built by a process of success in past experiences as well as outcome expectations in the SCCT. A strong sense of self-efficacy has been shown across multiple studies in teaching to have a strong correlation with retention (Chesnut & Burley, 2015; Chung, 2002), overall job satisfaction and adaptability (Caprara et al., 2006; McLennan et al., 2017; Troesch & Bauer, 2017; Wang et al., 2015). This has also been found to be true in other professions (Wunsch, 2019). In this study it can be seen that the participants had different needs at different times of their teaching career. This links with the process of building self-efficacy across an individual's career as it shows that beginning teachers are at the stage where they are building their self-efficacy through initial experiences in the field. As they have positive experiences their self-efficacy grows which, in line with the SCCT model of work satisfaction, increases their overall job satisfaction. As they progress in their career, they have a range of positive mastery experiences which also build their self-efficacy. Those teachers who have had positive experiences, which support their initial reasons for entering the profession, are more likely to have positive job satisfaction (Caprara et al., 2006), motivation (Alexander, 2008) and self-efficacy

(Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Caprara et al., 2006; Chesnut & Burley, 2015; de Vries, 2017) which in turn lead to an increased intent to remain in the profession (Al-Eisa et al., 2009).

### **5.5.3. Relationships**

The relationship between a teacher and their supervisors and peers was found to be of vital importance across teachers from different backgrounds and years of service. In the SCCT models there is not explicit discussion of the role that relationships play in an individual's career development and growth. Instead, in the diagrams below it is possible that relationships may interplay across a number of different areas, much in the same way that self-efficacy has an effect across the models in various ways.

This study proposes that, based on the findings of the qualitative IPA strand, the importance of relationships on an individual's career development should be included in SCCT, particularly in the context of teaching.

In Figures 5.9 (page 302) and 6.1 (page 309), it is shown that relationships can be contributing factors in a teacher's self-efficacy as well as in their performance outcomes. As discussed in the literature review both of these variables have been shown to have a link between relationships. In the LMX model a positive relationship can improve an individual's self-efficacy through the provision of assets in high quality exchanges in the workplace. These have then been shown to improve the individual's outcomes in the workplace which in turn, boost their feelings of positive self-efficacy. The same is true in this theory for the reverse. If a supervisor denies these assets to their employee, they have reduced outcomes and which, in the SCCT would lead to a reduction in their self-efficacy.

## **5.6. Summary**

In this chapter the results from the survey and the interviews have been presented and initially explored. The findings from the quantitative survey were inconclusive but gave some trends which could be explored in more depth in future research. Importantly, it did support the concept that teachers with different demographic backgrounds could potentially have different intent to leave rates, and overall experiences. It did not show a difference between the experiences of teachers who entered the profession for different reasons, however, this was a very simplified

analysis and set of questions so it is suggested that this is an area that could be better explored through the use of the FIT-Choice survey in future research wanting to explore this variable in a quantitative manner. In the interview strand there were three major emergent themes that the participants presented in the context of experiences they felt made them consider leaving or staying in the teaching profession. They were the initial reason they chose the career, the need for support (beginning teachers) or recognition (experienced teachers) and the perception of their relationship/s with the supervisor.

In the next chapter these findings are discussed and presented through the four models of SCCT, with the recommendation that relationships are added more explicitly in each of the models and that future studies explore this further to better determine in what way the relationships are interconnected with the other theories that underpin SCCT. This is followed by a summary of how these findings are important in theory, policy and practice for the future which have been discussed throughout this chapter as they emerged.

## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

The previous chapter has presented and discussed the findings from each of the strands of the research process. In the embedded MMR design these are drawn together to answer the research question in greater depth. Therefore, in this chapter the implications of the findings, and their connections to answer the overarching research question are explored. A summary of the impact of these findings on theory, policy and practice are then given at the end of the chapter to draw together the points which have been raised throughout this thesis.

The initial focus of this study was the attrition and retention of teachers. However, as the study progressed it became apparent, in both strands, that the true area of interest was centred around teachers' overall experiences and the impacts they have in various ways on job satisfaction and career development. The question of better determining retention and attrition statistics remains valid. However, it was not measurable in the context of this study; an issue that is well reported across Australian (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2016; Mason & Matas, 2015; Weldon, 2018) and international (Borman & Dowling, 2017; Hobson et al., 2006; Kelly & Fogarty, 2015) studies and publications.

The overarching research question was addressed by the qualitative survey and the qualitative interviews which were combined to create a cohesive and in-depth response. The question "what experiences impact teachers' job satisfaction and influence their decision to leave the profession?" was explored through the four sub questions below.

### *Sub questions:*

a. Are there higher attrition rates for teachers across different years of service?

*(quantitative survey strand)*

b. Are there demographic groups which indicate a higher rate of teacher attrition?

*(quantitative survey strand)*

c. What are the experiences of teachers which impact on them positively or negatively with regard to attrition?

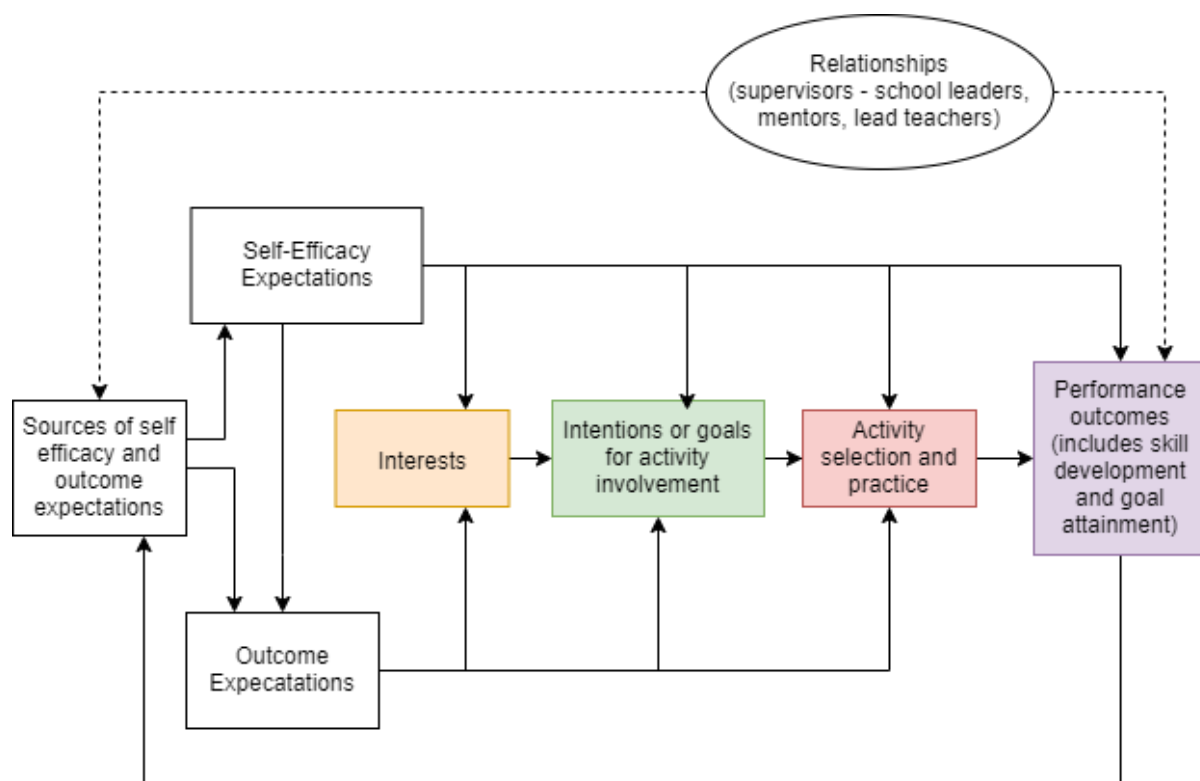
*(qualitative interview strand)*

d. What are the implications for improved support of teachers in order to reduce attrition? *(qualitative interview strand)*

The findings of the first two questions were addressed in the survey and were then connected with the interview strand. It was expected that teachers with different demographic groupings (such as gender, years of teaching, school type) would have different experiences overall. This was found to be true in the qualitative interviews, as teachers had different experiences dependant on whether they were beginning (<3 years) or experienced (>3 years). The interviews also suggested that there is a connection between the reason a teacher enters the profession and their interpretation of different experiences. However, the findings in this area in the quantitative strand were inconclusive. There was a strong suggestion that there is a difference in the rates of intending to leave across beginning and experienced teachers, however, across the different demographic groups the trend was either not as strong or not seen at all, as not all questions and not all demographics did not reject the null hypothesis. The summary of the results can be found on page 134. Instead, it has shown that, in most cases there was no significant or consistent difference between groups of teachers with different demographic groupings. It is important to note that the survey sample size was small, and there is the potential that, with larger sample numbers, there could be a stronger correlation between specific variables and intent to leave. In SCCT there is a connection between personal and contextual influences and career choice, as discussed in section 2.1.8. Therefore, it is interesting to note that different demographic variables, such as gender or school type, did not show different rates of intent to leave in this study. This is something that would warrant further exploration in future research to determine if there is a difference or not, as SCCT suggests that there may be, in teachers' career choices and if this in turn has any impact on their job satisfaction or intent to leave.

It is also important to note that this study, as with many into attrition and retention, was measuring intent to leave and job satisfaction rather than true attrition. The quantitative data would suggest that there is still a strong need to better understand why teachers leave the profession, but firstly to gain a stronger understanding of the actual attrition rates across different bands of service and demographic variables. Since the qualitative strand found that there is difference between groups, despite the relatively small numbers in qualitative IPA interviews, this thesis would warn against future research into this field treating teachers as a homogeneous group.

Sub questions c and d were considered through the qualitative interviews, which allowed a more in depth and personalised exploration of the experiences of teachers using IPA. It was found that there were three major themes which the participants felt impacted on their experience of teaching in a positive or negative way. The reason a teacher chose the profession (motivation), the need for support (beginning teachers) or recognition (experienced teachers) and the relationships they have with their supervisors and peers were the three major themes which emerged. It was also decided that SCCT was the best theoretical model to explain how these experiences impact on a teacher's career and, in turn, their retention or attrition. In Figure 6.1 the proposed impact that relationships can have on a teacher's career pathway in the SCCT model of career interest development is shown. In this diagram it is suggested that a teacher's relationship with their supervisors impacts on their performance and self-efficacy.



*Figure 6.1* A summary of the SCCT model of career interest development (Lent et al., 2002), with the inclusion of the impact of relationships found in this study.

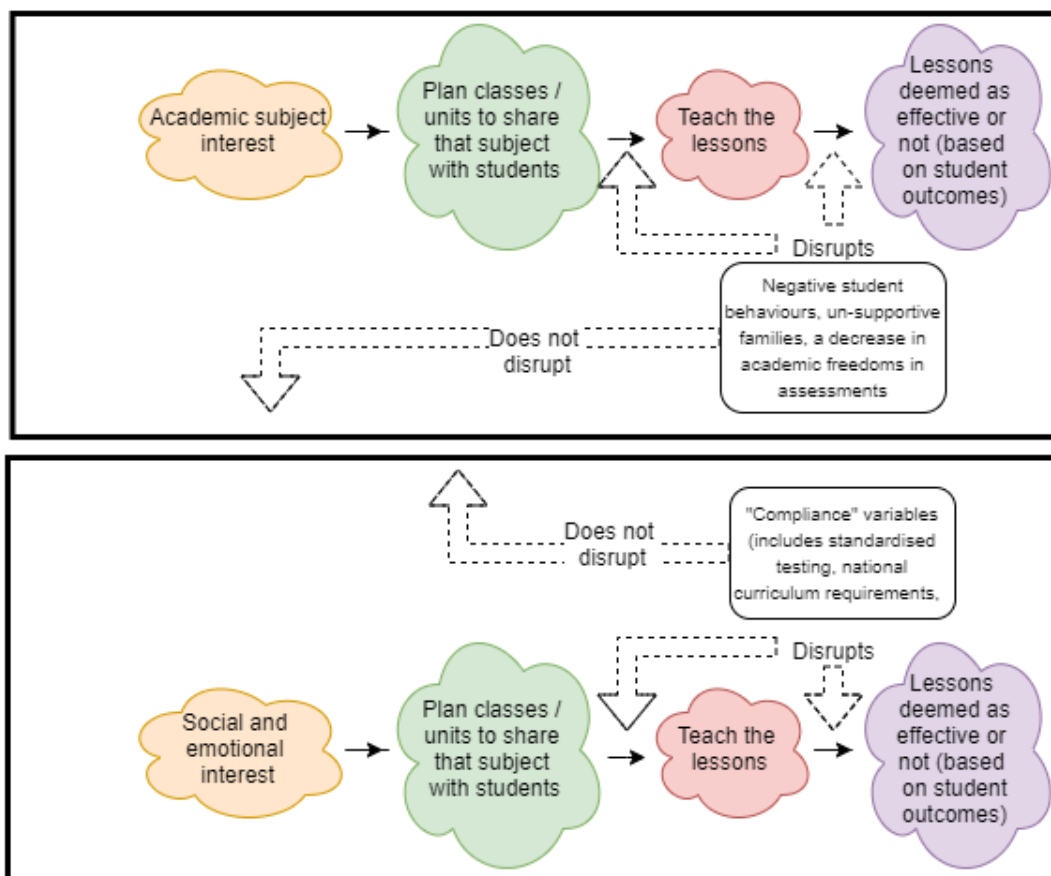
This has come from the links with relationships and the LMX model which has shown that positive relationships with supervisors has led to increased performance, as well as the multiple studies which have shown that positive

