Factors influencing teachers' engagement with research in English schools

MA Education (YLC)

EDUC5430M Dissertation

List of abbreviations

3IE	International Initiative for Impact Evaluation
CPD	Continued professional development
DfE	Department for Education
DISS	Deployment and Impact of Support Staff
ECT	Early Career Teacher
EEF	Education Endowment Foundation
EIF	Education inspection framework
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
GTP	Graduate Teacher Programme
IES	Institute for Employment Studies
MA	Master of Arts
MITA	Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants
NPQ	National Professional Qualification
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PGCE	Post-Graduate Certificate in Education
SCITT	School-Centred Initial Teacher Training
TA	Teaching Assistant
TDA	Teacher Development Agency
TLR	Teaching and Learning Responsibility

Abstract

This dissertation study reports on the findings of a qualitative research project considering the factors that influence teachers' use and engagement with research in the English education sector. The study is framed within an interpretivist paradigm. It uses a grounded theory methodology to analyse and interpret the qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with relationships drawn between my own experiences described in autoethnography as a confessional tale. Through constant comparison, the results of these two qualitative methods were then analysed as part of an iterative process.

Key themes influencing teachers' engagement with research emerged from this analysis and included:

Resource issues - These included the time taken to engage with or in research, the cost associated with accessing research, for example, academic writing contained within journals featuring a 'paywall' or a lack of funding that may be related to large-scale projects, the accessibility of resources concerning how easily teachers could read and interpret the findings of research as well as lack of expert support to conduct quality research which may be available in research institutions such as universities and could include access to data analysts, statisticians and other research experts or professionals.

Research literacy preparedness - Factors such as a teacher's highest degree level attained, training route such as a PGCE, continued professional development including programmes such as NPQ's and career stage (how long they have been teaching, are they in a leadership role)

Leadership priority—Do the leadership team, the headteacher, or the academy trust prioritise research for decision-making and school improvement? Leaders' research literacy, school and MAT policies (such as appraisal policies that reference or ignore research-based and evidence-informed approaches), and practice (meetings, CPD structure and intent) significantly impact the extent to which schools effectively engage with research.

Government focus - Central government has a significant role in influencing leadership priorities and approaches. Training frameworks are decided at a government departmental level. Changes from the NQT framework to the ECT framework have brought about an increased focus on 'evidence-based' practice and engagement with research, but this has not been sustained as a focus of the teacher standards (DfE, 2011). Funded research agencies such as the Education Endowment Foundation indicate a desire to embed research-based practice in the field of education, and increasingly, government compliance and accountability mechanisms such as OFSTED are referencing research-based approaches when justifying the criteria used to judge schools.

The study acknowledges that the identified themes are explicitly linked and cannot be addressed in isolation. It also presents interpretations of the existing research related to each theme, and by connecting these to the data collected in the research study, it presents considerations for the reader on each theme. The findings from this study serve to better the understanding of teachers and school leaders who are reviewing or seeking to develop research-based approaches in their establishment by clearly identifying factors which can become barriers to research engagement. The study also adds to the volume of research that concludes that further improvements in education systems can be more effectively and sustainably realised through engagement in educational research, and this engagement would benefit the efficiency, impact and professional standing of teachers and the profession as a whole.

Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 How did I get here?

In 1999, I decided to become a teacher; in 2004, I qualified as a teacher and in 2009, I became a senior leader. In 2021, I began a Master's Degree in Education at the University of Leeds, and it was only at this point that I learned how to access, critically evaluate, interpret and produce research. This dissertation is concerned with the research literacy of teachers. The participants in this study were staff in a Multi Academy Trust secondary school. This introduction aims to provide the reader of this dissertation with an insight into the role and evolving thought processes of a school leader throughout the research (as headteacher of this secondary school and a researcher engaged in my master's qualification) and the juxtaposition with the research aims and objectives, which are discussed at the end of this chapter.

The rationale for conducting research in this field was based upon my experience and reflections upon observing, participating in and implementing new whole school initiatives in multiple schools when the evidence base used to justify the change was either poorly evaluated, weak or non-existent. It was also linked to my research awakening on my journey through my master's degree programme and an increasing awareness that, as a Headteacher, I can set the tone and expectations for the teams I lead concerning this crucial professional obligation.

It is essential that teachers are involved in the analysis and use of suitable research to develop effective teaching and learning practices (Evans et al, 2017). Teaching professionals should engage in and with research judiciously to improve their own practice and that of others, with school leaders ensuring that evidence-informed research is a critical leadership priority (DfE, 2016).

Accordingly, my initial research questions (below) sought to understand the barriers teachers face in understanding, using, and participating effectively in research to secure improvement.

1. What does effective research use look like in a comprehensive English school?
2. Have policy changes relating to teacher induction resulted in improved research literacy of staff?
3. What are the barriers to engaging in or with research effectively?
4. How can we overcome these, and what are the benefits of doing so?
5. How important is it that school leaders have good research literacy?

Throughout my master's qualification, I realised that my research into education would be strongly framed by a theoretical position. In the case of this research, I have applied an interpretivist ontology with a relativist view, which seeks to understand the interconnection between the study and the research subjects (Moustakas, 1994) and is concerned with the thoughts, feelings, and interpretation of the research subjects' experiences.

I had considered a case study model in the early stages of designing this research project. Still, I had an increasing realisation that my role in the research process would not be limited to the observer and that my involvement in the study would be much more intricate and personal than expected. Deciding upon a suitable methodology was time-consuming, but during my master's degree, I became increasingly interested in grounded theory and felt that it would be the most appropriate methodology, providing me with a suitable framework to explore the topic of research literacy concerning my specific context. Furthermore, it developed as a practical methodology that resonated with my philosophical foundations, enabling me to contemplate my reflexive position. The approach allowed me to conduct and develop my analysis progressively, revisiting the context and gaining a deeper understanding of the processes occurring. (Corbin and Strauss, 2008)

1.2 A Short Biography

I am currently employed as Headteacher of Stokesley School, a comprehensive secondary school and sixth form in North Yorkshire and part of the Arete Learning Trust. At the time of writing, this is a position I have held for just over a year. I am an experienced leader, having held senior team positions in two other secondary schools over 16 years and having been a teacher for 20 years, beginning my teaching career in Ashford in Kent as a physical education teacher. During that time, I completed various professional development courses and gained qualifications to support my leadership development, including 'Leading from the Middle' and the 'National Professional Qualification for Headship'.

Whilst my profession is a source of enormous pride, I am most proud of my family. I am husband to another teacher, a passionate Head of Art, and a father to three boys. My family motivates me to be a better leader. Whilst it is perhaps a cliché, I strive to provide an educational experience that I would happily provide to my children. If it is not good enough for them, it is not good enough for me.

Headship, undoubtedly, is the most demanding of all my roles in schools. I firmly believe that the role of an effective senior leader is to create the conditions and culture that enables every member of staff and each student to be the best they can be. To do that, I need to be the best I can be. In this dissertation, I will share my 'confessional tale'. Three factors drove me to complete a master's degree. Firstly, I wanted to prove that I was more

academic than my A-level results and bachelor's degree might suggest. Secondly, I saw it as an opportunity to break free from the 'typical PE teacher' stereotype and meet the desirable criteria for headships I was aspiring to. Lastly, I was driven by the potential to use my learning to improve my school and others. The experience of this program has been enlightening and transformative, shaping me both as an individual and an educationalist. This dissertation marks the culmination of my post-graduate journey and a significant shift in my approach to the effective use of education research.

1.3 Reflexivity and Positionality

Positionality defines a researcher's view of the world and their approach when conducting research (Rowe, 2014). It concerns the broader social and political considerations that can impact interpersonal relations and consequently influence the qualitative research processes (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Regarding such matters, my position as an interpretivist researcher is made straightforward earlier in my introduction and is implicit in the methodology and methods described in this dissertation.

Reflexivity is a central facet of qualitative research that requires a critical appraisal of oneself throughout planning, conducting and presenting research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Lynch describes reflexivity as "attained through philosophical introspection, an inward-looking, sometimes confessional and self-critical examination of one's own beliefs and assumptions" (Lynch, 2000, p. 29).

The aim is not simply to increase self-awareness. Reflexive researchers seek to understand and describe how they influence the research process and, consequently, how the research affects what they believe and do (Giddens and Sutton, 2017).

Reviewing the theme of research literacy through the symbolic interaction of an interview is an appropriate method; however, my positionality remains an essential factor to consider in my research. I am the Headteacher of Stokesley School. As in this role, it may be assumed that I could have a bias or 'ulterior motive' in promoting myself as a research-literate and research-informed individual. While finding opportunities to promote the school is part of my role, my values align strongly with those set out in the Nolan Principles (Committee on Standards in Public Life, 1995). With honesty as a core principle, I believe it is essential for school leaders and those in public office to be truthful and open. As difficult as that can be with the pressures and accountability of headship, I believe that no one benefits, least of all the students and the community I serve, if we try to mask the areas for development in our school or if we misrepresent ourselves to be 'better than we are'. This is not about a fear of being caught but a concern over the consequences of not honestly appraising our school and failing to address critical development priorities.

As a researcher, I also acknowledge that my position as headteacher may affect the responses of my participants at the interview. There is a risk that they provide responses they think I would wish to hear rather than offering honest opinions. My interpretation of responses may differ when considering events that are shared experiences as opposed to those that are unwitnessed by an external researcher. Stokesley School has also provided part-funding for my MA in Education, and as such, it may be assumed that I would not want to produce research that paints the school in a negative light. I would declare, and have, very openly signified my pride in being Headteacher of Stokesley School. Still, I am acutely aware of the reputational risks as a researcher, as a senior leader within a multi-academy trust and to my school if I am deemed to have misrepresented the data in any way.

1.4 Quality markers of qualitative research

In planning my dissertation, I have continually considered the quality markers associated with qualitative research. After all, it would be a significant waste of time to produce a dissertation that is not worth reading. As such, my research must demonstrate authenticity by considering its credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Sparkes and Smith, 2009).

1.5 Aim and Objectives

Having developed my research literacy and through exposure to research as part of my master's degree, I had surmised that developing the research literacy and capability of teachers would be an essential factor in sustainable school improvement. Still, I was unsure if that position was backed by research or supported by teaching colleagues. I aimed to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influenced the use of, and participation in, research of teachers that could benefit my leadership and others. This led me to refine the objectives that have become the core of my study.

1. To investigate the importance of research literacy and engagement in and to the English education system.
2. To explore teachers' experiences and perceptions on research literacy and engagement to understand better the factors that influence teachers' engagement with research in English schools.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In discussing teacher's engagement with research and the research literacy of teachers, different areas of research should be considered

2.1 Research in Education

In 1996, Professor David Hargreaves addressed the Teacher Training Agency at the organisation's annual lecture. "Teaching is not at present a research-based profession. I have no doubt that if it were, it would be more effective and satisfying," he claimed. Hargreaves compared the fields of medicine and education, citing clear distinctions between the two. In medicine he claimed "there is little difference between researchers and users, all are practitioners. In education by contrast researchers are rarely users and so there are major problems of communication" (Hargreaves, 1996, p.1). In concluding, Hargreaves references the evidence-based medicine notebook from Sackett and Haynes and concludes that if a similar approach were taken in education, it would be beneficial.

Writing the following year in the journal Seminars in Perinatology, Sackett outlined that the:

> "practice of evidence-based medicine is a process of life-long, self-directed learning in which caring for one's own patients creates the need for clinically important information about diagnosis, prognosis, therapy, and other clinical and health care issues, and in which its practitioners:
>
> 1. Convert these information needs into answerable questions;
>
> 2. Track down, with maximum efficiency, the best evidence with which to answer them (and making increasing use of secondary sources of the best evidence);
>
> 3. Critically appraise that evidence for its validity (closeness to the truth) and usefulness (clinical applicability);
>
> 4. Integrate the appraisal with clinical expertise and apply the results in clinical practice; and
>
> 5. Evaluate one's own performance." (Sackett, 1997, p.3)

Following Hargreaves's lecture, there was widespread criticism of the quality of educational research. After a change of government from Conservative to Labour, and writing on behalf of OFSTED, Chris Woodhead, the Chief Inspector of Schools, concluded that "Eminent academics…have expressed their serious concerns about the quality of much educational research that is published today. This study suggests they are right to be worried" and that much of the research published was "at best no more than an irrelevance and distraction" (Woodhead, 1998, P1).

Despite this report's clear conclusions, little progress was made in advancing the field of educational research.

Whilst the English initial teacher education standards from 2007 required trainee teachers to adopt a "constructively critical approach towards innovation" (TDA, 2007a), it was only teachers who sought to attain the status of Excellent and Advanced Skills Teachers that had to demonstrate a commitment to "research and evaluate innovative curricular practices and draw on research outcomes…to inform their own practice and that of colleagues" (TDA, 2007b).

The absence of research literacy in teachers was cited by Beauchamp (2013, p.4), who argued:

> "The position and value of research in teacher education – or training, as it more usually termed - in England is contested. The importance of research-informed provision has, arguably, diminished over time, and the knowledge base for teaching is often defined as practical, relevant and focused around contemporary, experiential knowledge of schooling."

In 2013 a paper by Dr Ben Goldacre reignited the discussion about research in education. Goldacre, a medical doctor, was part of a team that reviewed the government's approach to measuring the impact of policies and advocated for using randomised controlled trials to test the effectiveness of public policy intervention. Expanding on his work for the cabinet office, he claimed that there was a:

> "huge prize waiting to be claimed by teachers. By collecting better evidence about what works best, and establishing a culture where this evidence is used as a matter of routine, we can improve outcomes for children, and increase professional independence." (Goldacre, 2013, p.1)

Goldacre warned of the dangers of simply taking research at face value and explained that teachers need to be a 'critical consumer' of evidence, warning about the dangers of assuming that an intervention works when only proven in a single trial. Goldacre concludes that whilst there is an enthusiasm in some parts of teaching for evidence-based practice, the structures and support needed to make it sustainable and impactful are not present, noting that *"As a result, a small number of trials are done, but these exist as isolated islands, without enough bridges joining the people and strands of work together."* (Goldacre, 2013, pp.15-16)

2.2 A shift

Goldacres' research was gathered when the value of evidence-informed education was becoming more formally recognised in the English educational system. In 2011, the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, announced plans to establish an educational endowment foundation, formally launched in November 2011. The foundation was established to commission evidence-based research with "the promise to evaluate approaches and programmes that aim to improve the results of poorer pupils in schools" (EEF, 2017). Shortly afterwards, in 2013, ResearchED, a grassroots teacher-led organisation, was developed to bridge "the gap between research and practice in education" (ResearchEd, 2024).

During these years, there has been an increasing focus on UK government policy to use approaches and strategies derived from robust evidence to improve student outcomes. Whilst research undertaken (and the evidence derived) does not always lead to improvements in policy and practice, it can be effective in saving a significant amount of time, money, and resources from being wasted on ineffective methods. This can lead to more impactful and effective use of the limited resources available to schools and other organisations.

Knowing and understanding what does not work may be interpreted as not offering a solution to a problem, which may lead to the research being ignored, but this is a mistake. The Educational Endowment Foundation, as an example, has published the results of hundreds of evaluations, yet the majority of these had yielded results which were deemed too small to demonstrate an impact (Lortie-Forgues and Inglis, 2019); yet each piece of research can be used to enable teachers and school leaders to make more informed decisions about whether or not the type of strategies and interventions are likely to work in their context.

In the UK, we have seen a significant increase in interest and emphasis on generating robust evidence that enables teachers and educators to understand what will work in their context. This has been exemplified by work funded by organisations such as the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), The Institute for Employment Studies (IES) and the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3IE) (Gorard, 2020).

2.3 Good Intentions

Whilst the aim of these organisations was to support the development of evidence-informed practice, there is still concern about how teachers and leaders make skilled use of the research that is being presented. To make evidence-informed decisions, the reader has to be able to interrogate the research. The broader availability of research has not coincided with the development of teacher's research literacy. This was notably seen

when research summarised by the education endowment foundation noted that the impact of teaching assistants on overall progress was limited for the relatively expensive cost of the interventions provided. The conclusion of the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project, which was included in the summary evidence for the EEF report, was that teaching assistants had a negative impact on student progress, particularly for those students with special educational needs (Blatchford et al., 2009). Whilst this report led to a reduction in teaching assistants (TAs) nationally and cast doubt on the value of TAs, it was in large part due to the misinterpretation of the EEF headline in the teacher toolkit as leaders who we pressed for time digested a summary rather than the full conclusion of the findings which explained that teaching assistants "cannot easily outperform or compensate for school leaders' ineffective decision-making about TA deployment and preparation." (Webster et al., 2020, p.12)

In response to the initial findings of the DISS report, the Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants (MITA) project aimed to educate school leaders on the best ways to deploy teaching assistants, and after the project, the impact of teaching assistants was noted to be significantly higher than in the original DISS study. (Sharples et al., 2016)

2.4 Developing research literacy

The case above is one example of a situation where the summarised research interpretation led to some school leaders' knee-jerk reaction. School leaders are, after all, busy people with competing priorities. The allure of receiving easily digestible research and guidance from recognised (and government-funded) bodies is therefore appealing. Still, a dearth of accessible educational research means there is room for consultants and educational product marketing experts to disguise their expertise or anecdotal evidence as research in the form of documents such as case studies or reports. (Niesche, 2023)

Whilst both the standards for newly qualified teachers (DFE, 2019) and headteachers (DFE, 2020a) call for a more evidence-informed practice and strategies to be implemented, there has not been a government-led strategy to upskill teachers who began their career before the implementation of the early career teaching (ECT) framework which incorporated guidance on developing a degree of research literacy amongst new teachers. The focus on research is tokenistically extended to those undertaking qualifications under the national professional qualification (NPQ) framework, but explicit teaching of research literacy or how to undertake research is absent. Participants are presented with varying quality research prescribed by course leaders from different providers, leaving many participants without the skills to critically evaluate what has been presented.

To effectively use and engage with research, research literacy must be viewed as an essential element of teachers' practice and not as something externally driven or concerned only with discrete projects (Carter 2015).

Teachers, as professionals, should be required to critique research evidence actively. They can then apply and adapt research findings in their own contexts to implement effective teaching strategies. Teachers with solid research literacy skills can then discuss, rationalise, and evaluate their pedagogical approaches and strategies, underpinned by legitimate research knowledge, practice, and experience (Wilson et al. 2013).

Even if the ECT framework or NPQ courses develop the staff's research literacy, it is only sustainable if a research-based approach is integrated into a school's systems and culture. "In developing sustainable research cultures, enquiry needs to be interwoven into all structures, processes and systems within the school context as part of a critical pedagogic approach" (Evans et al., 2017, p.418). If we succeed in achieving this aim, the importance of well-trained 'research advocates', with the support of research professionals, cannot be underestimated (Nelson et al., 2015). These advocates must form part of school and multi-academy trust leadership teams to implement such cultural and structural changes. The research agenda needs to be recognised as an essential priority so that sufficient time, energy, and resources can be committed to realising its potential.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

In my introduction, I mentioned that my research approach was rooted in the epistemological conventions of the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism evolved through a critique of positivism (a paradigm based on measurement and reason where knowledge is exposed from an impartial and quantifiable observation of events) with a subjective perspective.

"Interpretivism is more concerned with in depth variables and factors related a context, it considers humans as different from physical phenomena as they create further depth in meanings with the assumption that human beings cannot be explored in a similar way to physical phenomena" (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020, p.41) and this is relevant when studying organisations, such as schools, with large numbers individuals who have their own interpretations and perspectives on events.

Interpretivism acknowledges the relevance of differences in culture and circumstance whilst also exploring the concept of divergent social realities, believing that individuals can interpret the knowledge and impact of events experienced differently, but this remains their reality. The simple premise underpinning this approach is explained by Blumer (1986), who states that people seek meaning in one another's actions rather than merely reacting to them. Our response may not be directly linked to the initial act. Still, it is influenced by the meaning we attribute, indicating that our response is informed by the symbolism or through the interpretation attributed to such actions.

3.2 Grounded Theory

My research uses a grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) method to provide a framework for drawing themes from the qualitative data obtained in my research. This research takes the form of an auto-ethnography. Still, it blends elements of case study methodology by incorporating the views of another teacher from my current school as participants in my research.

Grounded theory is a research method that allows the researcher to study a particular subject or process to discover new theories based on data analysis. (Charmaz & Henwood, 2017). "The method is designed to encourage researchers' persistent interaction with their data, while remaining constantly involved with their emerging analyses" (Charmaz and Bryant, 2010, p.1). This method fits very naturally with my role as a headteacher in school and a researcher, as I am persistently interacting with sources of data as part of my role. Still, the use of qualitative data sources, including semi-structured interviews and confessional tales (in the case of my auto-ethnographical elements), allows an opportunity to code the responses to identify key themes.

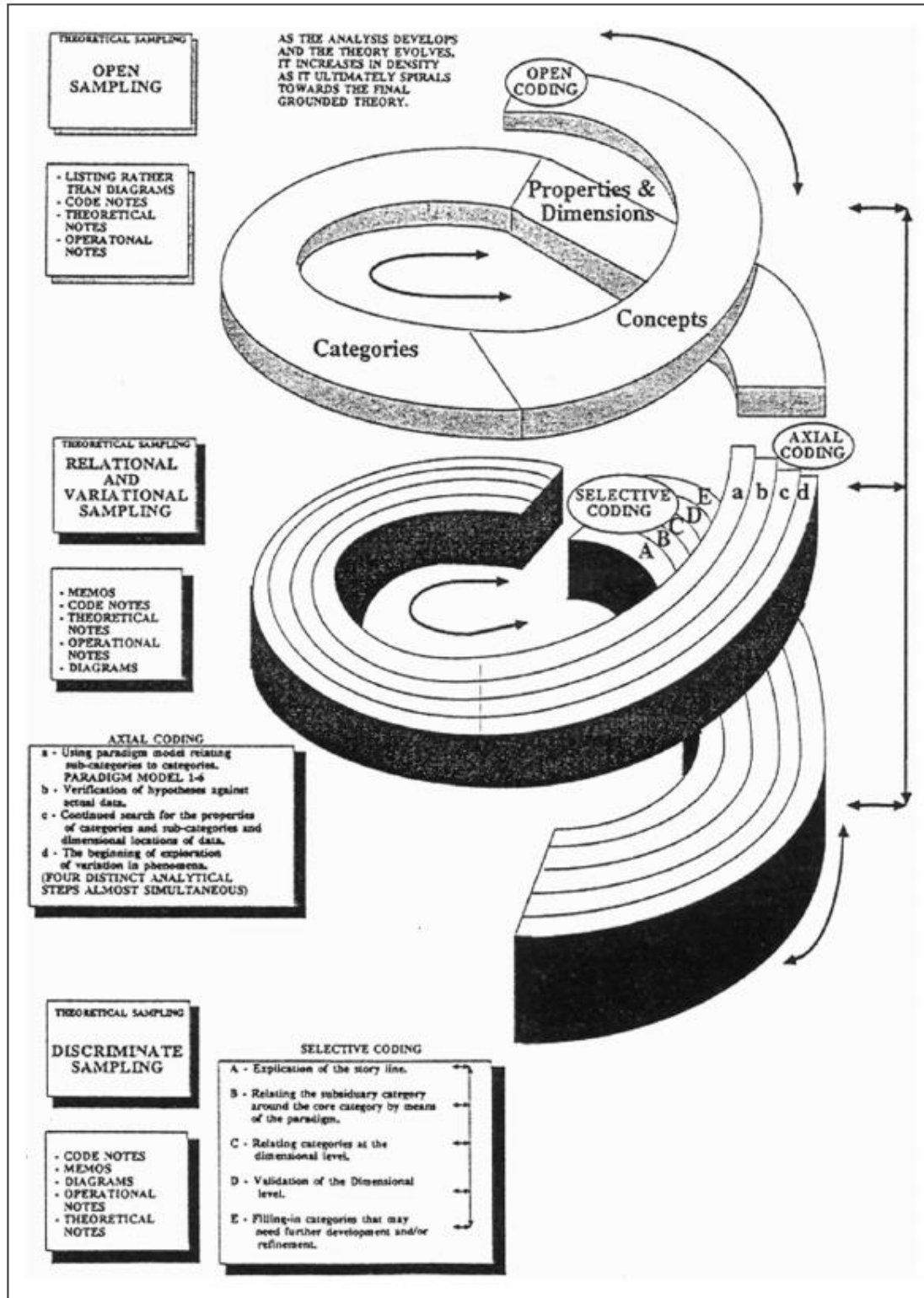The approach taken in this research closely follows Waring's helix model illustrated below.

Figure 1. Waring's 2003 Helix Model adapted from Buckley and Waring (2013)

3.3 Constant Comparison

Constant comparison is a fundamental concept of grounded theory and is made up of four critical stages as described by Glaser (1965, p437):

> "(1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory"

This concept was applied to the data to generate categories. In the first instance, ideas and concepts emerging from the data were notated in hand-drawn diagrams, which facilitated the consideration of different aspects and relationships, as well as their organisation and hierarchy.
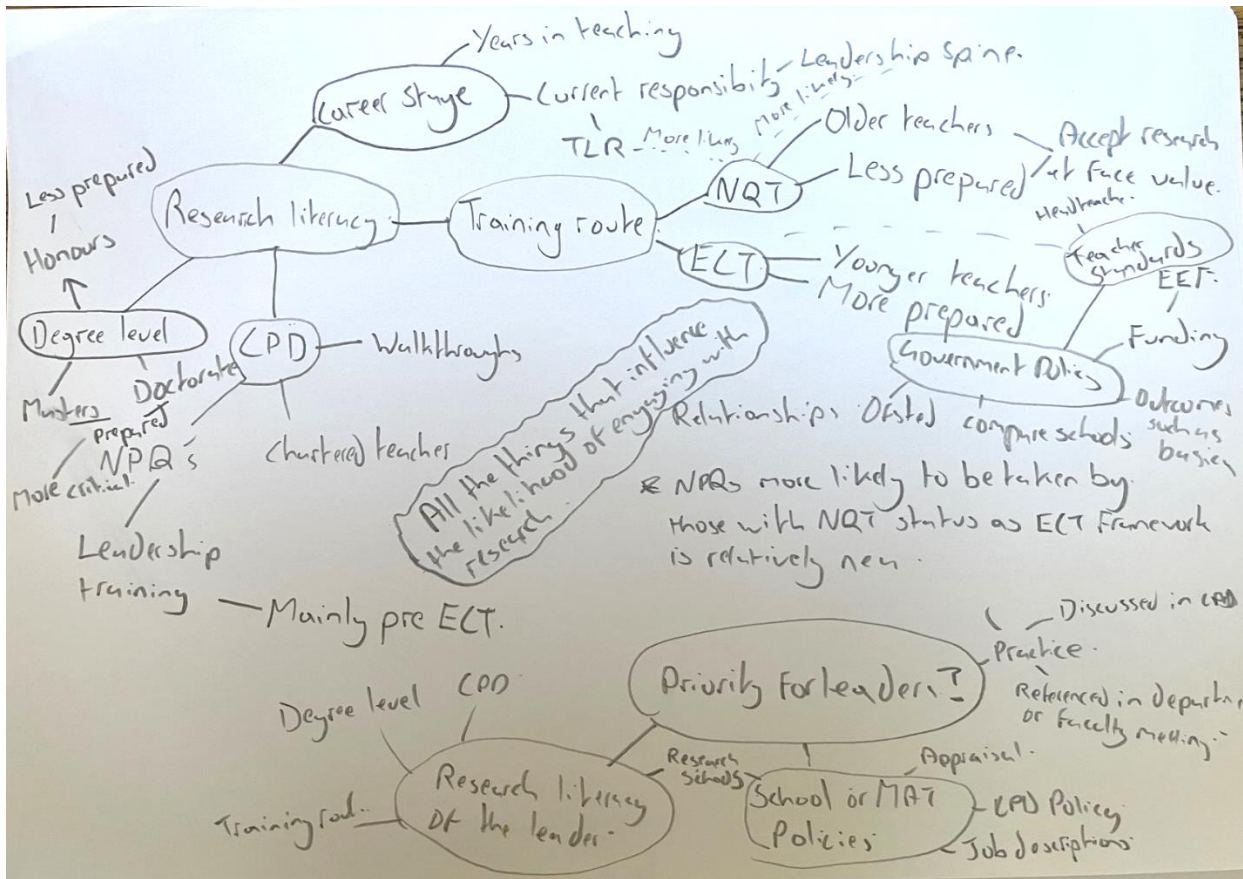
Figure 2. Hand-drawn data derived from analysis of interviews

3.4 Coding in grounded theory

The responses were coded using the constant comparative method (see figure 2). This method's nature and the asynchronous nature of semi-structured interviews mean that various codes and themes emerged along the way. These were refined through the constant comparative methods, as shown below.