outcomes in performance directly, and indirectly, improves self-efficacy (Erdogan & Enders, 2007; Southwell & Morgan, 2009). In this addition to the model, the relationship is most important between the teacher and their supervisor. In this context, mentors and senior teachers could also be considered as supervisors. The key concept appears to be that the teacher views that person as being in a position of power in the school and having some form of supervisory or leadership role over them. This could possibly include in the ACT Education Directorate; School Leader C, School Leader B, School Leader A, Year Coordinators, Special Program Coordinators, Lead teachers or experienced teachers within their school. The role of those individuals who the teachers see as peers in this model has not been explored and may warrant further investigation. It is also suggested that further research is needed to better understand whether the interaction is uni- or bi-directional, as the LMX model focuses on the impact that the relationship has on the individual, more so than the impact on the supervisor.

The impact of relationships with (supervisory) figure/s are shown in Figure 6.1 on page 309. In this model of career interest development, the relationship between a teacher and their supervisors is shown. As is being proposed in other models, the relationship can impact on a teacher's performance and self-efficacy. In the model of task performance of the SCCT the relationship of both supervisory figures and peers could have an impact on a teacher's self-efficacy and performance attainment level. In this it is possible that supervisory figures could build a teacher's self-efficacy, through support, guidance, feedback and providing clear outcomes that the teacher is aiming for. In this study the level of support, or recognition, that a supervisor provides was shown to be important to teachers. In Figure 6.3 on page 313 this link between supervisory relationships and teacher task performance is shown through the impact of relationships on a teacher's learning experiences and attainment. The relationships between a teacher, the supervisor/s and/or peers also could be considered as a background environmental influence as well as a Proximal Environmental Influence.

The SCCT model of career interest also best explains the difference between experiences of teachers who enter the profession for different reasons. In Figure 6.2 on page 311 a summary of the response to different experiences presented in the interviews is presented. In this diagram it can be seen that both reasons given for entering the profession follow a similar path in their day to day work life, however

the same environmental variable (either negative student behaviours or compliance variables) influence each group differently. This aligns with the SCCT model of career interest development. In that model, seen in Figure 6.1, an individual's career interests are developed through a loop which ends in an increase in self-efficacy. If a teacher feels that a particular variable impacts on their performance outcomes (such as student behaviours impacting of the delivery of a subject specific lesson) then it will in turn cause a decrease in their overall career interest. This could in turn, lead to decreased work satisfaction and increased intent to leave or attrition, which is shown in Figure 6.4 on page 314.



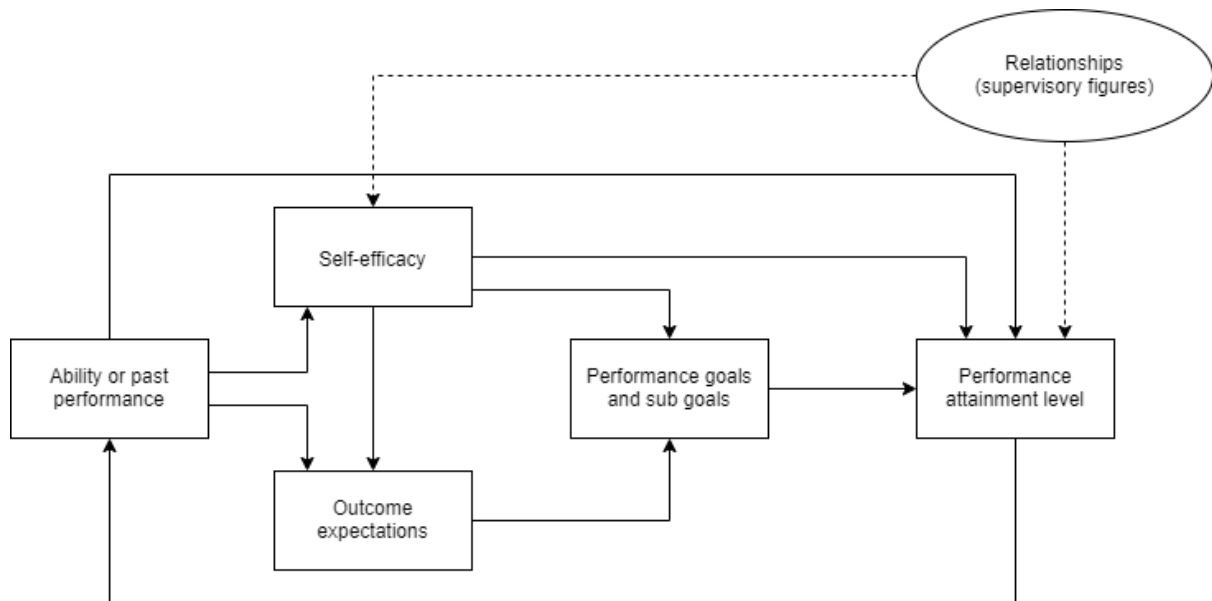
*Figure 6.2* The different interpretation of environmental or situational variables by teachers who enter the profession for different reasons.

In this model it is suggested that the role of a supervisor is to build a teacher's capacity and provide a workplace in which they feel supported or recognised for their achievements. As discussed previously this is closely linked with building self-efficacy, which can be grown through mastery learning, positive feedback and observing others have success in situations. Self-efficacy can also be



grown through positive physiological states, which a supervisor cannot directly control, but can create environments in which teachers are in the best emotional, social and physiological state possible.

The SCCT model of task performance is also relevant to the findings of this study, as it is key to understanding how a teacher can build their self-efficacy, and in turn how a supervisor can mentor and lead them. In Figure 6.3, on page 313, the inclusion of relationships between supervisory figures is shown, as having an impact on an individual's self-efficacy and performance attainment level. As discussed previously, a supervisor figure can build an individual's self-efficacy through positive feedback, modelling success, guiding a teacher through mastery learning stages (more importantly for beginning teachers), and creating a positive work environment. In the model of task performance a supervisor can also support a teacher in having success by giving them attainment levels to aim for, such as the teacher professional standards (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2018a), and by giving them positive feedback when they attain those goals. This model best explains the findings of this study, with both the quantitative and qualitative strands showing that teachers have different but important needs at different stages of their career. Experienced teachers all reported a need for something beyond the classroom, with many reporting that they enjoy roles which allowed them to support other teachers or work across the whole school. Beginning teachers reported a need for support, in getting through and learning the day to day components of what it means to be a teacher. In this model it can be seen that when a teacher reaches a point where they feel they have attained as high as possible in their performance goals they need to move to new goals to remain engaged in the work. This is then linked with the following model of career interest over time. Beginning teachers are the opposite, in that they are building their self-efficacy in the field and are looking for support and guidance to set and then attain their performance goals.



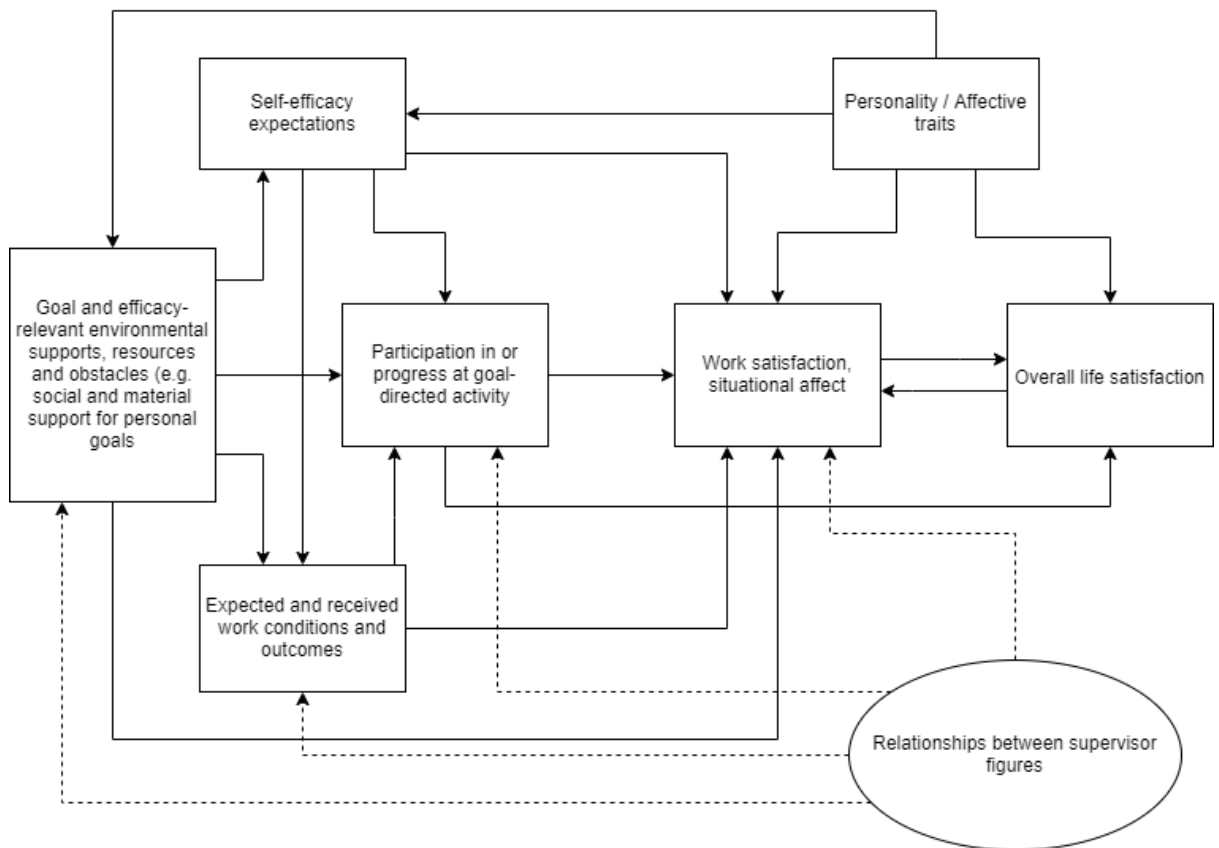
*Figure 6.3* A summary of the SCCT model of task performance (Lent et al., 2002), with the inclusion of the impact of relationships found in this study.

The fourth model of the SCCT, which was added in 2006 (Lent & Brown, 2006a), focuses on an individual's job satisfaction and how it in turns links with their overall job satisfaction. It has been shown that this model can be extended to look at attrition in a workplace, in particular cotton growers (Wunsch, 2019). In my thesis the study focus shifted, based on the emergent themes in the IPA interview process. It moved towards a focus on better understanding teachers' experiences, job satisfaction and motivation. It, therefore, also seeks to include an additional component in the form of the relationship between supervisors and/or peers. In Figure 6.4, on page 314, relationships have been included as a potential influence on a teacher's; work satisfaction, participation/progress in goal directed activity, expected and received work conditions and outcomes and goal and efficacy-relevant environmental supports, resources and obstacles.

The ways in which relationships can impact on these areas has been discussed and have been shown to be important in building a teacher's self-efficacy and in creating a positive work environment.

As discussed in the introduction and literature review, there is often an attempt to measure teacher attrition through intent to leave questions. However, if a teacher is considering leaving, but has not, then that is actually a measure of retention. It is more important in those settings to understand (1) why have they

stayed (retention), (2) why do they want to leave and (3) how to better motivate and inspire them so that they are no longer wanting to leave.