Figure 3. The codes and themes that emerged from the constant comparison process

Data were imported into NVIVO to assist in the analysis process, and the themes and codes were refined. Examples of this coding process for semi-structured interviews are in Appendix B.

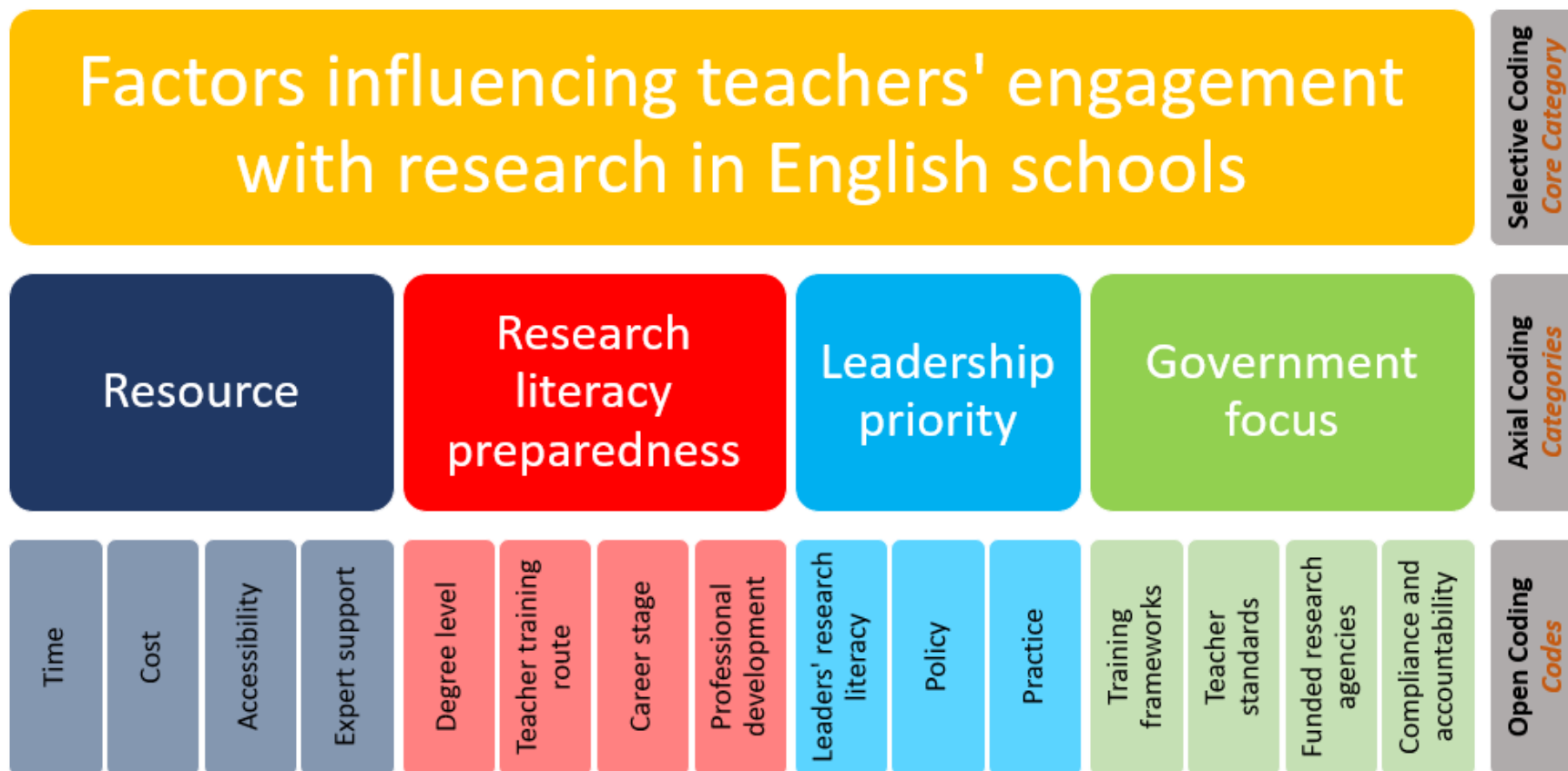| Name	Files	References
(Theme) Government focus	**5**	**34**
Compliance and accountability	5	4
Funded research agencies	5	14
Teacher standards	5	3
Training frameworks	5	13
(Theme) Leadership priority	**5**	**91**
Leader's research literacy	5	43
Policy	5	21
Practice	5	27
(Theme) Research literacy preparadness	**5**	**126**
Career Stage	5	23
Degree level	5	28
Professional development	5	34
Teacher training route	5	41
(Theme) Resource	**5**	**76**
Accessibility	5	9
Cost	5	13
Expert support	5	7
Time	5	47

Figure 4. Results obtained during the coding of sources using NVIVO

In addition to coding responses, the software was used to record annotations as an aide memoir for interpreting the codes and themes that were developing.

> **Teacher 1** 12:59
> Well, I want the time to read it properly and also maybe have someone who I can talk to about it before I would then put it into practice. So read it in advance, is this what you mean, and then either have an opportunity with the science department if it was based on my science teaching, or with the pastoral team if it was something to do with my role to discuss it? And then yeah, we'll definitely take it on board.

Annotations

Item	Content
1	Answer suggests a degree of analysis would be considered before implementation but it is fairly basic and does not suggest considerations of bias, reliability, validity, review of quality markers etc.

Figure 5. Example of annotation of data in NVIVO

3.5 Selecting participants

A group of participants was invited from the school staff team representing teachers of varying levels of experience and responsibility. Consequently, they experienced different training routes and induction frameworks and studied to various degree levels.

Participant	Years in teaching	Training route	Induction Framework	Degree level	NPQ	School Role	Research Method
Researcher	20	Degree with QTS	NQT	Completing Masters	NPQH	Headteacher	Autoethnography Confessional Tale
Teacher 1	38	Degree and PGCE	NQT	Bachelor's degree	x	Middle Leader	Semi-structured interview
Teacher 2	20	Degree and GTP	NQT	Bachelor's degree	x	Assistant Headteacher	Semi-structured interview
Teacher 3	15	Degree and PGCE	NQT	Doctorate	NPQSL	Assistant Headteacher	Semi-structured interview
Teacher 4	12	Degree and PGCE	NQT	Masters	NPQLTD	Lead Practitioner	Semi-structured interview
Teacher 5	2	Degree and SCITT	ECT	Bachelor's degree	x	Teacher	Semi-structured interview

Table 1. A brief profile of the participants and the research methods used.

In conducting semi-structured interviews, I had a set of interview questions for each participant; however, the semi-structured nature allowed me to explore emergent themes throughout the interview. The questions explored during the interviews are listed in Appendix A.

Transcripts of these interviews were generated using Otter.AI software and subsequently analysed by hand and then in NVIVO qualitative data analysis software (an example is contained in Appendix B).

3.6 Ethics Approval

All research was conducted in line with the ethical standards set out by the University of Leeds and having gained ethics approval for my research project. Copies of signed ethical approval, sample participant information and consent forms used can be seen in Appendices C, D and E respectively.

Chapter Four: My story and my school

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present my research story. The method is perhaps slightly unconventional as I will seek to blend elements of my literature review, quotes from the semi-structured interviews and my own experience into my 'confessional tale'. There is an important blend here, because the processes, standards and research referenced have all been a formative part of my journey. The interview quotes reinforce specific points relating to the emerging themes and demonstrate the inextricable links between those themes.

My route to headship has been far from straightforward and may appear unconventional. Still, it is my sincere hope that in my attempt to provide a candid account that is true to myself, my approach, and my style, you will find points of resonance or relatability that engage you in the key questions that this study seeks to address. It has taken 20 years for me to go from an embodiment of the PE teacher stereotype to a headteacher who feels ashamed to have taken so long to appreciate the importance of research in education.

4.2 Story Telling

This tale of school leadership will describe my journey through this research project through storytelling, enabling me to depict the context of my study and my thoughts and feelings, which are those of a headteacher and researcher. This dual role is significant in my story, but I believe it is a substantial factor in discussing the implications of the research. Participant observation allows the researcher to comprehend the challenges of a group, which is not possible with other methods (Pryce, 1979).

Storytelling allows an opportunity to articulate the emotional impact of research processes on an educational leader to provide a greater understanding of why these responses are an essential part of the dialogue. Guba and Lincoln (2005) described how storytelling techniques can:

> "break the binary between science and literature, to portray the contradiction and truth of human experience, to break the rules in the service showing, even partially, how real human beings cope with both the eternal verities of human existence and the daily irritations and tragedies of living that existence" (Guba and Lincoln, 2005, p.211).

To understand why the research agenda has been slow to develop in education, you need to understand the lived experience of those responsible for ensuring it is developed, and whilst my story and the voices of my staff team may not represent those of others in education, it will help to pose questions or create suggestions that may benefit others in

the pursuit of a, truly, research and evidence-informed approach. Charmaz and Bryant (2010) describe storytelling as a narrative process of enquiry, which they consider to help the reader understand the events that occur during research. Sparkes and Smith describe this narrative inquiry as "a complex genre that routinely contains a point and characters along with a plot constructing events that unfold sequentially over time and in space to provide an overarching explanation or consequence" (Sparkes and Smith, 2009, p. 2).

4.3 A confessional tale

In attempting to provide an account of my own experiences, I am presenting a confessional tale (Van Maanen, 1988), which places my experiences at the heart of the research. Confessions are offered because they give a deep insight, a more 'honest' portrayal of the ethnographic process. This is strongly linked to my continuous reflexivity, which, as Lynch described, is: "attained through philosophical introspection, an inward-looking, sometimes confessional and self-critical examination of one's own beliefs and assumptions" (Lynch, 2000, p. 29). This is my story.

4.4 An origin story

I have been in education for 40 years, firstly as a learner when entering a nursery school at four and now as the headteacher of a secondary school and sixth form college. I had many experiences during that time, including attending a Methodist School primary school with faith-based solid approaches, completing GCSEs and A Levels in a non-denominational secondary school and sixth form college.

I had always enjoyed school and was inspired to become a teacher through the experience of a handful of highly effective and impactful teachers. I knew the difference a good teacher could make as I had directly benefited from it throughout my schooling. I was fortunate that the teachers in my primary school were very good at providing a safe and consistent learning environment that inspired me to want to learn. As such, I left primary school full of confidence and destined for the top secondary school sets.

As a child, my father's influence hugely influenced the development of my personality and character. My Dad was a robust male role model. Having left school with little qualifications, he enrolled on a plumbing course at a local college. By the time I was old enough to understand what he did, he was the director of his own business with 15 employees. He had his own bathroom showroom and was a well-known community figure, having played football for Richmond Town. His face and those of his teammates adorned the local chip shop walls in the annual team photo, and his membership of Round Table had created a network of new friends from all across the town. On New Year's Eve, the members of Round Table met at a hotel in York and would sit close enough to the

gathering of slightly inebriated males to hear their jokes, listen to their tales and see their close bond.

This is important in my tale as it formed part of the early definition of what it meant to be successful: earn good money, make lots of friends, work hard, and play harder. Academic discussions were not a discourse to which I was exposed.

Sport and physical activity were always significant within my family, and I was heavily involved in team sports, playing hockey and rugby to a high standard. Again, these team sports reinforced the early markers of success that my father had laid out. My teammates were friends; we had a common goal, and we trained hard and socialised hard afterwards, regardless of the match's outcome.