*Figure 6.4* A revised career choice model from the SCCT (Lent & Brown, 2006a) to include the impact of relationships as shown in this study.

Overall, the research question “what experiences of teachers impact on their decision to leave the profession?” was addressed through a combination of the quantitative survey strand and the qualitative IPA interview strand. The two strands gave different insights into the overall experiences of teachers in regard to attrition and retention, although the interviews shifted the focus towards the overall experiences of teachers which they believed led them considering leaving, or consolidating their choice to stay, in the profession. The quantitative surveys provided a limited outcome to determine if any demographic groups were at higher risk of attrition, however, they supported the findings of previous research which have found attrition difficult to impossible to measure accurately. It was also found that there were some small differences in some groups which led to the

recommendation that in future research caution is exercised when treating teachers' as a homogenous group when studying experience and/or attrition/retention.

It was found that the four models of SCCT best explained the emergent themes of the IPA interview analysis. The themes support/recognition and reason for choosing the profession (which was called motivation) supported the use of SCCT to explain a teacher's career development, including their job satisfaction. The importance of relationships between supervisors and peers was significant in the interviews however, it was not addressed in detail in the SCCT. Therefore, the finding of this study is that the SCCT explains teacher experiences as an overall factor on their career development with the addition of the importance of relationships across a teacher's career. This study would also suggest that this is an area in need of further research to better explain the complexity of relationships on teacher experience. The LMX was suggested as a possible model to explain the nature of the links between a teacher and their supervisors and peers. In the following section of this chapter the implications of these findings are given for research (theoretical perspectives), policy and practice.

## **6.2. Implications**

The results of this study have implications across research, policy and practice in the ACT Education Directorate and beyond. Whilst each of these implications has been mentioned and discussed throughout the previous chapters and sections, they are explicitly presented in here in a summary form. This section includes the implications to theory / research, policy and practice. In Figure 6.5 on page 256, a summary of the implications presented in this section are drawn together.

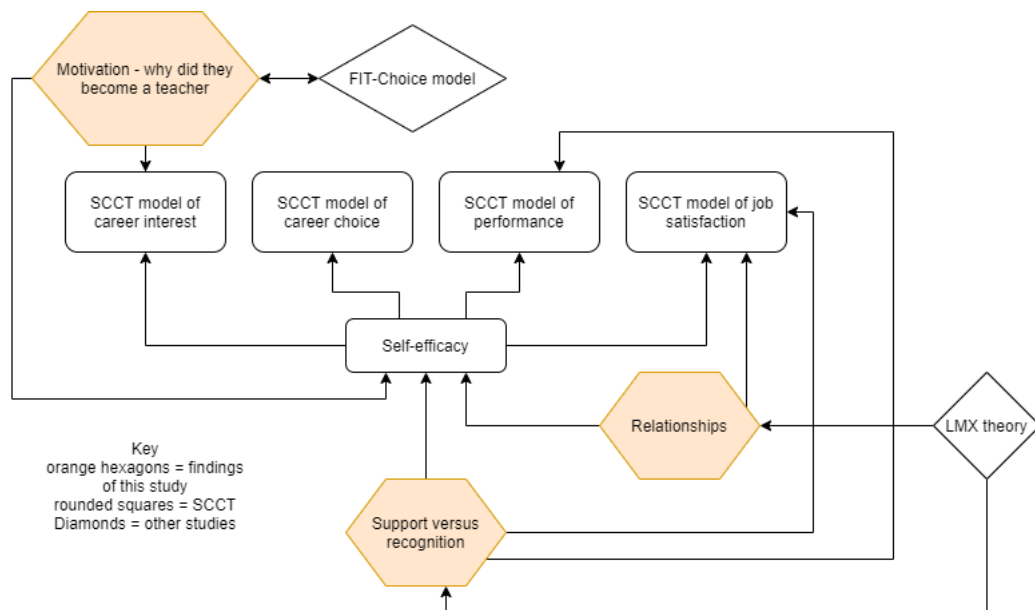


Figure 6.5 A summary of the connections between the findings of this study and SCCT, LMX theory and the FIT-Choice model.

### 6.2.1. Theoretical implications

This study has found a number of key points which are of relevance to the education field and SCCT research. The major implications are summarised below.

#### 6.2.1.1. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

Lent et al. (1994) first proposed SCCT and it has been expanded on and tested in a wide range of career fields such as cotton growing (Wunsch, 2019), engineering (Inda et al., 2013) and agriculture (Rajabi, Papzan, & Zahedi, 2012). Whilst there have been some explorations of SCCT in teaching (Duffy & Lent, 2009; Lent et al., 2011), the need to continue to expand its use in different careers and in different settings has been consistently raised. The SCCT has not been tested in the teaching field, in the ACT, previously so this study adds support in that specific context to the theory. SCCT has been shown to have validity in the teaching field, as it explained the experiences of the participating teachers, including the similarities and differences between them. In particular, it was shown that the reason an individual chooses the profession is a major variable which impacts on how they view experiences throughout their career. This is a key model in SCCT, career choice, which is supported by the findings of this study. It is suggested that this can be

explored further in Australia, and across the world to determine if this is true for all educational settings.

It was also shown that teachers have different needs at different points in their career. There was a suggestion in the data that beginning teachers were more likely to report an intent to leave, and in turn they reported a greater need for support than their experienced colleagues. The experienced teachers also reported this need from their initial teaching days. The difference was that experienced teachers reported a need for recognition of their work, those who did not feel recognised reported lower levels of satisfaction and higher rates of intending to leave. This was explained through SCCT in a number of aspects of the four models. The stages a teacher moves through in their career are linked with their career interest, choice, performance and overall job satisfaction. It was also explained through the lens of developing self-efficacy through mastery learning experiences. As experienced teachers likely have higher levels of self-efficacy in teaching overall, and have had significant mastery experiences, they are less likely to need support. The need for validation of their work, through recognition, is evident in SCCT in the performance and job satisfaction models. In these models the teacher builds higher levels of expectations around their work and the recognition builds in positive outcomes in the loops. These then feed into the overall job satisfaction and strengthens the career choice model, as they are validated in their want to stay in the profession. Conversely, without this recognition or feelings of being validated, they are less likely to have a positive loop in the career choice model which may increase the likelihood that they will leave the profession.

The relationship between supervisors and teachers was found to be important, but it is not fully explained by SCCT. This was an addition which was suggested as a more explicit component to the models, however it has also been suggested that this can be explored in future research to determine in more depth how the relationships are best included. There was a suggestion that the LMX model of leadership could be used to underpin this understanding, however it also would require further exploration in the teaching context. It could also be considered that in the case of teaching, relationships are about increasing a staff self-efficacy. The means to achieve this are presented in the practice implications section of this chapter.

Overall, there was significant support for the use of the SCCT to explain the experiences of teachers in the education field. The specific context of teaching in the

ACT was presented, however, the need to test and explore the models of SCCT in different settings has been widely reported. In the context of teaching, the SCCT is a strong model to explain the experiences and the addition of the importance of relationships between supervisors and teachers strengthens its use in this field. This is encouraged to be explored in more depth by future research.

#### *6.2.1.2. FIT-Choice scale*

One key finding of this study was the correlation between how a teacher viewed certain experiences, such as behaviour management issues, and their initial reasons for choosing the profession. Whilst career choice was explained through the use of SCCT, the findings also support the work of Watt and Richardson (2007) in the use of the FIT-Choice scale to understand the reason teachers choose the profession and the impact this has on their career. This thesis has shown that this is a significant area in the ACT, which still requires further exploration. This study found that there was no difference between how teachers with different reasons for entering the profession viewed student behaviours or academic pressures in line with the findings of the interviews. However, as discussed previously this was not an explicit component of the survey and the analysis was not able to be conducted beyond trend levels. Instead, the strong emergence of this theme in the interviews would suggest that future research should consider the use of a more in depth and specific tool to measure the reasons that teachers choose the profession. The FIT-Choice scale provides this tool. Therefore, this study supports the importance of understanding why teachers enter the profession and suggest that the FIT-Choice scale is an appropriate tool to measure this in detail (Eren, 2012; Watt & Richardson, 2007, 2008, 2012; Watt et al., 2012; Watt et al., 2014).

#### **6.2.2. Policy implications**

As discussed in Chapter 1, on pages 3 and 15, there has been a significant amount of work in educational policy surrounding the attraction and retention of teachers in Australia (Berry et al., 2019) and in the ACT (ACT Education Directorate, 2016b). The ACT is small setting, compared to the rest of Australia and most international educational contexts. However, due to its small geographic location it can be used to explore educational research on small scale which can then be expanded on across Australia and Internationally. The ACT Education Directorate

has significant policies in place, which were discussed in Chapter 1, designed to attract and then retain teachers into the profession as well as policies to build and strengthen their school leaders.

The ACT Education Directorate outlined, in their Strategic Plans (ACT Education Directorate, 2017, 2018a, 2018b), the high level of importance they place on the role of school leaders in building effective; cultures of high expectation, improved teaching practices, professional learning communities, using data to improve student outcomes and teacher learning and development. In the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan, *Education Capital: Leading the Nation*, a key priority was “Inspirational teaching and leadership” (ACT Education and Training Directorate, 2014, p. 9) which outlined the ways in which the Directorate aimed to continue to place value on the role of teachers and school leaders and to build the capacity of the workforce. The main strategies included an increase in teaching expertise and effectiveness and the building of the capacity of current and future leaders. In 2014-2105 the priority “*Inspirational Teaching and Leadership: through building the capacities of our teachers and leaders-by design, not by chance*” was addressed through scholarship programs and the Aspiring Leaders program (ACT Education Directorate, 2015). The 2018-2021 Strategic Plan was guided by five core goals, three of which are relevant to this study in the context of growing teacher capacity as well as school leader capacity. Evidence-informed decisions, learning culture and united leadership are the three relevant goals which the ACT Education Directorate has said are informing their planning from 2018 (ACT Education Directorate, 2018b).

In the context of this study these are important policies which could impact on the experiences of teachers. In this study it was found that relationships between teachers and supervisors along with the level of support or recognition they received are key variables which impact on their positive or negative experiences in the profession. These areas appear to be addressed in the plans and policies of the ACT Education Directorate, however, based on the experiences of the participants in the survey these policies are not always been felt at the teacher level. This is an area that needs to be better understood, as the gap between policy and practice is not limited to the ACT. Many studies, as discussed on pages 16, 18 and 22 in Chapter 1, have found that aspects such as induction programs or provision of a mentor have been in policy for a number of years but are not reported as happening by teachers (Hudson,



2012, 2013). This was found in this study as well, with a mix of responses of the level of provision of key policy points such as this. It was also found that the quality of the leadership and the relationship between them was variable as well. Despite the ACT Education Directorate acknowledging the importance of supervisory relationships through statements such as “research also highlights the pivotal role of the principal as the key leader and participant in teachers’ learning and development” (ACT Education and Training Directorate, 2014, p. 9), it was during the time that this plan was implemented that a school leader told Jane that she should not have been nominated for an award as she was not a high achieving teacher. This was despite the nomination coming from her direct supervisor and being supported by other staff and parents.

The ACT Education Directorate has also acknowledged this gap between policy and practice, stating that “while 80% of school leaders report providing feedback to teachers based on the AITSL Professional Standards for Teachers, only 43% of teachers report receiving such feedback” (ACT Education Directorate, 2016b, p. 34). Therefore, it is important that the focus on attracting, building and retaining teachers is still included in policy, however, there appears to be a need to better bridge the gap from policy to practice.

The ACT is one specific context; however, this study is relevant to educational policy across Australia and internationally. The importance of having strong leaders who are able to effectively implement policy needs to itself be included in those policies. In the following implications for practice section it is suggested that school leaders have the same processes as classroom teachers in regard to growing skills along a set of professional standards. It was discussed in Chapter 1, that this exists, however it is focused on the Principal leadership process and skills. If there is a gap between the policies and practice this needs to be addressed at all levels of leadership. This study suggests that there needs to include, in policy, how the policies will be implemented at all levels.

The other major finding of this study was the importance of understanding why a teacher enters the profession and how this can impact on them in their career. This could be addressed in policy through the inclusion of the competition of a FIT-Choice survey at the start of employment to determine why the teacher is entering the profession. This could then support the school leaders who are mentoring and

leading the teacher, as they would be able to better understand how the teacher will view different experiences.

Each of the recommendations given here are contingent on having strong school leadership teams to implement the existing policies which seem to be largely guided by existing research already. Therefore, if the need is around this there needs to be a better understanding of leadership policies and theories such as SCCT in the profession. There is also a need to for further research to understand why, in some cases, these strong policies are not be seen by teachers. It raises questions around whether they are not being implemented, not being seen, or not being viewed as important by teachers.

### **6.2.3. Implications for practice**

A significant implication is in the practices of the education setting in the ACT, and in turn Australia and Internationally. The importance of attracting and retaining quality teachers is vital across educational settings across the world, as high-quality teachers are known to improve outcomes for students at all levels (DEEWR, 2011). This was discussed in depth in the literature review chapter as well as in the introduction chapter of this thesis. It is not only important to attract and retain teachers, their job satisfaction and motivation are also important, as satisfied employees who are motivated to do their jobs are known to produce better outcomes across different industries, including teaching (Lent et al., 2011), nursing (Heilferty, 2018) and cotton growing (Wunsch, 2019).

This study has shown that teachers can perceive similar experiences in different ways, depending on their reasons for entering the profession as well as their level of teaching experience. It was suggested that the use of the FIT-Choice survey is expanded to become part of teacher induction programs and is linked with SCCT to measure what motivates a teacher to choose the profession.

The key practices that should be, based on the research findings, either introduced or continued include:

- A better understanding of different approaches to leading and mentoring teachers based on their level of self-efficacy, years of service and reasons for choosing the profession.

- This study has suggested the inclusion of relationships into the models of SCCT, although the exact nature of this is still open for interpretation. One suggestion that was, in line with LMX theory, that supervisors provide assets to staff and in teaching this could be the provision of resources, guidance, support or recognition. It has also been suggested teacher self-efficacy is highly important and that supervisors need to be able to build staff self-efficacy through the support and guidance in mastery learning of the complex and varied aspects of being a teacher. The AITSL teacher professional standards (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2018a) were one model that was suggest as means to support this. It was also suggested that supervisors need to be able to provide positive feedback to teachers, model success in teaching and create environments in which teachers are in the most positive physiological state. Creating these environments and providing these variables will improve teacher self-efficacy overall.
- An increased focus on leadership training in education, particularly a need to build a strong (potentially national) set of school leader standards that extends beyond Principals to include Deputies, executive teachers, lead teachers and those teachers who would be in mentoring or leadership roles in a school setting. A framework, or standard that outlines the key needs to build strong teams and to support or recognise teacher achievements would provide the support and recognition that this study found was vital to increased job satisfaction and a decreased intent to leave.
- Schools, or educational departments, should be able to gauge why a teacher is entering the profession and have suitable avenues for teachers to be placed in schools or settings that match their career choices. It has been suggested that this could be a place for the use of the FIT-Choice model. The importance of this across such a wide range of career aspects, as outlined by SCCT, needs to be conveyed to schools and leaders.
- From a more individualistic and personal perspective, there needs to be a shift away from viewing all teachers have having the same motivations (and means to be motivated). Instead school leaders and policy makers should view each teacher as a separate individual who wants different things from

their role. When leading teams the reason teachers chose the profession, alongside their experience and self-efficacy levels should be considered and used in a positive way. For example:

- When leading experienced staff an approach of class observations, focusing on building skills will not work in the same way as it does with beginning teachers as they will likely already have high levels of self-efficacy. SCCT would suggest that allowing experienced staff to share and model their positive teaching strategies, and leaders modelling this to all staff, is a stronger way to motivate and build experienced teachers and build their levels of career choice, satisfaction and career interest. Each of these workplace strategies would increase task performance, which would allow the teacher to reflect and grow their practice.
- In the ACT there has been a focus on building strong leaders. However, as evidenced in the proceeding section of this chapter, much of that still centres around Principals and Deputies. Alternatively, the focus needs to be on executive teachers (SLCs), lead teachers and mentors better understanding the specific needs of working directly with teachers to build school cultures which create positive work experiences that in turn retain quality teachers in the profession. This was reported within the experienced teachers themselves of this study, where the work that they take on to build the school or educational experiences was not perceived as valued or celebrated. If a teacher is not *becoming an SLC* they are viewed in a negative light. In practice this need to change, the roles that experienced teachers bring to schools, and the extension work they do in their roles needs to be acknowledged. This can be achieved through awards nominations (internally and externally), through positive recognition on a day to day basis which is directly linked to things they feel proud of achieving, flexible work/life balance and through building positive relationships with teams and viewing each teacher individually. Performance processes need to be personalised and allow each teacher to be able to design their own learning journey with clear outcomes that the school or the team needs to achieve.

This study has found that there are implications and relevance across theory through the support of the use of SCCT to understand teacher career decisions, including attrition. It has also suggested that the impact of relationships with supervisors needs to be more explicit in SCCT and the inclusion of a model such as the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory (Erdogan & Enders, 2007) could explain the importance of this variable. It has also suggested that there are implications for education policy as the retention of quality teachers is important for both fiscal and academic outcome reasons. High quality teachers produce higher quality outcomes for their students (Young, 2018). Finally, this thesis has linked these findings to make suggestions for how to apply these findings into practices within schools and education settings. It has suggested that there needs to be a stronger focus on the building of strong leaders to ensure that the needs of teachers, including feeling supported or recognised, and having positive relationships are maintained. It is also important that schools and school leaders understand the importance in determining the different reasons why a teacher has entered the profession and the different forms of support each group/s would need. This is an area which still requires further exploration and it is suggested that stronger links with the FIT-Choice model of determining teacher motivations (Watt & Richardson, 2007, 2012) could be made which would also connect with the SCCT model of career interest (Lent et al., 2002). Figure 6.5, on page 316, summarises these implications which have been presented throughout this thesis.

### **6.3. Limitations**

There are limitations and considerations which have been presented throughout this thesis. The key points to consider are the number of participants that took part in the survey, the small context of the ACT, the employment in the public sector of all the participants and the link between the researcher and the context.

The survey was sent to all members of the Australian Educational Union (AEU) in the ACT, which limited the number of participants within the ACT setting that could take part. While sending the survey through this avenue did decrease the potential number of participants, it was still a self-selected sample from a significant number of the ACT teaching population. There are 4,150 members in the ACT AEU, including pre-service and retired teachers (G. Fowler, personal communication, March 27, 2020). This includes non-government and government schools' teachers

and school leaders. Of these members, 134 teachers took part in the survey. This would only allow analysis at a confidence level of 90%. This was discussed in the method and results chapters as a significant limitation to the research. However, the findings were presented as trends, with future areas for research to be considered. In future research in the ACT, it is suggested that a larger number of participants are used where possible to determine more significant results in the quantitative strand of the process.

This study was conducted within the ACT, which compared with other Australian and international educational jurisdictions in small. The ACT Education Directorate has 3,780 teachers across 88 public schools (ACT Education Directorate, 2018a) and there are also 47 non-government schools whose teaching workforce statistics are not available. This is compared with 3,136 schools in New South Wales (NSW) (New South Wales Department of Education, 2018). The ACT has challenges and settings which may not be seen in other educational jurisdictions. However, this study has found that there is even difference across school settings (such as primary versus secondary), which would potentially also be true across schools and potentially also school jurisdictions. Therefore, it is suggested that future research compare and contrast the experiences of teachers across different school jurisdictions and locations to determine if there are similarities and differences between them. The findings of this study can still be used to draw some correlations across the profession, and across other fields, as the links with SCCT would suggest that the experiences of teachers in the ACT are in line with the findings for other teaching settings (Lent et al., 2011) and careers such as engineering (Inda et al., 2013) and agriculture (Rajabi et al., 2012). Therefore, there continues to be a need to further explore the experiences of teachers across all school settings and to continue to test this against the four models of SCCT.

Despite the ACT AEU having members from the government and non-government sectors, all the participants in the survey were teaching in the government sector. Therefore, it is important to note that the experiences of these teachers may not be the same as those in the ACT non-government sector. Further research could also use IPA to compare and contrast the experiences of these teachers. It could also be further explored through large scale survey analysis such as the Staff in Australia's Schools (SiAS) survey from which many of the survey questions for this study were drawn from.

IPA allows the research to be connected to the field being studied and in this study the researcher was an employee of the ACT Education Directorate. Whilst this is a component of IPA and was a significant component of the choice of IPA over other forms of analysis, it may be that some participants were not as open due to this. All due diligence was given to this in the ethics applications, informed consent, information sheet and as part of the interviews. Despite this, it is possible that with a different researcher the participants may have chosen to focus on different experiences of their careers. It is suggested that future studies in the field could use alternative methodologies to compare and contrast against the findings of this study. Alternatively, the researcher in this study could revisit the transcriptions in the future to apply a different lens to the interviews. Future research could also be placed outside the research problem, by not working within the field. The inability to remove the researcher from the problem was considered from the beginning and was the reasoning behind the selection of IPA over descriptive phenomenology or other forms of hermeneutics. However, it is still important to note that the participants themselves may have responded differently to a researcher who they saw as outside the field and this could be an area for future research to consider.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This thesis has utilised a mixed methods approach to understand the experiences of teachers in the ACT. It has used IPA to delve into these experiences to understand what specific experiences teachers had which made them want to stay or leave the profession.

The study was designed to address the research question, *what experiences impact teachers' job satisfaction and influence their decision to leave the profession?*

This question was explored and answered through four sub questions below.

- a. Are there higher attrition rates for teachers across different years of service?
- b. Are there demographic groups which indicate a higher rate of teacher attrition?
- c. What are the experiences of teachers which impact on them positively or negatively with regard to attrition?
- d. What are the implications for improved support of teachers in order to reduce attrition?

Sub questions a and b were addressed through the quantitative survey, which did not have enough participants to draw strong statistical findings. However, it did present some trends that were of interest. It found that there was a suggestion that there may be different intents to leave (a method of measuring possible attrition) across beginning and experienced teachers. This was not shared for other demographic trends, which suggested that there is no difference between the intent to leave of teachers of different genders, school types or employment type (part time/full time and permanent / casual / contract). This was of interest, however, as the qualitative IPA interviews suggested that being on contract or casual employment may play a role in job satisfaction and intent to leave. In particular, it was suggested that beginning teachers who were on contract were not able to access the supports and relationships needed to build strong self-efficacy which is known to increase the intent to leave of teachers. Therefore, this is an area that still requires future research to better explore the intent to leave statistics across this variable and to connect it with attrition / intent to leave statistics for beginning teachers overall.



Sub questions c and d were addressed through the qualitative IPA interviews which showed differences between the experiences of beginning and experienced teachers in some themes. There was also a suggestion of an impact of the different type of employment type. In particular, the impact of casualisation and contract work on retention and job satisfaction.

The two strands were connected to address the overall research question and it has found that the initial reason a teacher chose the profession has a significant link with how they then interpreted experiences throughout their career. This was across levels of experience and demographic backgrounds. Therefore, it was also suggested that future research considers how to include this as a variable in better understanding the experiences of teachers. The use of the FIT-Choice scale was presented as one possible method for measuring the reason for a teacher choosing the career. This could then allow differentiation of professional learning, pre-service teacher education programs and management styles to better support teachers. This could include a greater focus on behaviour management training and teaching program for teachers who enter with a greater focus on imparting knowledge, as negative student behaviours had a significant impact on this group of teacher's job satisfaction.

It was found that beginning have different needs in terms of support levels compared to experienced teachers who report a need to feel validated and recognised for their work. This was considered from the perspective of SCCT, as a product of increased self-efficacy and through the four models of career development. There was no significant difference in other demographic groups, although there was some suggestion that there might be some groups that show higher rates of intending to leave and this should be further explored in future research.

Both experienced and beginning teachers reported that the relationship they have with their supervisors plays a significant role in their job satisfaction and this was suggested as an inclusion to SCCT in more explicit detail. The current model of SCCT theory connected with each of the other two emergent themes. However, it does not adequately allow the importance of strong, positive relationships to be included in any of the models. This study has shown that the impact of relationships on job satisfaction and intent to leave is strong across beginning and experienced teachers in all different settings. This study has suggested that these relationships are

connected across all the four models of SCCT. In the model of career interest development (or motivation – why they become a teacher), figure 6.1 shows that relationships play a part in the loop by building and supporting the development of self-efficacy. This figure also shows that this study has found that relationships can increase a teacher’s effectiveness at skill development and goal attainment through this. This is also connected with the SCCT model of task performance. In figure 6.3 the interplay of relationships on building self-efficacy is shown again and this is then connected with the overall performance attainment levels. Figure 6.4 has shown the overall inclusion of relationships into the SCCT as proposed by this study. It has shown that relationships play a significant role in a teacher’s self-efficacy, setting and supporting the attainment of appropriate goals and overall work satisfaction and situational affect. This is something that should be further explored and tested in future research.