4.5 Losing control

My performance in GCSEs was strong, but combined with sporting success, it created an arrogance that made me feel (almost) invincible. Therefore, when challenges arose in the sixth form, I could not deal with the feelings of failure. The death of a close personal friend and then an important family member, having dropped Level of mathematics because I found it too tricky, earning good money in a job as a lifeguard and wanting to emulate those older than me who would finish a work day with a drink at the pub. These factors led to a relatively rapid decline in my academic performance. As a consequence, I left the sixth form with two A Levels. Better than nothing, and the university I had applied for was still willing to take me, so off I went to Sheffield. I was going to Sheffield to complete a computing degree. Not because this was a career path that I desperately wanted to follow but because it was one my parents felt would provide a good job and steady income. Unfortunately, I could not break the patterns of behaviour that had contributed to my poor A-level results and dropped out of the course after one year. I had finally reached the bottom.

After returning home and having honest conversations with my parents, I decided to give university one more go. I would follow the path I had always wanted and train to become a PE teacher. My choices were limited to what was available in clearing, but I could access a course at De Montfort University. The bachelor's degree I studied was a four-year programme with teaching practices spread across the four years. As such, I was fully invested in becoming a PE teacher. The BA Physical Education course had a comprehensive mixture of students. Still, a passion for sport was evident in the overwhelming majority. As was typical of the era, the culture around amateur team sports also involved extensive periods of socialisation, typically involving alcohol. Having grown up in a rural market town in North Yorkshire, this form of socialisation was engrained from an early age and, unfortunately, made me predisposed to socialising rather than studying.

The result was affectionately known as a drinker's degree. A lower second-class bachelor's degree, which I had only really taken seriously in the latter stages of my course.

During these four years, I was given excellent feedback on my teaching practices. It led me to see more benefits in the experiential learning elements of the course than in reading books or research documents to understand how to be a better teacher. I would learn from my mistakes or be advised and sometimes corrected by those with more experience in the schools I taught in. I needed to understand the teaching points of skills and create resources to help me deliver these. Suppose I try to recall a stage in my training where my practice was impacted by research. In that case, the only example I can cite is reading a compulsory research paper on learning styles and hurriedly returning home from the lecture to try and incorporate the new knowledge into my resources for my teaching practice. I did this without questioning the source's validity and reliability, researching other approaches, and knowing if there was any contradictory research. It was what effective teachers planned for, and I would do it.

It would be wrong to suggest that my university did not teach us about the importance of research. It is simply that I cannot remember it, and I did the simplest dissertations to complete my bachelor's degree with minimum effort. In summary, I had convinced myself that I did not need research or good research literacy to be a good teacher.

My first year of teaching was in the NQT phase of induction (as opposed to the current ECT programme, which is over two years). During this induction period, there was very little (other than doing my job to a good standard) that I needed to do to pass. I would be observed three times and meet with other ECTs and my mentor on a half-termly basis. None of these meetings involved any discussion about research. We may share some best practices, such as what we felt worked well for us, but that was as evidential as the talks would be.

After passing that NQT year, I would spend most of my CPD time involved in whole school training sessions with a broad focus on topics such as differentiation or moderation, often with a lack of enthusiasm for things that I believed I did intrinsically as a new, fresh teacher but older colleagues were very dismissive of. As a result, there may have been references to research missed as others, and I went through the motions of attending 'professional development'. When I became a school leader, my thoughts about research began to change. This coincided with my involvement in National Professional qualifications such as 'Leading from the Middle' and NPQH. From my own experience in schools, I could cite numerous initiatives that had been launched by excited new leaders (including ones of my own) that had been based upon a visit to another school that does this.... and look at how good their results are so we need to do this too. I was also inundated with impressive case studies from companies changing the face of education, and I wanted to see how their products could help us improve outcomes. In the face of

increasing stress and pressure as I progressed into senior leadership positions, the idea of there being one replicable way of making a school better, regardless of the context, seemed more appealing. My formal journey to headship through the NPQH programme coincided with the launch of the Education Endowment Foundation, and for the first time, I began to question some of the research I had been presented with. When I later became a Deputy Headteacher and began searching for my first headship, I noticed that many of the posts had a master's degree as a desirable qualification. At this point, I was 16 years into teaching, and my reflections on my university days were that I had sold myself short in my academic ability and achievement, so I took the opportunity presented to me to begin my master's qualification. I was ready to shake the stereotype of the PE teacher and engage in academia.

I was taught how to access, read and critically evaluate research papers, which I would not previously have even known how to access. I started to question the ease with which I had accepted the "evidence" previously presented to me as a precursor to significant change being implemented. I quickly realised this would be essential to my work as a school leader. I understood more about myself as a leader because I had considered my views of ontology and epistemology concerning education, and this moment was pivotal in clearly establishing the principles and values of the research-informed school I would like to lead.

4.6 Why does this matter?

In the context of my research, this long introduction matters because the events within it have shaped my views. Having experienced 'academic success' at primary school, I felt shame that I had squandered my potential at the end of my schooling. As I progressed through my school leadership journey, I realised that I would likely be competing against others with a much more robust academic history than I have. I started to feel that it may hinder me. In my formative years, I was not exposed to scholarly discussion. My family were from a working-class background, and academia was not prized. Indeed, my journey toward the master's began at the suggestion of a headteacher who told me I may not get invited to headship interviews without a master's qualification. This could appear to be a self-serving folly. Something to make me appear better than I am. 'Look at me; I engage in research; I have a master's degree; I have my National Professional Qualification for Headship.' Whilst I told those assembled on the first day of the master's qualification that I was there to prove to myself I was more than my 2:2, I now feel like this is the most important qualification I have undertaken as a leader. Not because it will enable me to become a headteacher. I have achieved that without completing the master's degree. It is essential because it has led me to understand research. It has taught me the value of research and made me determined to apply what I have learned in my leadership.

It has brought about new feelings of shame. Why did I not know this before? Why did I read that one case study (written by the company selling the product) and blindly accept that the solution they offered was right for a previous school? Why did I spend that money on that technology without a solid evidence base? Why did I accept that another leader brought in changes that added significant workload and stress to the whole staff team simply because they had visited another school that did this thing, and they were outstanding?

I need to provide this degree of honesty and reflection. Could my view on the importance of research in education be construed as an opportunity to present myself as a better leader without having the substance to back it up? Of course, it could. Any form of communication has at its heart an attempt to persuade, but I am not interested in my own self-promotion at this point. As a headteacher, I feel the substantial weight of responsibility to improve my school continuously; I feel the need to ensure we spend money wisely, we learn from our mistakes, and we develop confident, happy and effective staff. I have a responsibility to serve our community and support our learners to be the best they can be, and I can best do that by creating the environment and culture that allows my staff team to be the best they can be. Because of my journey and ability to bring about change as the head of an organisation, developing research literacy and evidence-informed practice is now my main priority. Like the doctors in Goldacre's (2013) paper who drove best practice through "eminence, charisma and personal experience" (Goldacre, 2013, p.8), I have come to a view that evidence-based education is vital if our profession wants to make a difference to those we serve. It is not so much about wishing to be seen with professional status. Still, it is about wanting to understand and make a difference so that together, we can improve the education of the next generation. Suppose we pay lip service by occasionally using the EEF teaching toolkit to justify a decision. In that case, we will not reap the benefits that could be realised from a truly research-literate, research-informed and research-engaged workforce.

4.7 Attempts to embed a research driven approach

In 2017, I was invited to attend a seminar at Huntington School. Huntington was one of the first 'research schools' in North of England and was part of the Research Schools Network. The day was eye-opening as various staff members discussed the randomised controlled trials they had developed, how they used research to inform practice and how this was built into the policy and practice of the school. Indeed, every member of staff, teaching and support, had a research-based performance management objective. What a great idea, I thought.

When, as Deputy Head, I announced in an SLT meeting that this research objective should be replicated in our school, my suggestion was met with broad approval. So, in 2018, some staff had a research-based appraisal target. Aren't we progressive? Did

everyone know how to conduct their own research? Did we train staff in research literacy? No. But if the outstanding schools down the road are doing this, then why not replicate their headline? There we go; now we both do research.

Of course, there was a stark difference between the two approaches. Huntington School was a research school—it was in the name. The head believed passionately in the power of research to improve education. The school's calendar, induction processes, CPD, structure, leadership roles, funding, culture, values, and school priorities were all strongly aligned with the research agenda.

At Malton School, we had multiple priorities that would benefit from a more research-based approach. Still, the priority was not to spend time developing the staff's research literacy. So, some well-intentioned research objectives for a small number of staff led to some interesting findings and the sharing of best practice. Still, the research agenda did not develop much beyond that. As school leaders, we did not have the appetite and could not afford the time to experiment with research in school. We would continue to look to the best practices of others but with a slightly more research-informed way of enquiring rather than taking something at face value.

The headteacher of Malton School is undoubtedly one of the most impactful and influential leaders I have worked with. He is also an academic. However, using research in schools has not been a prominent enough agenda item to merit the investment in time. That educational research has not provided a conclusive framework for successful teaching is perhaps one of the reasons that it has not been a priority for most schools. Whilst compliance and performance tables dominate the thoughts and fears of school leaders, it is perhaps easy to understand why randomised controlled trials and taking risks to test theories seem dangerous and even unethical (if they lead to worse outcomes for a group of students).

4.8 Taking the lead

My master's degree has overlapped with the start of my own headship. The opportunity to embed a research-based approach is more firmly in my control, but barriers still exist. My dissertation research has provided the opportunity to test some of the theories about the barriers to embedding a research-informed approach to school improvement by interviewing five colleagues at different stages in their teaching careers.

4.9 Is it just me or…?

The benefit of being a headteacher researcher is that I have a 'captive' audience for my musings. Discussions with leaders and teachers over the past year started a dialogue about the factors that impacted my school's research use. Still, my evidence base was initially comprised of anecdotes. The semi-structured interviews presented an

opportunity to provide qualitative evidence and establish potential themes. As a result of the constant comparative methods detailed in Chapter Three, four key themes emerged. The **resources** available to conduct research, the **research literacy preparedness** of teachers, whether this was a **leadership priority** in the school or MAT and how **government focus**, through policy frameworks, accountability and compliance mechanisms, influenced the perceived importance of teachers engaging in research.

4.10 Resources

Time

This was the barrier that was most frequently mentioned. Teacher 1 replied with 'Time' when discussing the barriers to engaging with research. If someone presented her with research they thought was good, she would take the time to read it. 'I want the time to read it properly and also maybe have someone who I can talk to about it before I would then put it into practice.' Teacher 2 described how it is essential to 'I think time is really important…. time to read, time to discuss, time to plan'. Teacher three explained that 'having the time to spend looking at research is difficult and translating it into what you want to do in the classroom, as well, is important.' Teacher 4 described how a lack of time made her more accepting of cumulative research summaries.

> 'I've got a master's degree and I'm very critical of things when I read them, and just make sure it's not something that is applied. But to be honest, with being quite time-poor, if it's accepted by something like the EEF, which obviously takes lots of research into account, and if it's something from them, I do kind of take the EEF more at face value because I know what they do'.

Money

Education-linked organisations are increasingly trying to find ways to demonstrate engagement with evidence-based approaches. Consequently, there are explicit references to educational research in their associated journals, such as 'Leader' from the Association of School and College Leaders and 'Impact' from the Chartered College of Teaching. Whilst these efforts may expose members to articles about (or summaries of) educational research, they will often not include the research project itself. As such, those reading the articles may not be critical consumers of the research itself. For many sources of educational research, you would either need a subscription to a specific journal or be prepared to pay for each piece of research downloaded. Taylor Francis is a source of a significant number of educational journals. These include the 'The Journal of Educational Research' and the 'British Journal of Educational Studies' but online institutional access to these journals can cost over £1000 per journal, which is an

expensive outlay for a school and provides access to only one of the hundreds of journals related to the field of educational research.

Teacher 5 explained that to access research literature, 'I would have to go and ask someone else who I know would have it because I feel like I wouldn't have access from my uni[versity] account like I used to' whilst Teacher 3 cited examples of trying to access research articles from online journals but 'you are blocked all the time because you have to pay for your articles'.

Expert support

In the interviews, some acknowledgement was that support may be required to get the most out of working with research. Teacher 1 described how she would like to 'also maybe have someone who I can talk to about it before I would then put it into practice'. Having school support is important when developing staff research literacy. It is helpful to have someone who knows what they are doing. Regarding larger-scale, randomised controlled trials, it is vital to source additional support and expertise if it does not exist in the institution. Developing partnerships between schools and academic research institutions would not only provide access to expert staff. Still, it could alleviate the cost issues described above by providing access to existing resources such as university libraries or online repositories.

4.11 Research Literacy Preparedness

Degree Level

There was an apparent distinction between how participants with master's degrees and doctorates could articulate research literacy concepts and cite engagement examples while applying them. Teacher 3, who has achieved a doctorate, was clear in describing what she would consider when reviewing research, discussing 'methodologies', 'reflexivity', 'bias', and 'peer review'. These terms are used in academic research reviews and were not mentioned by staff with bachelor's degrees despite the same question about research considerations before application.

Teacher training route

Teacher training routes are diverse and can range from four-year degrees, including qualified teacher status, to programmes such as the SCITT programme, where trainees learn on the job. Interviews and review of course frameworks suggest that the varying routes have different levels of focus on engaging in and with research. Teacher 2 described how the GTP route involved weekly sessions with a mentor, but these had focussed on some examples of best practices from other schools rather than referencing any research. The sessions focused on 'common themes, difficulties that people were experiencing in the first year rather than research-led advice, guidance'. Teacher 3

described her PGCE route as one that had some reference to research in the discussion of pedagogical strategies 'but there wasn't any sort of research modules or anything like that where we did our own piece of research'. Teacher 5 was an ECT who had just completed his two-year induction process after taking a SCITT route into teaching following his degree. He described how engaging with research regularly was part of the expectations under the SCITT course framework and how he would have to complete weekly readings of research. Reading and making notes on the research was 'checked off' as part of the induction process.