Finally, suggestions for how these findings can be relevant in the specific areas of research, policy and practice were given with suggestions on how this study can be implemented or drive future research in these areas.

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## Appendices

### 8.1. Appendix A: Salaries of teaching staff in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries in 2017

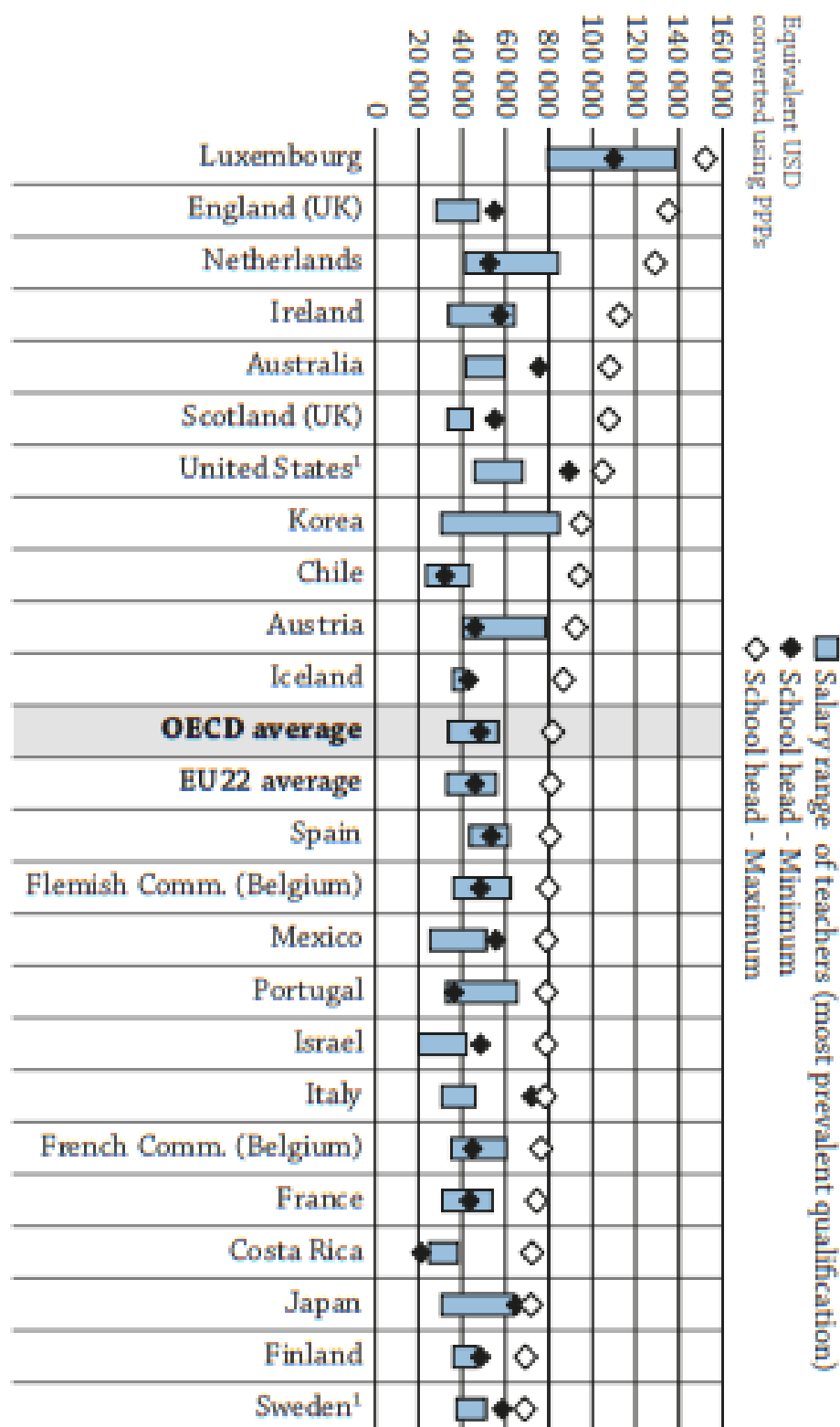


Image downloaded from OECD (2018, p. 400).

## 8.2. Appendix B: Questions included in the initial survey, including the original source location

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Options / Info</i>
<p><i>Purple = Questions from AEU SOS survey (2010), Yellow = questions from US SASS survey (2014), Green = questions from Australian SiAS Survey (2014), Red = Across more than one study</i></p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Information for participants:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Information from consent and information forms will be at the start of the survey</p> <p style="text-align: center;">At the end of the survey the following option will be given to participants who would consider further participation in the stage 3 of the study.</p> <p>This survey may the opportunity to contribute to a deeper understanding of the experience of teachers in ACT Education system through participation in a more in-depth study. If you would be willing to participate in this follow up study, please click the link below to be taken to a new survey which will collect your personal details so I can contact you later in the year. This personal collection survey is not linked to your answers in the survey you have just completed in any way. No links can be made between your details and the answers you have given.</p> <p>Providing these details does not lock you into participating in this further stage of the research and participants may withdraw from the research at any stage.</p> <p>All information provided will remain completely confidential and will be stored and managed in line with the guidelines of the USQ Ethics Committee.</p> <p>More information about this additional research stage will be provided prior to any involvement, however if you have any questions please contact the author of this survey at 355tacey.griffiths@ed.act.edu.au or on 0414 589 393.</p>	
<b>Section 1: Demographics</b>	
Please indicate your age as of May 1 this year:	_____ years _____ months
Gender <sup>1</sup>	Male, Female, Other
What is your current marital status? Mark (X) only one box.	Single, Married, De facto, other
Do you identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?	No, Yes (Aboriginal), Yes (Torres Strait Islander), Yes (both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander)
In which country were you born?	Australia, Canada, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Malaysia, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South

	Africa, United Kingdom, United States of America, Other ( <i>please specify</i> )
Please answer Question below only if you were <u>not</u> born in Australia. For how many years have you lived in Australia?	_____ years
a. Do you speak a language other than English at home? b. What is that language? c. How good is your spoken English?	Yes, No Open answer Very good, Good, Satisfactory
a. In what year did you commence your initial teacher education program? b. In what year did you complete your initial teacher education program? d. For how many years have you been teaching in total (counting this year as one)?	Select from year lists from <1970, 1971 .. 2015   < 1, 1 ..., 20, >20
In what school year did you FIRST begin teaching, either full-time or part-time, at the primary or secondary level? <sup>2</sup>	Do NOT include time spent as a student teacher. (Example: If you FIRST began teaching in September 2010 or in January 2011, you would report 2010-11.)
In how many schools have you taught at the primary or secondary level? Do NOT include time spent as a student teacher. <sup>2</sup>	Select from year lists from <1970, 1971 .. 2015
Excluding time spent on maternity/paternity leave or sabbatical, how many school years have you worked as a primary- or secondary-level teacher in public or private schools? <sup>2</sup>	Include the current school year. Do NOT include time spent as a student teacher. Record whole years, not fractions or months.  Ordinal options from <1, 1 ... 20, 20>
Is your current employment arrangement as a teacher?	On-going/Permanent, Fixed-term/Contract (less than 1 year), Fixed-term/Contract (1– 3 years), Fixed-term/Contract (more than 3 years), Casual/Relief (on call), Casual/Relief (continuing appointment)
Is your current employment as a teacher full-time or part-time?	Full-time, Part-time ( <i>please specify the time fraction; eg, 0.5 for half-time</i> )
Have you had any interruptions to your teaching career (e.g., leave, resignation and return)? If so, how many years have you been absent from teaching?	Select from a number of years drop down (<1 year, 1, ..., 20, >20)
How many students are at your school?	1 – 50, 51 – 100, 101 – 500, 501 – 1000, Over 1000

School type	Primary, Secondary, Primary/Secondary, Special, Other
Which one of the following best describes your position in the school?	Principal, mainly classroom teaching, mainly managing an area or department in the school, Mainly providing specialist support to students, A combination of classroom teaching and management, Other
Have you earned any of the degrees or certificates listed below? Please select all that apply and include what year you graduated from this course of study as well as your major area of study.	Vocational certificate, associate degree, Bachelor's degree, SECOND Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies, Doctorate or first professional degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., M.D., J.D., D.D.S., What was your major field of study for each degree?
<b>Section 2: Personal</b>	
At what stage of your life did you first decide that you wanted to become a teacher?	While at school, During my first degree program at university, Upon completing my first degree, While in employment, Other (please describe)
Which of the following factors were important to you in your decision to become a teacher <sup>3</sup> <i>Please tick all boxes that apply.</i>	Love of teaching, Love of subject, Encouragement from teacher(s) while you were at school, Family role model(s), Availability of employment, Attractiveness of the salary, Working conditions, Security of employment, Holidays, hours of work, Desire to contribute to society, Desire to work with young people, Status of the teaching profession, Other ( <i>please specify</i> )
<b>Section 3: Experiences as a pre-service teacher</b>	
Was your initial teacher education program?	A graduate program (requiring a first degree as a prerequisite for entry?), an undergraduate program?
How helpful was your initial teacher education course in preparing you for: ( <i>please tick one box in each row</i> )	Teaching students with a wide range of backgrounds and abilities, Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, Supporting students with disabilities, Developing and teaching a unit of work, Developing subject content knowledge appropriate for school curriculum, Developing strategies for teaching literacy, Developing my own literacy skills, Developing strategies for teaching numeracy, Developing my own numeracy skills, Making effective use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Learning about resources available for my teaching areas,

	<p>Developing my skills in classroom communication, Learning how to your evaluate and improve my own teaching, Involving parents/guardians in the educative process, Managing classroom activities to keep students on task, Dealing with difficult student behaviour, Making effective use of student assessment information, Ensuring that my assessments are consistent and comparable with those of other teachers, Interpreting achievement reports from national or state-wide assessments, Meeting my professional and ethical responsibilities as a teacher, Complying with legislative, administrative and organisational requirements, Developing contacts with professional teaching networks, Engaging with performance and development plans</p>
<b>Section 4: Experiences in the school</b>	
<p>Since you began teaching, which of the following types of assistance have you been provided with by your school or employer, and how helpful were they? <i>For types of assistance that you did not receive, please tick "Not Applicable."</i></p>	<p>How helpful was the assistance? (Scale = Not helpful, Of some help, Helpful, Very helpful, Not Applicable).</p> <p>An orientation program designed for new teachers, A designated mentor, A reduced face-to-face teaching workload, Follow-up from your teacher education institution, Structured opportunities to discuss your experiences with other new teachers, Observation of experienced teachers teaching their classes, Other assistance (<i>please specify</i>)</p>
<p>In a typical week, how many hours do you spend on all school-related activities [including work days, evenings and weekends]?</p>	<p>Less than 29 hours, 30- 40 hours, 41-45 hours, 46-50 hours, 51-55 hours, 55+ hours</p>
<p>In the last year have the hours you spend on school-related activities increased, decreased or stayed about the same?</p>	<p>Increased, Decreased, Stayed about the same</p>
<p>In your FIRST year of teaching, how well prepared were you to – (beginning teachers only)</p>	<p>Scale = Not at all prepared, Somewhat prepared, Well prepared, Very well prepared</p> <p>Handle a range of classroom management or discipline situations?, Use a variety of instructional methods?, Teach your subject matter?, Use computers in classroom instruction?, Assess students?, Differentiate instruction in the</p>

	classroom?, Use data from student assessments to inform instruction?, Meet state content standards?
In your FIRST year of teaching, did you participate in a teacher induction program?	(A teacher induction program is a program for beginning teachers that may include teacher orientation, mentoring, coaching, demonstrations, and/or assessments aimed at enhancing teachers' effectiveness.) If you are in your first year of teaching, please answer for THIS school year. Yes, No
Did you receive the following kinds of support during your FIRST year of teaching? If you are in your first year of teaching, please answer for THIS school year. <i>Please select all that apply</i>	Reduced teaching schedule or number of preparations, Common planning time with teachers in your subject, Seminars or classes for beginning teachers, Extra classroom assistance (e.g., teacher aides), Regular supportive communication with your principal, other administrators, or department chair
In your FIRST year of teaching, did you work closely with a master or mentor teacher who was assigned by your school or district? If you are in your first year of teaching, please answer for THIS school year.	Yes, No
How frequently did you work with your master or mentor teacher during your first year of teaching?	At least once a week, Once or twice a month, A few times a year, Never
c. Has your master or mentor teacher ever instructed students in the same subject area(s) as yours?	Yes, No
Overall, to what extent did your assigned master or mentor teacher improve your teaching in your first year of teaching?	Not at all, To a small extent, To a moderate extent, To a great extent
How many hours a week are you paid to deliver INSTRUCTION to a class of students in THIS school?	(Example: If your base contract requires you to work 40 hours a week, with 30 of those hours for delivering instruction and 10 hours for planning, monitoring students outside of class time, etc., you would report 30 hours.) Short answer response
Including hours spent during the school day, before and after school, and on the weekends, how many hours do you spend on ALL teaching and other school-related activities during a typical FULL WEEK at THIS school?	Short answer response



<p>How much actual influence do you think teachers have over school policy AT THIS SCHOOL in each of the following areas?</p>	<p>Scale = No influence, Minor influence, Moderate influence, A great deal of influence</p> <p>Setting performance standards for students at this school, establishing curriculum, Determining the content of in-service professional development programs, Evaluating teachers, Hiring new full-time teachers, Setting discipline policy</p>
<p>How much actual control do you have IN YOUR CLASSROOM at this school over the following areas of your planning and teaching?</p>	<p>Scale = No control, Minor control, Moderate control, A great deal of control</p> <p>Deciding how the school budget will be spent          Selecting textbooks and other instructional materials, Selecting content, topics, and skills to be taught, Selecting teaching techniques, Evaluating and grading students, Disciplining students, Determining the amount of homework to be assigned</p>
<p>To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?</p>	<p>Scale = Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree</p> <p>The school administration's behaviour toward the staff is supportive and encouraging, I am satisfied with my teaching salary, The level of student misbehaviour in this school (such as noise, horseplay or fighting in the halls, cafeteria, or student lounge) interferes with my teaching, I receive a great deal of support from parents for the work I do, Necessary materials such as textbooks, supplies, and copy machines are available as needed by the staff, Routine duties and paperwork interfere with my job of teaching, My principal enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it., Rules for student behaviour are consistently enforced by teachers in this school, even for students who are not in their classes, Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be, The principal knows what kind of school he or she wants and has communicated it to the staff, There is a great deal of cooperative effort among the staff members, In this school, staff members are recognised for a job well done, I worry about the</p>

	<p>security of my job because of the performance of my students or my school on standardised testing, I am given the support I need to teach students with special needs, The amount of student tardiness and truancy in this school interferes with my teaching, I am generally satisfied with being a teacher at this school, I make a conscious effort to coordinate the content of my courses with that of other teachers.</p>
<p>To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?,</p>	<p>Scale = Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree</p> <p>The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren't really worth it, The teachers at this school like being here; I would describe us as a satisfied group, I like the way things are run at this school, If I could get a higher paying job I'd leave teaching as soon as possible, I think about transferring to another school, I don't seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching, I think about staying home from school because I'm just too tired to go.</p>
<p>a. Has a student FROM THIS SCHOOL ever threatened to injure you?</p> <p>b. Has a student FROM THIS SCHOOL threatened to injure you IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS?</p> <p>c. In the past 12 months, how many times has a student FROM THIS SCHOOL threatened to injure you?</p>	<p>Yes, No, Short answer response</p>
<p>a. Has a student FROM THIS SCHOOL ever physically attacked you?</p> <p>b. Has a student FROM THIS SCHOOL physically attacked you IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS?</p> <p>c. In the past 12 months, how many times has a student FROM THIS SCHOOL physically attacked you?</p> <p>Times</p>	<p>Yes, No, Short answer response</p>
<p><b>Section 5: Intent to leave</b></p>	
<p>Do you plan to leave teaching permanently prior to retirement?</p>	<p>Yes, No, Unsure</p>
<p>How long do you see yourself teaching?</p>	<p>1-3 years, 4-5 years, 6-10 years, More than 10 years, Don't know</p>

<p>You have indicated that you plan to leave teaching prior to retirement. Please indicate which of the following were important factors in your decision to leave teaching prior to retirement?</p> <p>(Check only the factors that were important influences on your decision.)</p>	<p>I never intended teaching to be a long-term career, I have found that I am not suited to teaching, I am not enjoying teaching, Family reasons, Unsatisfactory relationships with other staff, Better opportunities outside of schools, Superannuation benefits from leaving teaching early, The workload is too heavy, Insufficient support staff, Class sizes too large, I had/have issues with student management, Insufficient recognition or reward for teachers, The poor public image of teachers, Changes imposed on schools from outside, Dissatisfaction with performance appraisal processes, Other (<i>please specify</i>)</p>
<p>How much longer do you intend to work in schools?</p>	<p>Ordinal options from &lt;1, 1 ... 20, 20&gt;, Unsure</p>
<p>If you intend to leave teaching in less than 3 years, please answer Question TBC. Otherwise go to Question TBC</p> <p>Your answer to Question TBC indicates that you intend to leave schools within the next 3 years. What do you intend to do then? (<i>Please tick any that apply.</i>)</p>	<p>Seek employment elsewhere in Education, but not directly in schools, Seek employment outside of Education, Take study leave, Take extended leave from teaching (12 months or more), Cease active employment, Other (<i>please specify</i>)</p>
<p>How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your job? <i>Please tick one box in each row.</i></p>	<p>Scale =</p> <p>The amount of teaching you are expected to do, The amount of administrative and clerical work you are expected to do, Your freedom to decide how to do your job, Your opportunities for professional learning, Your opportunities for career advancement, The balance between your working time and your private life, Your salary, The rewards available to you for superior performance, The feedback you receive on your performance, Managing student behaviour, What you are currently accomplishing with your students, The number of staff available to your school, The school's physical resources (e.g. buildings, grounds), The school's educational resources (e.g. equipment, teaching materials), The culture and organisation of your school, Your working relationships with your colleagues, Your working</p>

	relationships with your Principal, Overall, how satisfied are you with your current job?
At this stage, how do you see your future in the teaching profession?	I expect that teaching will be my lifetime career, I am unlikely to leave teaching, I am thinking about an alternative career, I am actively seeking an alternative career
In your opinion, do schools as a whole currently have difficulty in retaining teachers in the profession?	Yes, No, Don't know
Which of the following in your view would most help retain teachers in the profession?	Reduced workloads, More classroom assistance, Smaller class sizes, Fewer student management issues, Higher pay for teachers who demonstrate advanced competence, Cash bonuses for teachers judged to be high performing, Additional professional development
Do you plan to leave teaching permanently prior to retirement? <sup>4</sup>	Yes, No, Possibly, Don't know
If you could go back to your college days and start over again, would you become a teacher or not? Mark only one box	Certainly would become a teacher, Probably would become a teacher, Chances about even for and against, Probably would not become a teacher, Certainly would not become a teacher
How long do you plan to remain in teaching? Mark (X) only one box	As long as I am able, Until I am eligible for retirement benefits from this job, Until I am eligible for retirement benefits from a previous job, Until I am eligible for Social Security benefits, Until a specific life event occurs (e.g., parenthood, marriage), Until a more desirable job opportunity comes along, Definitely plan to leave as soon as I can, Undecided at this time

### 8.3. Appendix C: Final survey questions after pre-testing and pilot testing feedback

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Options / Info</i>
<p><i>Purple = Questions from AEU SOS survey (2010),</i>  <i>Yellow = questions from US SASS survey (2014),</i>  <i>Green = questions from Australian SiAS Survey (2014), Red = Across more than one study</i></p>	
I have read the information provided to me and agree to participate in this research.	
<b>Section 1: Demographics</b>	
Please indicate your age as of December 1 this year:	_____ years _____ months
Gender	Male, Female, Intersex, Prefer not to say, Other
What is your current marital status? Mark (X) only one box.	Single, Married, De facto, Prefer not to say, other
Do you identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?	No, Yes (Aboriginal), Yes (Torres Strait Islander), Yes (both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander)
In which country were you born?	Australia, Canada, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Malaysia, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States of America, Other ( <i>please specify</i> )
Please answer Question below only if you were <u>not</u> born in Australia. For how many years have you lived in Australia?	_____ years
a. Do you speak a language other than English at home? b. What is that language? c. How good is your spoken English?	Yes, No  Open answer Very good, Good, Satisfactory, Prefer not to say
a. In what year did you commence your initial teacher education program? (your university program) b. In what year did you complete your initial teacher education program? d. For how many years have you been teaching in total (counting this year as one)?	Select from year lists from <1970, 1971 .. 2015   < 1, 1 ..., 20, >20
In what school year did you FIRST begin teaching, either full-time or part-time, at the primary or secondary level?	Do NOT include time spent as a student teacher.
In how many schools have you taught at the primary or secondary level? Do NOT include time spent as a student teacher. <sup>2</sup>	Select from year lists from <1970, 1971 .. 2015

Have you earned any of the degrees or certificates listed below? Please select all that apply and include what year you graduated from this course of study as well as your major area of study.	Vocational certificate, associate degree, Bachelor's degree, SECOND Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies, Doctorate or first professional degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., M.D., J.D., D.D.S., What was your major field of study for each degree?
Which one of the following best describes your position in the school?	Principal, mainly classroom teaching, mainly managing an area or department in the school, Mainly providing specialist support to students, A combination of classroom teaching and management, Other
School location	Gungahlin area, Belconnen area, Inner North area, Inner south (including Weston Creek) area, Tuggeranong area, Other (please specify)
School type	Primary, Secondary, Primary/Secondary, Special, Other
How many students are at your school?	1 - 50, 51 - 100, 101 - 500, 501 - 1000, Over 1000
Have you had any interruptions to your teaching career (e.g., leave, resignation and return)? If so, how many years have you been absent from teaching?	Select from a number of years drop down (<1 year, 1, ..., 20, >20)
Is your current employment as a teacher full-time or part-time?	Full-time, Part-time ( <i>please specify the time fraction; eg, 0.5 for half-time</i> )
Is your current employment arrangement as a teacher?	On-going/Permanent, Fixed-term/Contract (less than 1 year), Fixed-term/Contract (1– 3 years), Fixed-term/Contract (more than 3 years), Casual/Relief (on call), Casual/Relief (continuing appointment)
<b>Section 2: Personal</b>	
At what stage of your life did you first decide that you wanted to become a teacher?	While at school, During my first degree program at university, Upon completing my first degree, While in employment, Other (please describe)
Which of the following factors were important to you in your decision to become a teacher <sup>3</sup> <i>Please tick all boxes that apply.</i>	Love of teaching, Love of subject, Encouragement from teacher(s) while you were at school, Family role model(s), Availability of employment, Attractiveness of the salary, Working conditions, Security of employment, Holidays, hours of work, Desire to contribute to society, Desire to work with

	young people, Status of the teaching profession, Other ( <i>please specify</i> )
<b>Section 3: Experiences as a pre-service teacher</b>	
Was your initial teacher education program?	a graduate program (requiring a first degree as a prerequisite for entry?), an undergraduate program?, Other ( <i>please specify</i> )
<b>Section 4: Experiences in the school</b>	
In a typical week, how many hours do you spend on all school-related activities [including work days, evenings and weekends]?	Less than 29 hours, 30- 40 hours, 41-45 hours, 46-50 hours, 51-55 hours, 55+ hours
In the last year have the hours you spend on school-related activities increased, decreased or stayed about the same?	Increased, Decreased, Stayed about the same, Not applicable
To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?	Scale = Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree I am satisfied with my teaching salary, The level of student misbehaviour in this school interferes with my teaching, Routine duties and paperwork interfere with my job of teaching, My principal enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it., Rules for student behaviour are consistently enforced by teachers in this school, even for students who are not in their classes, The principal knows what kind of school he or she wants and has communicated it to the staff, In this school, staff members are recognised for a job well done, I worry about the security of my job because of the performance of my students or my school on standardised testing, The amount of student lateness and truancy in this school interferes with my teaching, I am generally satisfied with being a teacher at this school
To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?,	Scale = Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren't really worth it, The teachers at this school like being here, I like the way things are run at this school, If I could get a higher paying job I'd leave teaching as soon as possible, I think about transferring to another