Career stage

The recent development of research-focused training frameworks meant that staff who had been teaching for longer were less likely to have been exposed to research or to have developed their research literacy. Teacher 5, who had just entered the profession, referenced multiple examples of research engagement. Teacher 1, who had been in the profession for 38 years, could not provide many examples of where research had informed her practice. This should not be considered to be a poor reflection on Teacher 1. The literature review clarifies that this focus on research has only emerged relatively recently, and previous models focused on the reflective teacher considering what works well. My confessional tale highlights the lack of exposure to research for most of my 20 years in teaching.

Professional Development

My exposure to research has predominantly come about through exposure to professional development, such as the NPQ programmes and my master's degree. I can consider the responses of Teacher 2, who has been a teacher for the same duration as me, as a senior leader but could not articulate research literacy clearly. Teacher 4 explained that engaging in an NPQ 'has given me that space and taught me about that way of thinking that you don't just run with an idea'.

4.12 Leadership priority

Leaders' research literacy

If research literacy was so important, why was I lacking it? Reflecting on my educational journey, I see it was not a required skill set. Yes, I was taught to analyse sources in A-Level History, and I had been introduced to research in my degree, but to really embed a skill requires practice and repetition, and this simply had not been the case. Was I alone in this? Well, if you don't understand research and aren't a research-literate leader, then you are less likely to be able to engage in the process meaningfully. The previous section highlights some evident differences in research literacy between teachers who have attained different degree levels.

For research to become a feature of school and educational improvement, leaders must value it. Reformed national professional qualifications make clear that the skills that they expect leaders to acquire are routed firmly in "both the best available educational research and on additional guidance from the Expert Advisory Group and other sector representatives" (DfE 2020b, P.6). The framework lists extensive sources of research which have informed the evolution of the standards to help justify the competencies and have frequent reference to research and evidence-informed practice. Indeed, evidence-informed frequently appears when discussing professional development and classroom pedagogy. Still, there is no specific reference to developing the research literacy of staff as part of this professional development. While leaders must make decisions informed by evidence, it is also important that leaders can critically evaluate the evidence they are presented with to make an informed decision.

My personal journey to becoming research literate has instilled in me a deep belief in its importance for school improvement. This belief has led me to initiate discussions on research literacy with senior leaders and the teams they manage. The feedback from teacher 1, who noted the increased emphasis on research, was reassuring. However, I am aware that this shift in focus would not have been possible without my own development of research literacy.

Policy and practice within schools

In 20 years of teaching, I have never received any school-based training on research literacy. I have been a consumer of the evidence that has been presented to me, but I have often taken it at face value because of the perceived status of the person presenting me with the evidence. There is an argument that we do not need all staff to be critical consumers of evidence. There is a danger that we could spend more time debating research's validity, reliability and context than using it to inform our decision-making. However, research literacy is about more than consuming research; it is a tool that helps teachers become researchers. Suppose researchers understand that single case studies should not be generalised to provide evidence of something that would work well in every school. In that case, some of the power of research is in understanding how to conduct it legitimately in your own setting so that you can share best practice, at least within your setting, that have demonstrated measurable and valid impact. Yet we can't expect teachers to take a research-based or evidence-informed approach to their own improvement if we don't upskill them to become research-literate. Teacher 2 explained that he had seen the 'benefit in recent years of working with our changing practice based around good research, and therefore best practice' but felt that unless it were part of the culture, there would be conflicts for those who see it as an add-on. Teacher 3 explained that for it to be part of the culture, it needs to be evident in the systems: 'You could embed it within your CPD program…so that you enable people to do their own action research-based projects.'

4.13 Government focus

Training frameworks

Through the Department for Education in England, the UK government is responsible for prescribing the standards and training frameworks for teachers. In January 2019, the Department for Education published the Early Career Framework, which would transform the induction process of new teachers. The framework was the first to state that to develop as professionals explicitly; teachers should be "[e]ngaging critically with research and discussing evidence with colleagues." (DFE, 2019)

Despite changes to the ECT framework, the Teacher's Standards document, which was updated in December 2021, does not reference this engagement with research.

Teacher 1 was an experienced middle leader teaching for 38 years. When discussing her induction period, she struggled to recall any explicit examples of research being used but assumed that some of her training was linked to research. 'I can't remember specifically, but I know we had to do… we definitely had to do two long pieces of work, which must have been based on some sort of research.'

Teacher 4 encountered some references to research in her training in 2013, but these were often presented as the way to do things rather than a critical evaluation of the research. She did recall that she was asked to complete a research project as part of her PGCE course, but that 'it wasn't done brilliantly. It was something that would not stand any kind of academic rigour'.

These discussions demonstrate that research literacy and engagement with research are relatively new additions to teacher training and induction. This has implications for generations of teachers who may not have the skills to locate, review, or conduct meaningful research in their settings. If these older generations of staff are to learn these skills, they will need to be delivered or facilitated by their schools.

Teacher standards

Teacher standards were extensively referenced earlier in this chapter, but it was noted that the lack of reference to research-based practice in the standards may influence the value teachers place on it. Teacher five, an ECT, commented that it was exemplified in the ECT framework, but when it came down to being signed off against the teacher standards, noting, 'It's just funny how this isn't part of the teacher standards, we spent so long doing research as part of the ECT years and then when we were signed off against the teacher standards, and now I've looked at them for next year with performance management it doesn't mention it.' This strange juxtaposition of the framework and

teaching standards means that new teachers are perhaps more likely to see research as a bolt onto their induction process as it is not explicitly a requirement of teaching.

Funded research agency

Government-funded research agencies provide a clear commitment to using research for school improvement. As cited in earlier documents, the most frequently mentioned of these is the EEF. The impact of the EEF was noted in multiple interviews, but it was reported most frequently in interviews with teacher leaders who had engaged in an NPQ programme. Teacher 3, a leader who has a doctorate and has taken part in multiple NPQ programmes, described the EEF as an opportunity for staff 'dipping their toe into that because it has been made user-friendly and because, you know, all the infographics are really clear on the benefit of that intervention.' Teacher 4, a leader who has a master's degree and has completed multiple NPQs, described how 'the EEF stuff was quite a lot of … your big systematic reviews that take into account lots of different research' and explained that she was likely to take these at face value as she understands the process.

Compliance and Accountability

Teacher three described how the government emphasis is not strong enough on a system level but is evident in some forms of policy and accountability. 'when you read the white papers and some of the things from OFSTED that the government are publishing, that's all very well rooted in research.'

Organisations such as OFSTED enforce elements of compliance and accountability from the Department for Education. A phrase often shared among school leaders when referencing OFSTED is that you must 'tighten to attain a good judgement then relax to become outstanding'. This refers to the culture of compliance within the British Education system. As described by Alexander (2004), the Department for Education and other institutions such as OFSTED "have elevated the quintessentially pragmatic mantra 'what works' to the status of ultimate criterion for judging whether a practice is educationally sound; and the word 'compliance'—not to mention sanctions such as 'special measures' or withdrawal of that accreditation by which compliance is enforced-feature prominently in the procedural vocabulary" (Alexander, 2004, p.9) of these institutions.

Many school leaders have ultimately seen the OFSTED inspection handbook as a check box exercise to ensure compliance. This exercise has consumed the available time of leaders and school staff as they try to evidence compliance with each slightly different iteration of the inspection framework. While OFSTED has been careful to remove references to specific strategies in the inspection handbook (such as differentiation), the handbook now cites multiple other documents, including OFSTED's own research papers, which then serve as another checklist for compliance. Notably, OFSTED's 'Research for

education inspection framework' provides even more criteria based on research summaries.

Effective teaching

Research on teaching effectiveness suggests that achievement is likely to be maximised when **teachers actively present material** and **structure** it by:

- providing overviews and/or reviews of objectives
- outlining the content to be covered and signalling transitions between different parts of the lesson
- calling attention to main ideas
- reviewing main ideas.

Figure 6: OFSTED Research informed criteria for structured teaching (OFSTED, 2019 p.14)

As a school leader, I thoroughly understand the importance of compliance, particularly regarding safeguarding health and safety. Compliance is essential in specific domains. Still, it can also be the 'thing' that limits innovation and creativity. If there is already an evidence-informed rationale for what constitutes an 'outstanding' quality of education, why would you take a risk by deviating from that winning formula and engaging in a randomised controlled trial?

If I reflect on the school-led training and professional development experiences I have received over the past 20 years, the majority have been on behaviour, expectations, differentiation, or scaffolding and assessment. The rationale for these things has usually been that they are school priorities. They are school priorities because when we look at the good or outstanding criteria for judging schools, these are the things we could do better.

4.14 Leaders create the culture

In the language of school leadership, the terms 'research-based' and 'evidence-informed' are now used almost interchangeably.

The OFSTED inspection handbook references research on multiple occasions to justify the judgement criteria on a particular area of focus. When considering the curriculum, "Inspectors will focus on what our inspection experience and **research** show are the most important factors to consider." (DfE 2023)

The Headteacher standards (often applied to others in senior leadership roles for appraisal) state that Headteachers must "establish and sustain high-quality, expert teaching across all subjects and phases, built on an **evidence-informed** understanding of effective teaching and how pupils learn" (DfE 2020a)

The Oxford English Dictionary defines evidence as "The available facts, circumstances, etc, indicating whether or not a thing is true or valid." (Oxford Compact English Dictionary, 1996, p.338). My recurring question about this evidence-informed approach is how can you be evidence-informed if you are not research literate? If evidence is defined as something true or valid, you must be able to assess the validity of the evidence you have been presented with.

4.11 Barriers to developing research literacy

My stance on research has only changed due to my engagement and immersion in my master's degree. Before this, I was blissfully unaware of where to find research, how to interrogate it, and how to conduct it and as such, I was pretty dismissive of its value. Like Goldacre's doctors in the 50s, I would follow the guidance of the most charismatic teaching elders and find out what worked well. The reason I remained research illiterate until my 42nd year is that it was only when I became a Deputy Head that I worked for a leader that placed overt value in being research literate and wanted to invest in me to become so by subsidising my entry to a master's degree yet even in this school, where such investment indicates a recognition of the value of research literacy, such professional development was voluntary and not afforded to all staff.

4.12 Research literacy is not a priority

Despite my passion for this topic, I have not succeeded in developing this facet in the school that I lead. In my defence, I have only been in post for a year, when many things in our school and multi-academy trust have changed. While I have the autonomy to make decisions about the school I lead, I have to do so in a way that is not at odds with the vision and values of the trust I lead. I must ensure the teachers' parity in directed time, appraisal, and other trust-wide policies. As a headteacher, I am concerned with every facet of my school. I have a competent team of leaders who drive school improvement in different school leadership and development areas. Still, as I have often been reminded, 'it is the headteacher that goes to jail if something serious goes wrong', i.e. the buck stops with me!

Teachers' research literacy is, therefore, unlikely to develop unless it becomes a priority within a school or trust. But what other barriers do teachers perceive exist when it comes to engaging with research and developing teachers' research literacy?

But simply saying that you are doing research does not necessarily translate to producing informative research articles that demonstrate impact, generate discussion and lead to generalisable strategies that can improve education for the masses. Training every teacher to the standard required to produce publishable research papers is not feasible. The skillset needed to do so is often the remit of a vocational researcher. Even then, such researchers may specialise in particular research methods, methodologies or facets such as data analysis. Teachers have demanding day jobs that are unlikely to provide the time to double as research professionals. The Research Schools Network encourages all school staff in Research Schools to take a research-based approach to improving the quality of teaching. Their website details how a core aim is to "help bridge the gap between research and practice". (Research Schools Network, 2024)

This does not mean that every staff member produces published research articles, but there are various mechanisms for sharing their findings, including the Research Network 'Blogs' and the Clips from the Classroom' videos. The network aims to help school staff access, understand, and apply research with "openly available resources that exemplify evidence use in teaching and learning." Research School Network Website.

4.14 Fundamental or folly

Considering these barriers then brings us to some final conclusions and a final question: Is it worth the investment of time, energy, and resources for schools to develop staff research literacy and engagement?

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Implications

5.1 Conclusions

Older generations of teachers without qualifications beyond a bachelor's degree or engagement in NPQ programmes are less likely to be 'research literate'.

Developments in programmes that encourage engagement with research have been most evident in the past ten years. An older generation of teachers that began before the ECT process and before the development of refined NPQ programmes likely received less professional development related to their research literacy. As many of these teachers may not be school leaders, it may also be true that the value of research literacy has not been recognised through in-school professional development programmes because those responsible for setting these programmes have not been exposed to its importance.

Research is more likely to occur and be effective in schools where leaders are research literate and believe in its importance.

This may seem obvious, but research-motivated individual staff members such as Chartered Teachers may be engaged with research without it being an explicit focus or priority for a school. The research literature clearly shows that research needs to be structured into a school's policies, processes, and practices to develop sustainable research cultures, forming an essential part of the pedagogic approach. This can only occur if school leaders understand the importance of research for sustainable school improvement and create the conditions for it to happen.

This year, my school has been involved in a national research project with Trauma Informed Schools and the Home Office. If I had not been the headteacher of this school, the school would not have been part of the project. Our involvement in this project is important to me for two reasons. The first is, rightly, that I believe our students would benefit from approaches that provide a better understanding of them as individuals (many of whom have experienced trauma such as the pandemic) and where our staff team are equipped with strategies that help them to identify, support and address the needs of our community of learners so that they can become the best they can be. The second reason is that I do not know whether this approach will work in the context of our school community. I believe it will, but regardless of the outcome, it will result in a comprehensive research paper allowing other school leaders to analyse the findings, consider the impact and make an informed decision about adopting this trauma-informed approach. Training one staff member in the 11-day diploma costs over £1500. Training your whole school in the techniques is a considerable cost, so it is essential that you make an informed, evidence-based decision. In that sense, I believe that teachers have a duty to one

another to participate in educational research for the good of educators nationally and globally.