	school, I don't seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching
<b>Section 5: Intent to leave</b>	
How long do you plan to remain in teaching? Mark (X) only one box	I expect that teaching will be my lifetime career, Until I am eligible for government support benefits, Until a specific life event occurs (e.g., parenthood, marriage), Until a more desirable job opportunity comes along, I am actively seeking an alternative career, Undecided at this time, Other (please specify)
Do you plan to leave teaching permanently prior to retirement?	Yes, No, Unsure
You have indicated that you plan to leave teaching prior to retirement. Please indicate which of the following were important factors in your decision to leave teaching prior to retirement? (Check only the factors that were important influences on your decision.)	I never intended teaching to be a long-term career, I have found that I am not suited to teaching, I am not enjoying teaching, Family reasons, Unsatisfactory relationships with other staff, Better opportunities outside of schools, Superannuation benefits from leaving teaching early, The workload is too heavy, Insufficient support staff, Class sizes too large, I had/have issues with student management, Insufficient recognition or reward for teachers, The poor public image of teachers, Changes imposed on schools from outside, Dissatisfaction with performance appraisal processes, Other (please specify)
How long do you see yourself teaching?	1-3 years, 4-5 years, 6-10 years, More than 10 years, Don't know
If you intend to leave teaching in less than 3 years, please answer Question TBC. Otherwise go to Question TBC Your answer to Question TBC indicates that you intend to leave schools within the next 3 years. What do you intend to do then? (Please tick any that apply.)	Seek employment elsewhere in Education, but not directly in schools, Seek employment outside of Education, Take study leave, Take extended leave from teaching (12 months or more), Cease active employment, Other (please specify)
If you could go back to your university days and start over again, would you become a teacher or not? Mark only one box	Certainly would become a teacher, Probably would become a teacher, Chances about even for and against, Probably would not become a teacher, Certainly would not become a teacher
In your opinion, do schools as a whole currently have difficulty in retaining teachers in the profession?	Yes, No, Don't know



Which of the following in your view would most help retain teachers in the profession?	Reduced workloads, More classroom assistance, Smaller class sizes, Fewer student management issues, Higher pay for teachers who demonstrate advanced competence, Cash bonuses for teachers judged to be high performing, Additional professional development
<b>Section 6: Beginning Teachers</b>	
In your FIRST year of teaching, how well prepared were you to – (beginning teachers only)	Scale = Not at all prepared, Somewhat prepared, Well prepared, Very well prepared Handle a range of classroom management or discipline situations?, Use a variety of instructional methods?, Teach your subject matter?, Use computers in classroom instruction?, Assess students?, Differentiate instruction in the classroom?, Use data from student assessments to inform instruction?, Meet state content standards?
In your FIRST year of teaching, did you participate in a teacher induction program?	(A teacher induction program is a program for beginning teachers that may include teacher orientation, mentoring, coaching, demonstrations, and/or assessments aimed at enhancing teachers' effectiveness.) If you are in your first year of teaching, please answer for THIS school year. Yes, No
Did you receive the following kinds of support during your FIRST year of teaching? If you are in your first year of teaching, please answer for THIS school year. <i>Please select all that apply</i>	Reduced teaching schedule or number of preparations, Common planning time with teachers in your subject, Seminars or classes for beginning teachers, Extra classroom assistance (e.g., teacher aides), Regular supportive communication with your principal or other administrators
In your FIRST year of teaching, did you work closely with a master or mentor teacher who was assigned by your school or district? If you are in your first year of teaching, please answer for THIS school year.	Yes, No
How frequently did you work with your master or mentor teacher during your first year of teaching?	At least once a week, Once or twice a month, A few times a year, Never, Not applicable
c. Has your master or mentor teacher ever instructed students in the same subject area(s) as yours?	Yes, No, Not applicable

Overall, to what extent did your assigned master or mentor teacher improve your teaching in your first year of teaching?	Not at all, To a small extent, To a moderate extent, To a great extent, Not applicable
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**8.4. Appendix D: Email sent to interview participants**

From: Stacey Griffiths [mailto:u1006754@uemail.usq.edu.au]

**Sent:** Friday, 12 January 2018 8:54 PM

**To:** [Participant email here]

**Subject:** Interview participation - Teacher attrition and retention in the ACT study

Dear [Insert Participant Name Here],

I am contacting you regarding a survey you participated in at the end of 2017 in which you indicated that you would be interested in further involvement with the research through a more in depth interview.

**I would love to hear, and include, your experiences in my research and would like to set up a time to meet with you to conduct a 1 hour (maximum) interview.**

The interview would be focusing on your experiences as a teacher in the ACT, especially those which you feel may have contributed to yourself (or those around you) choosing to leave or remain in the profession.

I could meet you at any location in the ACT (or surrounds) that would be most comfortable and easy for you. I can do any day and time from now until the 30th of January. After this date I could do any time or day outside of work hours up to the 4th of February.

Ideally the interviews are conducted face-to-face but if you would prefer, I can conduct it over the phone. Also, if you are unable to meet before the 4th of February I can accommodate a date after this if required.

I am very grateful that you participated in the initial survey and that you have now offered your time and expertise to myself and this study. If however you have decided that you would prefer to not participate further please let me know and I will remove your details from my list.

I have attached the formal information sheets (which I will bring as hard copies to the interview) for you to read over when you get a chance. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via email or phone (0414 589 393).

I look forward to meeting with you in the future,

Stacey Griffiths

University of Southern Queensland (USQ) - PhD student

0414 589 393

## 8.5. Appendix E: Interview Participant Information Form



University of Southern Queensland

### Participant Information for USQ Research Project Interview

#### Project Details

Title of Project: *Understanding the experiences of teachers in the ACT: Using a Mixed Methods approach to discover why they leave or remain*  
 Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H16REA224

#### Research Team Contact Details

##### Principal Investigator Details

Ms. Stacey Griffiths  
 Email: [u1006754@uqmail.usq.edu.au](mailto:u1006754@uqmail.usq.edu.au)  
 Mobile: 0414 589 393

##### Supervisor Details

Associate Professor Karen Trimmer  
 Email: [karen.trimmer@usq.edu.au](mailto:karen.trimmer@usq.edu.au)  
 Telephone: (07) 4631 2371

#### Description

This project is being undertaken as part of a PhD.

The purpose of this project is to determine which demographic groups of teachers are most at risk of leaving the teaching profession, and what are the experiences of teachers within these groups which impact on their decision to leave or remain in the profession.

Teacher attrition and retention is widely discussed in popular media and research, with many articles reporting that up to two thirds of beginning teachers leave the profession within the first five years. However, recent research has suggested that much is still unknown in the field. In the particular context of Australia, and in particular the ACT, there is very limited data to support the suggestion that beginning teachers are at higher risk of leaving the profession than those teachers with more than five years experience.

I am requesting your assistance because you have been identified, from my findings in the initial stages of this study to be at a higher risk of leaving the teaching profession. As you are a current teacher within the ACT I would like know what experiences you have had which have impacted on your decision to remain in the profession and what experiences you may have which have made you consider leaving.

#### Participation

Your participation will involve up to 2 interviews that will take approximately 1 hour each of your time. If you choose to participate in a second interview it will be conducted between 1-2 months after the initial interview.

The interviews will take place at a time and venue that is convenient to you. You may choose to participate in an interview online using Skype or Zoom if you would prefer.

Questions will include

- What have been some key life experiences which have defined you as a teacher?
- Can you explain any key life experiences you have had in your workplace?
- What have been the most / least positive life experiences you have had as a teacher?

The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher, and their supervisors. This transcript will be made available to you, along with the final thesis, prior to publication. All identifying information presented during the interview will be removed from the transcript, and your participation in this study will be confidential.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. You may also request that any data collected about you be destroyed. If you do wish to withdraw from this project or withdraw data collected about you, please contact the Research Team (contact details at the top of this form).

Your decision whether you take part, do not take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will in no way impact your current or future relationship with the University of Southern Queensland or the ACT Education Directorate / ACT Catholic Education / an ACT Independent School.

### **Expected Benefits**

It is hoped that your participation in this study will benefit you as you reflect upon your career journey. The study findings will benefit future teachers and assist in making policy to improve the retention and support of teachers in the ACT and Australia.

### **Risks**

Sometimes thinking about the sorts of issues raised in the interview can create some uncomfortable or distressing feelings. If you need to talk to someone about this immediately please contact Lifeline on 13 11 14. You may also wish to consider consulting your General Practitioner (GP) for additional support.

As an Executive Teacher in the ACT there is the potential that I will know teachers who volunteer to participate in this study. To minimise the risks to interviewees all participation is completely confidential. If you at any stage feel uncomfortable with my position in the ACT Education system you are able to withdraw from the study without bias. Any relationship (past, present or future) we may have in a professional context will be treated as separate from this study, and your participation in the study will never be disclosed or discussed in any setting.

### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law.

Your interview responses will be recorded and these recordings will be saved and backed up on two secure hard drives which will be stored in a locked filing cabinet with of the researcher. These recordings will remain confidential and will only be accessed by the researcher and their supervisors for analysis purposes. All identifying information will be removed from the transcripts prior to any sharing or publication of findings.

Only the researcher (Stacey Griffiths) will have access to the recordings for transcription.

Any data collected as a part of this project will be stored securely as per University of Southern Queensland's Research Data Management policy. The data collected in this survey may be used for future research by the researcher and any future use will maintain the same confidentiality of the participants.

### **Consent to Participate**

I would like to ask you to sign a written consent form (enclosed) to confirm your agreement to participate in this project. Please return your signed consent form to Stacey Griffiths prior to participating in your interview.

#### **Questions or Further Information about the Project**

Please refer to the Research Team Contact Details at the top of the form to have any questions answered or to request further information about this project.

#### **Concerns or Complaints Regarding the Conduct of the Project**

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Coordinator on (07) 4631 2690 or email [ethics@usq.edu.au](mailto:ethics@usq.edu.au). The Ethics Coordinator is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an unbiased manner.

**Thank you for taking the time to help with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.**

## 8.6. Appendix F: Interview Participant Consent Form



University of Southern Queensland

### Consent Form for USQ Research Project Interview

#### Project Details

Title of Project: *Understanding the experiences of teachers in the ACT: Using a Mixed Methods approach to discover why they leave or remain (Stage 3)*  
 Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H16REA224

#### Research Team Contact Details

##### Principal Investigator Details

Ms. Stacey Griffiths  
 Email: [u1006754@umail.usq.edu.au](mailto:u1006754@umail.usq.edu.au)  
 Mobile: 0414 589 393

##### Supervisor Details

Associate Professor Karen Trimmer  
 Email: [karen.trimmer@usq.edu.au](mailto:karen.trimmer@usq.edu.au)  
 Telephone: (07) 4631 2371

#### Statement of Consent

##### By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- Have read and understood the information document regarding this project.
- Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.
- Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team.
- Understand that the interview will be audio recorded.
- Understand that I will be provided with a copy of the transcript of the interview for my perusal and endorsement prior to inclusion of this data in the project.
- Understand that you are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty.
- Understand that you can contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Coordinator on (07) 4631 2690 or email [ethics@usq.edu.au](mailto:ethics@usq.edu.au) if you do have any concern or complaint about the ethical conduct of this project.
- Are over 18 years of age.
- Agree to participate in the project.