Leaders must ensure that research underpins the school's systems, structures, and activities to have a meaningful impact and support school improvement.

I don't want to waste precious resources on something that doesn't work. I don't want to be seduced by marketing spin or anecdotes of what works well in another school. I have seen the negative impact of initiative overload, of making changes to cycle back a few months or years later. I want to deliver impactful, sustainable improvements in my school. If, as I have concluded, this requires staff who are research literate and research engaged, I need to provide the time to focus on this along with ensuring the systems and processes in school are linked to this approach. If research is a priority, then the staff appraisal system should allow for research-based approaches to be part of the objective. Staff induction should include a basic and functional level of training in research literacy; CPD should be evidence-based and allow for discourse on research literature and engagement in research projects guided by colleagues with strong research literacy skills and experience. Meetings should provide opportunities to engage with or in research, development plans should detail actions that are rooted in evidence-based strategies, and staff should feel empowered to take risks as professionals to test what works well within ethical boundaries that support the long-term aim of improving education, outcomes and life chances for all. If research is to be of value, it cannot simply be a bolt-on that is just tenuously referenced when OFSTED calls. To enable research to take place, teachers need time and the necessary tools with access to 'experts' to help facilitate the process and engage in meaningful reflection (Garet et al. 2001)

Research will be most impactful if it is an evolved partnership between research-literate educators and research-skilled professionals with sustained research opportunities.

Having dropped A Level Mathematics, the thought of conducting a forensic statistical analysis of complex sets is not one I relish. This fear is not what led me to prefer qualitative methods, but it is the part that would put me off a quantitative approach. I lack the skills to confidently and competently use those methods. Hargreaves foresaw this barrier but concluded that "the end result would be far more research that is closely related to policy and practice, that is carried out by and with users, and that leads to results which are more likely to be applied in practice" (Hargreaves, 1996, p.8)

Higher education providers, specifically universities, have a crucial role in enhancing the research literacy of teachers so that it may benefit school improvement (Coe et al. 2015). This collaboration needs to occur as a partnership where the respective parties are viewed on equal terms but with clearly defined and understood roles for schools,

academies and university partnerships to successfully meet the aim of developing teachers into research-literate professionals (Lillejord and Børte, 2016).

5.2 Implications for school leaders and recommendations

Embedding a research culture

Without specific direction from central government to embed research literacy as an element of school compliance, it will likely remain a discretionary priority for school and trust leaders. As an increasing emphasis has been placed on developing the research literacy of ECTs, the momentum established in their training and induction mustn't be lost. School leaders should consider how they can locate research with their staff's everyday practice whilst providing agency to those staff to utilise the power and resources of their training to fulfil their potential as teacher researchers.

Empowering teachers by developing research literacy and providing agency

I agree with Evans et al. (2017), who concluded that "teachers need to know not only how to locate and critically use research evidence but also how to actively engage in research with their pupils as an integral part of their everyday practice; research should not be seen as a separate entity but as a sustained and integral part of being a teacher professional." (Evans et al. 2017, p.418). This will only occur in schools that firmly establish a research culture, evident in the school's structures, policies, and practices. By improving the research literacy of teachers through a sustained and planned professional development model, schools will make better decisions about the use of resources, the strategies employed, and the research projects to be trialled, and these, in turn, will lead to better outcomes for students and a greater sense of professionalism amongst teachers.

Seeking research partnerships and opportunities

We should seek opportunities to develop partnerships with universities and other research institutes to allow meaningful engagement with research professionals and potentially support cost-effective access to research resources (databases, journals, university library, etc.). Schools should provide opportunities for researchers to work in schools or support development priorities through their own research (not specifically staff from the school leading projects but providing the materials and the research subject).

By taking opportunities to engage in research projects, teachers will be able to trial, review, and evidence approaches to teaching and learning that work in the specific context of their school. These will undoubtedly be related to school improvement priorities or areas for further development, and these areas of focus are likely to be themes evident in similar schools throughout the country. If the resulting research is published, accessible, and critically evaluated by other teachers, who may use it to trial and research strategies in

their own settings, then we may realise the vision set out by consecutive governments of a self-improving school-led system.

5.3 Implications for me…the researcher

In my confessional tale, I described a journey to becoming a leader who felt ashamed of his research literacy. Two years ago, that was true, but by undertaking a master's degree, I no longer feel that shame, not in anticipation of a certificate that helps me secure that next job but because through this research study, I have exorcised those demons and I know that my lack of research literacy was not my fault. I can't change those poor decisions I made historically based on a lack of research literacy or without questioning the evidence base. Still, I can use the knowledge and confidence I have gained from becoming a researcher to ensure that those I lead and I learn from past mistakes and that research is part of the culture in the schools I lead.

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Appendix A – Interview Questions

1. How long have you been in teaching?

2. What route did you take into teaching?

3. How much emphasis was placed on using research in your training?

4. How much value do you currently place on educational research?

5. How frequently do you refer to or utilise research in your current role?

6. Where do you go to to access research?

7. When considering research, what factors would you consider before using it?

8. Can you give any examples where you have used research to inform or improve your (or others') practice?

9. Is it essential for teachers to have good research literacy? (*Research literacy refers to the ability to access, comprehend, and evaluate research studies and engage in research activities within a specific field or context.*)

10. What would help to improve the research literacy of staff at Stokesley School?

11. Would it be worth the investment of time to do this? Should this be an important priority?

Appendix B – Example of coded and annotated transcript from NVIVO

Name: Teacher 4

Teacher 4

Tue, Jul 09, 2024 11:42AM

[redacted] 0:00
So, if I start by firstly, can you just tell me your name, your role in school and how long you've been teaching for?

Teacher 4 00:55
Teacher 4, assistant head teacher for teaching and learning, and I have been teaching for roughly 12 years.

[redacted] 01:05
Quick maths there. That's good. What route did you take into teaching?

Teacher 4 01:11
PGCE at Durham University? It's a classic. Well, what used to be the classic route into teaching.

[redacted] 01:17
And what was it you studied before that

Teacher 4 01:19
Geography, got a Bachelor of Science in geography? Yeah.

[redacted] 1:23
So, when you took that PGCE route and I suppose you are in a, in a fairly unique position in school, and that you're also the ECT mentor, how much emphasis, do you think was placed through that teacher training element, on research and research literacy[1]?

Teacher 4 01:47
I think with a PGCE there was quite a lot but it didn't necessarily always translate into classroom practice as easily as it does now. So, we talked a lot about, they always used to use learning styles as an example for where it has gone wrong in the past, in terms of education, so we were definitely taught about things being researched based, but then I don't feel like it was ever fully translated into what that looks like in practice in the classroom. Which is one thing I've tried to be more conscious of as an ITT mentor and an ECT mentor and kind of what that looks like and how you do that, but I felt like when I did my PGCE back in 2013, they were at the beginning of trying to embed literacy in training of teachers. But it had a way to go, is how I feel, looking back on it now.

1 / 10

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Do you remember it being delivered to you in a way that you were, presented with research and asked to form an opinion on it or were you presented with research to justify a particular way of teaching or a particular method?

Teacher 4 03:14

It was taught in a couple of different ways. I feel like it was less literature to support a particular way of teaching. I think it was more you should be using, we should be researching things more before they're embedded I think that was mentioned, but then we weren't really introduced to huge amounts of different literature. The one thing that I do remember that was good about my PGCE is we were asked to do it and it's something that the ECT's have to do now[1] is we were asked to do our own research project. So I did, things come around again, I did digital learning, because the geography department at the time, it just got iPads, and I looked at teaching. It wasn't done brilliantly. It was something that would not stand any kind of academic rigor, but teaching the same thing. Students using paper copies, students using iPads and see and then measuring their progress. So, we were kind of taught that you should be investigating what you're doing checking how good it is, but it was kind of it felt like its own separate entity in a way rather than this should be part and parcel of how we teach whereas I feel... I'm fresh out of the mentor training for year two and UCL's Year 2 of ECT is kind of three research projects. So it's been taught now more in a way of... You want to be trialing experimentally things in the classroom but then you want to be testing whether it's working because obviously the to quote what happens in my NPQ quite a bit "everything works somewhere and nothing works everywhere". So having that evaluation of what is working in your particular classroom to your particular style of teaching. Rather than kind of it feeling like a bolt on, like you need to do a research project in teaching, this is what it is, and it was kind of felt like it was very separate from the rest of the teaching placement.

Yeah and so you will have gone through the NQT program as opposed to the ECT. Do you feel that emphasis on research continued in your NQT year in terms of it being something that was directed as part of the process or did that then?

Teacher 4 05:25

Not at all? I feel like the NQT program was mainly just checking. Are you settling into the classroom? I think it was going well in the classroom. There was I mean it was it was a long time ago. The maybe it was mentioned at some point but I have no recollection of research ever being mentioned in my NQT other than some of the whole school CPD, we had Ebbinghaus this stuff was mentioned but not specific to my NQT course.

So, comparing that then with the with the process that you lead in school now with the ECT's then comparing NQT program that how much more research based or evidence informed is that

Teacher 4 06:09

43
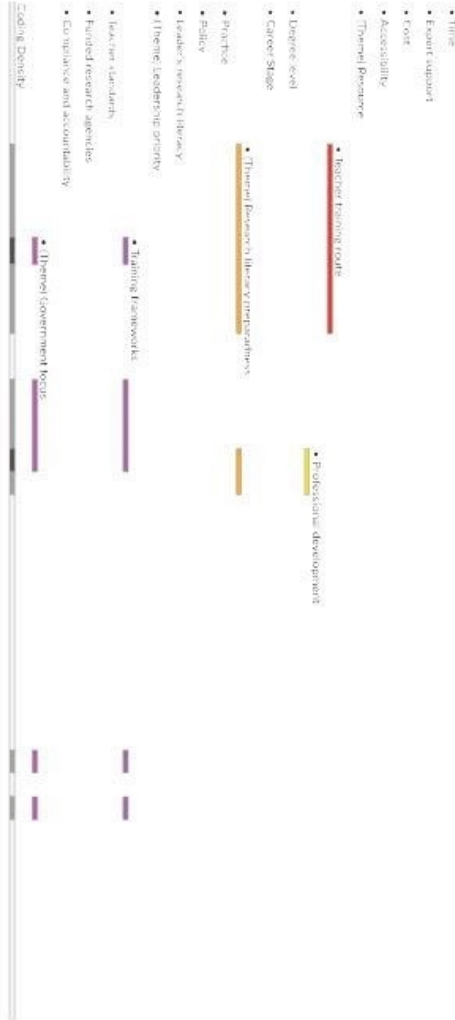
So much more. It's massive... like it's night and day difference between it. So I feel like the NQT there was no structure to it. It was kind of a temporary report written every term or I think it was even less than that and, obviously, the one year. With the ECT that I've got familiarity with a couple of different providers, but all of them that framework hangs on to research so when you do your behavior module, it gives you the research examples to investigate. All in that year one is very much more structured, have the have the different modules and the different areas the teaching the talk about the literature behind it and the evidence, they talk about the EEF quite a lot[3]. And then your year two, I only have familiarity with well no no, Teach First as well, Teach First does this less and the only kind of [year] one but the UCL is embedded in..."Now you know about research. How does that look for you as a practitioner and how do you embed that in your planning and your delivery?" So it's completely different? It's much more embedded now. Which I like, it means it's training practitioners in a different way and in a way that we shouldn't be treating practitioners.

███████████ 07:21
Good, thank you. How much value do you currently place on educational research? And I know that's quite a broad term, but how, how important is it to you in your role and how frequently do you use it?

Teacher 4 07:39
I think it's really important but there are obviously caveats to it because educational research is really hard to do. From coming from a social science background. There are so many variables that it is very difficult to do, but we still need to be doing it and we still need to be looking at what does work in some schools. Why does it work and starting to unpick that and to obviously get the best out of our young people. So for me, I would not just run a CPD session for example or design a CPD system that did not have research in the core of it, because it's the stuff that's been tested. It's stuff that that's gone through a very rigorous processes, the EEF stuff was quite a lot of that is your big systematic reviews that taken into account lots of different research. I do think, in this country, we are still reliant a lot on overseas research and American schools and I do think that's changing. And that's why it's really important that we as a school take on board research projects as well, to try and build up that bank of research. So, I think it's super important and it is the cornerstone, it's the step one in my job, I would say is accessing the research, but I wouldn't necessarily take everything at face value. I wouldn't necessarily see something and run with it. But it would be I want to collect evidence for something from research, and then use that to see what then fit in this thing.

███████████ 09:10
Right well, I'm going to skip a question there so you were just saying you won't you wouldn't necessarily take it at face value. So, when you are considering research, what factors do you consider before putting it out to other people or suggesting it as something that we might want to consider?

Teacher 4 09:30
In an ideal world? I'd want to be able to read different criticisms of it. I'm criticizing myself as well from you know, I've got a master's degree, I'm very critical of things when I read them, and just make sure it's not something that is applied. But to be honest with being quite time poor if it's accepted by something like the EEF, which obviously take lots of research into account and if it's something from
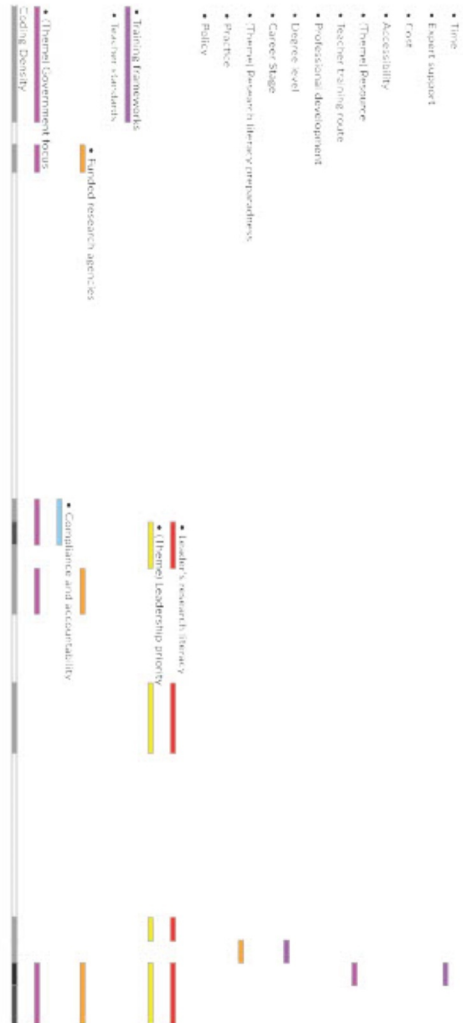
them, I do kind of take the EEF more at face value because I know what they do. But I do like, if it is something bigger as well. I like to see it, maybe done, in other places. See how other people have interpreted it in different ways to the CPD model we're running from next year. I've seen somebody's masters program that way. I've seen how [Another school] do it in that way. I've seen how different schools have done it. Then knowing what I know about this school. I've taken the core principles of it and made it , hopefully we'll find out next year, work for the school. So, it's kind of taking it from trustworthy places that I know, do all of the hard work, so I don't have to, in many cases, and then also maybe a few other examples of where similar things are done in other schools.

██████████ 10:41

So you talked about the EEF as one source of that. That's an open access site that anyone can go to and see the summaries of cumulative different pieces of research and the suggested amount of impact that those strategies or things may have. What are perhaps some of the barriers then to using educational research because there are other sources other than the EEF. There's a big body, for example, of educational research that goes into different journals and so…

Teacher 4 11:26

Well we don't have access to a lot of them. I do get access to more of them through the NPQ. But actually, all of that aside, I think the biggest barrier is time. Being able to, like I printed off recently, I think it's Guskey's evaluation as part of my NPQ and part of my NPQ[4] I have to pick some, 'apply tasks' to do after I've done some initial learning and one of those can be reading and I've picked reading this week. So, I do have access to more things but I printed it off a week ago and I've read the first two pages. So actually, in this job, especially at this time of year but to be honest, we can say that for any time of year, having the time to be able to read and digest it is quite difficult, which is why I rely on things like EEF more.

██████████ 12:16

Do you think when you reading…. You talked about being at the masters level in terms of your own study, and I know that you're looking to take that further. Do you think that all staff would be able to access all of the materials that you are being provided with i.e. do you think that all staff have got the research literacy to be able to comprehend, evaluate and digest the information that's contained in an academic journal?

Teacher 4 12:58

To be honest, probably not because, sometimes I feel I don't, I know when I'm reading some academic journals are very hard to digest and to sound really cynical, I think there are some people that are paid a lot of money to write things in a certain way that sounds hard to digest. Because it's social sciences, I think that that tends to be what happens. They use language that is overly complicated. So, I do think a lot of educational literature is not accessible to a lot of people. Or there's even research potentially that is accessible to but they don't have the time to sit and make those connections and read further into it, and as well I think you run a danger of people reading one journal, liking an idea and running with it without really thinking about the outside element of it and actually an NPQ has given me that space and taught me about that way of thinking that you can't, don't just run with an idea. Don't just force

something through because you've read it and being able to actually spend the time to think about how you're going to do that first, so think about where it might fit with what you've already done. Don't add something else without considering the other impacts of it. So I think with the pure academic journals. There's a huge amount of challenges and I think, quite a lot of staff that of any levels that would potentially struggle with them.

██████████ 14:21

What would you look for if you were thinking about the, you know, you've got a source from an academic journal, it's been, may have been cited a number of times where you think "well, that's good", but if you were looking at a piece and evaluating that bit of research, how would you know that it was valid and reliable and something that you might want to consider for further discussion within your organisation?

Teacher 4 14:52

I'd unpick the research methods. Yeah, and I'm in a unique position where one of my friends is a senior professor who specialises in research methods and I'm so boring that quite often these are my Saturday night conversations. But, I would always begin with the with the research methods and I think that's something that I've got from I've definitely picked it up from doing my masters so we know that not all staff in the school, teach yourself or otherwise are necessarily going to be masters level. I don't think you really do much of it at an undergrad level, in terms of picking out picking apart your research methods, but you want to look at what setting was it done and how did they collect the data? Where the money came from to do the research for example, all of that stuff I would take into account but I wouldn't necessarily expect everybody else to do that. I was known as being quite stubborn with it sometimes when I was presenting things in previous settings, when I've criticised it and said you shouldn't be running with this, because it's not done in the same way. Like American schools I've mentioned. That's always the example, isn't it? It's done in a completely different education system to us or if they only collected a bit of data that might not see the bigger picture or the court that was introduced to me in geography many years "correlation doesn't assume causation". I remember somebody delivering something about literacy telling the staff that literacy rate was directly linked to life expectancy, which if you look, the data lines up, but obviously there's a lot of steps in between literacy rate and life expectancy. So, it's looking at the connections they are making and where they got the data from, when they got the data and all of that. Which is why, because I think everyone builds up the habits in their undergrad reading year. You read your blurb the beginning, I've forgotten the word for it , the beginning bit and you read the conclusion and your findings and you take what you see at face value. I think most people if they haven't gone beyond undergrad, that's what they'll do. But then at masters level look at actually where did it come from and is it worthwhile?

██████████ 17:04

Yeah. No, that's great. Thank you. So, could you give any examples of where you've used research to inform or improve yours or other people's practice?

Teacher 4 17:18

Good question. Recently, because that's all my mind is going to at the minute. I have just built Guskey's five levels of evaluation into next year's CPD program[5]. There is, the literacy strategy is based on a lot of the, I think it was the Sutton trust data and some of the things from that, but off the top of my head, I can't remember exactly what base, but that's definitely based on it. In terms of my own practice, I think it was the first bit of research that was fully given to me and like a whole school, in my professional setting rather than my academic background is like the Ebbinghaus forgetting curve kind of underpinned 90% of my teaching. I was known as the Queen of quizzes at [Previous School]. Yeah, so everything it is basically everything. On a normal day I might be able to give you more examples.

▬▬▬▬▬ 18:26

I suppose on, related to that then you've clearly studied to a level that's required you to be more critical in evaluating sources of information and thinking about how they may apply to a school within its context. How, how important do you think it is that teachers in particular have good research literacy? Would the establishment with the school be better if every teacher had your degree of understanding or about research?

Teacher 4 19:09

Not necessarily the only thing… It would be a benefit, if all teaching staff in the school had that understanding, because we'd all, I think the buy in would be easier. And I think potentially it would cause more elements of discussion around things as well, which is not necessarily a bad thing. But actually, if you have a strong leadership team that can disseminate that information and if you have the trust between the leadership team and the teaching staff, they know that you know what you're doing. I think that, you know, I don't think you have to have my knowledge of a master's level knowledge of educational research to be a fantastic practitioner and part of a team in a successful school. But this wouldn't be a bad thing if everybody had that.

▬▬▬▬▬ 19:58

So where is that level of knowledge and understanding most important then?

Teacher 4 20:05

I think, on a strategic level of planning, from the like, curriculum side, teaching and learning side, all of that, that there's stuff that we are… and to be honest, there may be an argument for head of faculty there as well for the context specific side, or head of department so they know what works best in their faculties and obviously, you've got different organisations that benefit other faculties, so the History Association comes to mind and what they do. So I think, I think the lower down the school…I don't want to call it hierarchy because I criticised that yesterday but the lower down the school the get, the less important it becomes, providing you have that trust between the different levels and you have that "well I know that they know what they're talking about, so I'm gonna run with this and I support it" and I think if, if you are doing it right, the ground staff will be able to see the results and that will build that trust further. And yeah, it would be fantastic if they could all see everything, they could all read academic papers, and they all understood it and could do all of that but I absolutely don't think it's vital at all

And is there a reason that you think it's important, like a really important feature for school leaders to have that degree of research literacy that what, what, what's the benefit going to be of having a more research literate extended senior leadership team

Teacher 4 21:33

I think it means that they are you well using best practices from other areas and from research backgrounds to be able to make sure that the decisions they make for their school are the right decisions because they should be rooted in research and at the same time having that critical awareness of, well, where does that come from? And how does it best fit in our school? But I think as well, knowing that just because the research says it works, doesn't mean you don't have to monitor it and doesn't mean you don't have to evaluate it and use your skills in research to be able to run your own kind of, doesn't have to be massive, project, but run your own kind of research to check that it's working. Because if we just take an idea, don't have the knowledge to criticize it and to test it when it's running. We could be running things that are time poor, workload heavy on staff and the impact of that might be really low. Then that's when we start having issues with staff morale, people are overworked. So, I think it's really important that the senior team, and there'll be people that are better than others, there'll be people with doctorates and stuff like that, but just I think the senior leadership team should be having that knowledge that we need to evaluate things, we need to see where research has come from, before we fully run with it and that kind of knowledge, I think is really important to run a well-oiled machine.

So given that you've said there's an importance at the top end for being able to have those skills and research just received, but it's also clearly evident in the strategy and the structure of the program for EC T's. What should be happening in the middle then because if you how do you...?

Teacher 4 23:24

I suppose it is that level of literacy that is delivered in the ECT is kind of that, everything kind of comes from research because I think although this staff might not have the same research literacy in the ground staff, in the classroom teachers, they should still have an appreciation that what we are doing comes from there and what that means. They might not necessarily read loads of literature, necessarily understand all the research methods and all of that but kind of have that professional appreciation of it but they should be able to have, the way that they do in the ECT, that testing your own teaching. It doesn't need to be anything massively rigorous but understanding that they should be, if they're trying something new in their classroom or not necessarily trying something new looking to see what they've been doing for years is working, they should kind of have that basic kind of, how do we test this how do we monitor? It can just be those natural indicators in the classroom. We're not expecting stuff to do big research projects but like how are you monitoring this? How are you checking this is working? And it's those kinds of different levels so you classroom teachers understanding what research is where it comes from and how to test that in your own classroom. But then having the buy in that the big strategic kind of decisions are maybe a little bit more rooted. Maybe we're doing research that is a bit more intensive because it's on a whole school level. There's more variables we have to

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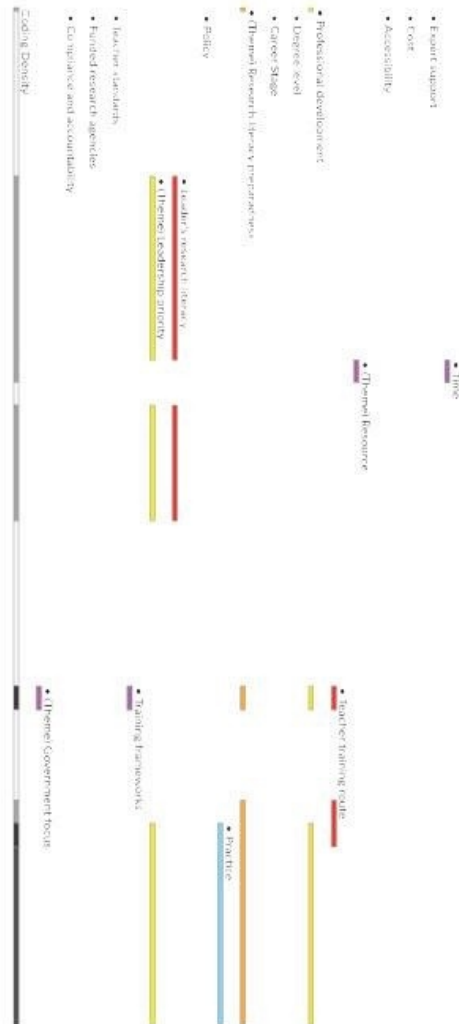
consider in a whole school compared to the classroom. So, we need to be just a little bit more savvy with our with what we're doing. So, it's kind of like different tiers of literacy level with it with research and understanding it.[6]

25:03
Because there's an element of that, and that was looking up to my bookshelf and one of the things is the reflective practitioner book. So, there's an element to which that sort of principle of evaluating your own teaching or others teaching and making suggestions that are based on evidence, which could be research or it could be experiential learning or other things that have presented themselves over time as strategies to improve.. that element has been going on for some time.

Teacher 4 25:46
Yeah, there'll be an element of subconscious about it now. Because I think if you asked any teacher in the school "is walkthroughs based on evidence?", they'll probably say yes, but then you ask them what evidence and it was probably "I don't know".

25:57
What would, if we think about the whole staff team, what would help to improve the research and literacy of staff so that those things became more accessible to the level that we might want them to be able to?