Participant Name

Participant Signature

Date

**Please return this sheet to a Research Team member prior to undertaking the interview.**



## 8.7. Appendix G: List of ACT Education Directorate Schools

### Primary Schools:

1. Ainslie School
2. Ainslie North Primary
3. Aranda Primary
4. Arawang Primary
5. Bonython Primary
6. Calwell Primary
7. Campbell Primary
8. Chapman Primary
9. Charles Conder Primary
10. Charles Weston Primary
11. Charnwood-Dunlop School
12. Curtin Primary
13. Duffy Primary
14. Evatt Primary
15. Fadden Primary
16. Farrer Primary
17. Florey Primary
18. Forrest Primary
19. Franklin Early Childhood School
20. Fraser Primary
21. Garran Primary
22. Gilmore Primary
23. Giralang Primary
24. Gordon Primary
25. Gowrie Primary
26. Hawker Primary
27. Hughes Primary
28. Isabella Plains Early Childhood School
29. Kaleen Primary
30. Latham Primary
31. Lyneham Primary
32. Lyons Early Childhood School
33. Macgregor Primary
34. Macquarie Primary
35. Maijura Primary

36. Maribyrnong Primary
37. Mawson Primary
38. Miles Franklin Primary
39. Monash Primary
40. Mount Rogers Primary School
41. Narrabundah Early Childhood School
42. Neville Bonner Primary School
43. Ngunnawal Primary
44. O'Connor Cooperative School
45. Palmerston District Primary
46. Red Hill Primary
47. Richardson Primary
48. Southern Cross Early Childhood School
49. Taylor Primary
50. Telopea Park School
51. Theodore Primary
52. Torrens Primary
53. Turner School
54. Wanniassa Hills Primary
55. Weetangera Primary
56. Yarralumla Primary

### Secondary Schools:

1. Alfred Deakin High
2. Belconnen High
3. Calwell High
4. Campbell High
5. Canberra High
6. University of Canberra High School, Kaleen
7. Lanyon High
8. Lyneham High
9. Melba Copland Secondary School

10. Melrose High
11. Mount Stromlo High School
12. Telopea Park School

### P-10 Schools:

1. Amaroo School
2. Caroline Chisholm School
3. Gold Creek School
4. Harrison School
5. Kingsford Smith School
6. Namadgi School
7. Wanniassa School

### Colleges:

1. Canberra College
2. Dickson College
3. Erindale College
4. Gungahlin College
5. Hawker College
6. University of Canberra Senior Secondary College, Lake Ginninderra
7. Lake Tuggeranong College
8. Melba Copland Secondary School Copland Campus Years 11 - 12
9. Narrabundah College

### Specialist Schools:

1. Birrigai Outdoor School
2. Black Mountain School
3. Cranleigh School
4. Malkara School
5. Woden School (The)

## 8.8. Appendix H: List of ACT Catholic Education Schools in the ACT

<i>Primary Schools</i>	<i>High Schools / Colleges</i>
St Thomas Aquinas Primary School	St Mary MacKillop College
Rosary Primary School	St Mary MacKillop College
St John Vianney's Primary School	St John Paul II College
St Anthony's Parish Primary School	St Clare's College
St Bede's Primary School	St Francis Xavier College
Sacred Heart Primary School	Merici College
St Matthew's Primary School	
St Joseph's Primary School	
Holy Spirit Primary School	
St Benedict's Primary School	
St Thomas the Apostle Primary School	
St Michael's Primary School	
St Jude's Primary School	
Mother Teresa School	
Holy Family Primary School	
Sts Peter & Paul Primary School	
Holy Spirit Primary School	
St Benedict's Primary School	
St Thomas the Apostle Primary School	
St Michael's Primary School	
St Jude's Primary School	
Mother Teresa School	
Holy Family Primary School	
Sts Peter & Paul Primary School	
St John the Apostle Primary School	
St Monica's Primary School	
Holy Trinity Primary School	
St Clare of Assisi Primary School	
St Thomas More's Primary School	
St Francis of Assisi Primary School	
St Vincent's Primary School	
Good Shepherd Primary School	

### 8.9. Appendix I: List of ACT Independent Schools

School Name	Type	Address	Telephone
<a href="#"><u>Blue Gum Community School</u></a>	<b>Independent Community</b>	114 Maitland Street Hackett ACT 2602 <a href="#"><u>Email</u></a>	+61 2 <a href="#"><u>6230 6776</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Brindabella Christian College</u></a>  Lyneham campus	<b>Independent Christian</b>	136 Brigalow Street Lyneham ACT 2602 <a href="#"><u>Email</u></a>	+61 2 <a href="#"><u>6247 4644</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Brindabella Christian College</u></a>  Charnwood campus	<b>Independent Christian</b>	46 Lhotsky St Charnwood ACT 2615 <a href="#"><u>Email</u></a>	+61 2 <a href="#"><u>6247 4644</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Burgmann Anglican School</u></a>  Valley Campus	<b>Independent Anglican</b>	Cnr Gungahlin Drive & The Valley Avenue Gungahlin ACT 2911 <a href="#"><u>Email</u></a>	+61 2 <a href="#"><u>6255 7700</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Burgmann Anglican School</u></a>  Ford Campus	<b>Independent Anglican</b>	Cnr Francis Forde Boulevard & Hurrell Street Forde ACT 2914	+61 2 <a href="#"><u>6204 3299</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Canberra Christian School</u></a>	<b>Independent Christian</b>	64A Ainsworth Street Mawson ACT 2607 <a href="#"><u>Email</u></a>	+61 2 <a href="#"><u>6286 3989</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Canberra Girls' Grammar School</u></a>	<b>Independent Anglican</b>	Melbourne Avenue Deakin ACT 2600 <a href="#"><u>Email</u></a>	+61 2 <a href="#"><u>6202 6400</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Canberra Girls' Grammar School</u></a>  Junior school campus	<b>Independent Anglican</b>	Grey Street Deakin ACT 2600	+61 2 <a href="#"><u>6202 6411</u></a>

<b>School Name</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Telephone</b>
<a href="#"><u>Canberra Grammar School</u></a>	<b>Independent Anglican</b>	40 Monaro Crescent Red Hill ACT 2603 <a href="#"><u>Email</u></a>	+61 2 <a href="#"><u>6260 9700</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Canberra Grammar School</u></a>  Junior school campus	<b>Independent Anglican</b>	15 Alexander Street Red Hill ACT 2603	+61 2 <a href="#"><u>6260 9600</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Canberra Grammar School</u></a>  Southside - early childhood campus	<b>Independent Anglican</b>	15 Alexander Street Red Hill ACT 2603	+61 2 <a href="#"><u>6260 9858</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Canberra Grammar School</u></a>  Northside - early childhood campus	<b>Independent Anglican</b>	33 Blamey Crescent Campbell ACT 2601	+61 2 <a href="#"><u>6247 7707</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Canberra Montessori School</u></a>	<b>Independent Montessori</b>	35 Mulley Street Holder ACT 2611 <a href="#"><u>Email</u></a>	+61 2 6287 1962
<a href="#"><u>Covenant Christian School</u></a>	<b>Independent Christian</b>	1 Woodcock Drive Gordon ACT 2906 <a href="#"><u>Email</u></a>	+61 2 <a href="#"><u>6294 2455</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Daramalan College</u></a>	<b>Independent Catholic</b>	Cowper Street Dickson ACT 2602 <a href="#"><u>Email</u></a>	+61 2 <a href="#"><u>6245 6300</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Emmaus Christian School</u></a>	<b>Independent Christian</b>	73 Davenport Street Dickson ACT 2602 <a href="#"><u>Email</u></a>	+61 2 <a href="#"><u>6247 7151</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Islamic School of Canberra</u></a>	<b>Independent Islamic</b>	33 Heysen Street Weston <a href="#"><u>Email</u></a>	+61 2 <a href="#"><u>6288 7358</u></a>

<b>School Name</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Telephone</b>
<u>Marist College Canberra</u>	<b>Independent Catholic</b>	Marr Street Pearce ACT 2607 <u>Email</u>	+61 2 <u>6298 7200</u>
<u>Orana Steiner School</u>	<b>Independent Steiner</b>	Unwin Place Weston ACT 2611 <u>Email</u>	+61 2 <u>6288 4283</u>
<u>Radford College</u>	<b>Independent Anglican</b>	1 College Street Bruce ACT 2617 <u>Email</u>	+61 2 <u>6162 6200</u>
<u>St Edmund's College</u>	<b>Independent Catholic</b>	110 Canberra Avenue Griffith ACT 2603 <u>Email</u>	+61 2 <u>6295 3598</u>
<u>Taqwa School</u>	<b>Independent Islamic</b>	4/55 Crofts Crescent Spence ACT 2615, Australia <u>Email</u>	+61 417 786 789
<u>The Galilee School</u>	<b>Independent Special Assistance School</b>	Box 1066 Tuggeranong ACT 2901 <u>Email</u>	+61 2 <u>6296 3410</u>
<u>Trinity Christian School</u>	<b>Independent Christian</b>	34 McBrde Crescent Wanniassa ACT 2903 <u>Email</u>	+61 2 <u>6231 4177</u>

## **8.10. Appendix J: Email follow up from James**

### **Title: Problems faced as a recently qualified teacher**

#### **The Graduate Diploma in Education**

No behaviour management component

Cross campus study unit – unit was not at all relevant – no communication between universities.

**Placements:** One of teachers at the placement school made racist comments about students  
Supervising teacher made comments about lack of differentiation, despite the fact that at the time of the placement this concept had not been covered/addressed in University course.  
Shouldn't they know what I was studying?

I think that my education qualification left me completely unprepared for classroom teaching (yes, my teaching placements whilst studying went well, but there was always the supervising teacher in the classroom).

#### **ACT Govt HR**

Initially messed up superannuation payments, despite the information given to them  
Taxed too much because they didn't give me the tax-free threshold, despite the information on the form I completed.

One union negotiated payrise did not happen – I had to email HR to inform them of payrise.  
Anecdotal evidence/comments I overheard in staffroom were that new teachers were not paid for weeks at a time due to delays in processing. This is outrageous – the first thing schools and department should ensure is that staff are paid promptly and correctly.

ACT Govt charge employees \$10 a fortnight if they want to salary sacrifice towards superannuation – absolutely ridiculous. HR are already sending the mandatory superannuation contributions to superannuation schemes – why should employees be charged if they want to pay extra superannuation via salary sacrifice?

#### **Dept Education**

No Google Classroom/Google Drive training. Mahara emphasised at University and we were advised this would be very important when we eventually started teaching – never used it since.

No induction.

Inequalities – superannuation, TQI, etc. Some teachers get 15.4% employer contribution to superannuation, some much less. Some teachers have had to present a portfolio to gain 'full' teaching accreditation via TQI, some haven't.

Very rude staff – not supportive. I have had some very unpleasant dealings with ACT Education staff – rude and unsupportive to my face, and I have also received some very cursory and rude emails. Do these staff realise that their wages are paid via taxes from people like me?

### **Permanent positions**

Is there any chance of getting a permanent position? I gave up a secure permanent position to embark on teaching because I thought I had something to offer students and schools. What happens if I get badly injured or sick? I have no sick leave because I'm on a temporary contract. What happens about my mortgage, etc. Temporary contract employees seem the norm. How do you get a permanent position? Shouldn't the department be trying to employ staff permanently?

### **Lack of empathy / professionalism from employing schools**

Five minutes before a lesson, I was told in the staffroom (not in a private situation) that my contract wouldn't be renewed due to staffing/financial reasons (nothing to do with my performance). Is this professional? At another school, I discovered my contract wouldn't be renewed (again, not due to my performance but due to teachers returning from leave) when an email was sent around with the proposed classes for the next school year. No discussion with supervisors, etc. Is this professional? Do schools and the department realise that staff have financial commitments? Many of us don't want to be on temporary contracts – we want permanent employment.

### **Lack of understanding from schools**

I asked what I needed to do to get a permanent position. Various teachers at various schools couldn't tell me. Asked about TQI requirements to move from 'provisional' to 'full'. School staff unable to tell me.

### **TQI**

Besides the inequity (eg some people didn't have to go through the whole provisional to full process – how is this fair?), the entire process seems flawed. I notice that Minister of Education Birmingham was recently quoted as saying that this TQI requirement may be 'dumped'. Different requirements in different states. Surely after teaching and being observed, school executive staff can decide whether you meet the criteria and deserve 'full' teaching accreditation? The process brings on anxiety, doubt – no-one seems entirely across the process. The whole recording of hours to meet the yearly requirement is also deeply flawed – teachers inventing professional development, fabricating hours, variation between schools.

**Casual teaching**

This seems the first step after completing a teaching qualification. I did casual teaching – why are casual teachers not given keys? I had to hunt down teachers all the time just to gain access to classrooms. I had to go on long journeys to near the school reception, because there was a toilet there where I didn't need a key. Why aren't casual teachers given email access and an ACT Education logon? I was left lesson plans that required me to use IT resources for which I needed a logon.

I also found, after completing my education qualification, that it was ages before I was offered a contract. In the interim I just did casual teaching. So I forgot loads about the national curriculum, etc etc, because you don't need to know this when you are just teaching casually and are implementing other teachers lessons. I found this a big problem.