Teacher 4 26:20
I think that if we can, kind of go by what I'm doing a little bit and how that works. So, if we think about kind of our I will call them Middle Leaders, but that heads of faculty heads of department, if we kind of clue those up on what should be done in terms of training their staff and basically getting the best results out of their department areas, then that can be disseminated downwards through into our classroom staff as well. So, if what they're delivering in their department time, is quite clearly based on research. It's backed in evidence, it's things and they have a program of monitoring, tweaking all of that built into it. That's modelling it for the other classroom staff, who will overtime hopefully want to pick up more experience in these areas might want to pick up their own areas to investigate. So, it kind of comes from the top down in away that if everything were given the middle leaders is and everything middle leaders is given to classroom teachers but then at the same time, we've got these new ECT's coming up that any teacher that's been teaching for less than three or four years now, they should have that as well. It will kind of, hopefully, naturally, we'd end up with a staff base that is more confident with research because it can be quite intimidating as well. When I think, a lot of staff sometimes as well, need to be reassured that most of the things that they've been doing has been mentioned and is rooted in research and it's nothing scary. It is just best practice that we've been doing for years.

27:55
If we take aside that there are lots of people out there doing educational research and we, we've got varying levels of awareness and interaction with it. How frequently do you think people in school are looking at creating their own action research projects or strategies to say I've got this problem, i'm

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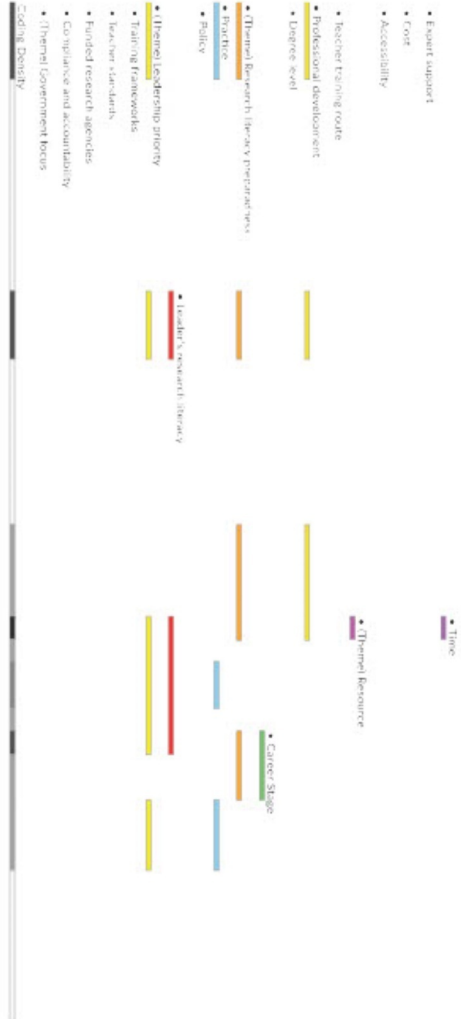
going to test ways of dealing with it and then, you know, think about the conclusions and share that practice.

Teacher 4 28:30

That's something that I really want to grow up and it has formed a large part of most of the CPD I've attended this year actually in various different forms. But that is another one that I think if we if we build it in on that department level, because departments now should be research identifying their own problem, and then working on it. And then we can build into hopefully be able to build in time. Looking at the next steps for the CPD program and where we go from a department base where everybody, kind of has their own individual project and I know that there's been a lot of successful research, I was talking to someone who was doing and who's just finished their master's, on teacher led CPD that there's a lot of success to be had by giving teachers that autonomy in their own practice. But I feel like there's... we have to get there first. So if it is modelled and well-structured through the heads of faculty and heads of department and they built up with that, then it leaves more space for the "right okay, individually speaking as part of your professional development, what do you want to work on? But how do we know it's working?" Building in opportunity and time for staff to be able to focus on their own little areas. And I think if we managed to get to that point, I think it will do some wonderful things for the school and in any school that were able to do that. To get staff really interested and excited about their own practice and do their own little projects and things. I know we do have some stuff that are involved with Ogden Trust and stuff like that, which is great. But I want it to be something that the staff are excited about and want to get involved in and hopefully it'll come from what's happening next year. If we tool up the middle leaders to be more confident in it then they'll tool up their classroom staff to make them more confident in it.

████████████ 0:20

And so the final thing, which I think I can see where you may fall on this, but do you think it would be worth the investment of time to develop the research literacy and that sort of awareness of staff, and should this be an important school priority?

Teacher 4 30:41

No,ha, Yes of course I do. Yes, I absolutely do. I think it, the one thing that I haven't said yet that I'm going to put in now is that I think it has the biggest impact on anything. So, get rid of the noise, because schools have a lot of noise. Schools are very, very good at adding things and not taking things away. And that makes us very time poor and that is the biggest challenge I found when I first joined the school was "I want to do all these things, but I'm very much restricted in a very small amount of hours" because other things have occupied the time. So, if we can give more time to this, this is the thing that has the impact because if a member of staff has issues with behaviour, we can focus on that, if a member of staff has issues with or wants to improve this, they can do that. And I think it will have the biggest impact on the culture of the school. I think if we can get teachers really buzzed about teaching and learning. That's going to make a massive difference. It just is something that will give teachers autonomy, which will help wellbeing, which just has so many benefits. And it just like removing the noise, what are our priorities, how do they work and focusing on that so 100%. Yes, having more time for that. But I would say that as the teaching and learning leading so yeah!

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Annotations

[1] This teacher is responsible for working with early career teachers as an in school lead and mentor.

[2] Teacher 4 drew comparison between the training route specifically the requirement to complete a research project as an PGCE student and the requirements of the ECT training framework to complete a research project. This is not something that was a specific feature of the NQT framework and progress was measured against the teacher standards which did not reference evidence or research. By contrast the ECT framework references evidence on more than 40 occassions.

[3] The ECT framework was created in conjunction with the Education Endowment Foundation. The content of the framework and its underpinning evidence has been independently assessed and endorsed by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). (DfE 2019)

[4] Teacher 4 is completing an NPQ in Leading Teacher Development

[5] The school CPD programme blends elements of policy and practice in the school leadership theme. The training forms part of directed time which is set within policy but the format of that is bespoke to help support the development needs of teachers so it is part of the schools practice to respond flexibly to training needs.

[6] Answer suggests that a gap still exists in school between the research literacy of ECT's and members of staff inducted under previous frameworks which is not currently addressed through specific CPD or a clearly articulated plan to sustain research literacy of staff beyond the ECT programme.

- Coding Density
- (Theme) Government focus
- Compliance and accountability
- Funded research agencies
- Teacher standards
- Training Frameworks
- (Theme) Leadership priority
- Leader's research literacy
- Policy
- Practice
- (Theme) Research literacy comparatives
- Career Stage
- Degree level
- Professional development
- Teacher training route
- (Theme) Resource
- Accessibility
- Cost
- Time
- Expert support

Appendix C – Ethics Approval

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DISSERTATION (EDUC5054M) PROPOSAL AND BLOCK ETHICAL REVIEW FORM 2022/2023

STUDENT NAME	▇▇▇▇▇▇▇
STUDENT NUMBER	▇▇▇▇▇
PROGRAMME (incl. Full time/Part time)	MA Education (YLC) Dissertation
DATE FIRST SUBMITTED	25/01/2024

TO STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS:

This is the dissertation proposal and block ethical review form each student needs to complete and have approved before they can begin to collect their data. Students and supervisors are advised to consider the completion of this form as a cyclical, recursive process of drafting, submission to the supervisor for feedback, revision, and re-submission. There are four sections, and before students can start collecting data they will need to have completed all four to the satisfaction of their supervisor. Typically students will complete one-three drafts of each section before their project is fully worked out. This may seem laborious but the intention is to ensure that the research each student carries out is robust, valid, reliable and fully compliant with the ethical requirements of the university.

TO THE STUDENT:

Step 1: Please use your directed study poster, the feedback from that poster and the tutorial discussions with your personal tutor to complete all sections of the document.

Step 2: You will then work with your personal tutor/supervisor to finalise the design of your directed study project. You will need to present a completed version of this form for your personal tutor/supervisor to sign.

Step 3: Once you have completed the final form and it has been signed by your personal tutor/supervisor please send it via email to your programme manager ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇

Step 4: When your form has been signed and approved you can go ahead and collect data.

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1.	**Your Topic**
Topic	An ethnographic research study to understand the benefits and challenges of engaging with research for school improvement.
Motivation	In my role as Headteacher, I am responsible for creating the school development plan which seeks to identify priorities for school improvement and outline strategies for achieving those improvements. These are often linked to individual staff members appraisal objectives and in many schools, there is no expectation that staff have to engage in research as part of those objectives. I have realised that, as a profession, we do not commit much time to reading academic research related to the areas for development and so I want to study the effects of engaging with research and improving research literacy with school leaders.
Working title	Research informed leadership – An ethnographic study into the value of engaging with research for successful leadership and school improvement.

2.	**Your Project**
Theoretical context	Whitty et al. (2012) described how educational researchers requires a better understanding of the relationship between educational research and teachers' professional development. My study will consider the findings of researchers such as Shank and Brown who surmised that teachers must be able to make sense of educational research in order to improve their practice. It will build upon the idea that evidence informed practice is essential for teaching professionals in twenty-first century learning environments (Waring and Evans 2015). My study will help to identify the challenges and benefits of engaging in research through the qualitative methods of an ethnographic study.

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Research questions	What is research literacy? (How should teachers engage in or with research) What are the benefits of engaging with educational research in a school? What are the barriers to engaging with educational research in a school? Can engagement with research lead to more effective strategies for school improvement?

3.	**Your Research design**
Overview	My research methodology will be an ethnography. This is appropriate as the study will look at the use of research as part of the 'everyday context' or a school rather than being conducted under experimental conditions.
	The methods of data collection will include:
	Interviews which will be used as a way of obtaining qualitative information from leadership colleagues. By conducting these interviews in a semi structured manner, I can allow for a consistency of questioning using an interview schedule allowing a comparison of responses from different interviewees but also providing the opportunity to probe or elaborate on key points raised during interview (Thomas, 2017)
	Focus group discussions with leaders to provide a view of similarities and differences of each participants' views on pieces of research.
	Participant observations which will be recorded in various interactions such as faculty or leadership team meetings, line management discussions and as part of the focus groups and interviews.

Quality	Hammersley (1990) described the function of an ethnography as being "to produce knowledge that is of public relevance". I wish to add the distinct, contextual study of research literacy in Stokesley School to the base of research literature that may help to inform future policy and practice at a local level. I will ensure my research project is replicable with a detailed explanation of the way it has been conducted. In conducting ethnographic research it is understood that my research is not concluding with a theoretical framework that can be applied to any school setting and so I have to acknowledge that my research may be of limited use to others in improving their own schools research literacy, but it may provide a useful think piece for schools wishing to evaluated and improve their own research literacy as well as contributing to and inviting further research in this field. I will triangulate data and provide a thick description of the findings. I will also be clear that the aim is to promote transferability (the extent to which the finding of the study can be applied to other situations) in addition to the case study school. As a piece of qualitative research I will be aiming to demonstrate credibility. I will make clear my positionality in relation to my research. In conducting my research I must acknowledge my subjectivity as an active participant and senior leader in my organisation. I am aware that as a leader within the organisation I already have a view on the degree of success of the object of my studies. I will need to be aware of experimenter expectancy effects and that in choosing to interview colleagues, the way in which I interview them will be vitally important as there is a risk that some staff may provide me with information that they believe would be what I want to hear rather than their true opinions or feelings.
Data-generation:	Data will be generated through a variety of methods including semi-structured interviews and discussions from focus groups. This data will be transcribed with secure digital software available in the case study school, in addition to the use of a journal to record field notes of observations of interactions over time, and by reviewing documents that may be relevant such as minutes of meetings held by leaders. Data generation will take approximately one month due to the time required to conduct interviews with staff in school. The interviews s will only be held with members of staff in the case study school and will be conducted in line with University of Leeds policy.
Data-analysis	Analysis of the data will follow a constant comparative method which involves coding and the identification of temporary constructs and themes. In addition a network analysis of these terms will be conducted using the values as themes and identifying any relevant sub themes. I am interested in exploring the use of software e.g. NVIVO.
Time-frame	As I already have access to my research setting. I am ready to begin my project once ethical approval is gained. My aim is to being working with leaders from the Arete Learning Trust Schools in February 2024 and to conclude my data collection by April 2024 to allow time for data analysis and write up in the summer term.
4.	**Ethical Considerations**

Training	Completed academic integrity training and EDUC 5060: Ethics training session. I have successfully completed a Directed Study module that involved a research study requiring University of Leeds ethical clearance.	
Ethical concerns	As my research will focus on data collected from adults there are fewer concerns raised than when dealing with information from children but I will still need to gain the relevant informed consents (British Education Research Association, 2018) and due to my role as Headteacher I will need to emphasise the difference between this being an element of my research my project for which the participants would freely give consent, and meetings conducted as part of a line management or leadership function in school. I must be aware that the nature of researching is intrusive and that publication of my findings and subsequent recommendations may have an impact on some of the participants.	
Research not requiring ethical review	If your research involves no data-generation involving human or animal participants, and no other ethical considerations arise, please type 'X' in the box to the right. You may proceed immediately to the end of the form. If your research does involve human or animal participants please continue.	
Research participants	Will the participants be from any of the following groups? Answer 'Yes' or 'No'.	
	A) Children under 16.	No
	B) Persons with a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator.	No
	C) Other vulnerable groups.	No
	If you have answered 'Yes' to any of the above, please explain why the research has to be conducted with such participants, in the box below.	
	Supervisors should also consider whether an individual application to FREC might be appropriate. Before suggesting this supervisors should contact Head of Area.	
Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)	A Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check will be needed for researchers working with children or vulnerable adults in the UK (see www.crb.gov.uk). So if you have answered 'Yes' to A) or C) above you will need to complete the boxes below.	
	Do you currently have a DBS enhanced disclosure? Answer 'Yes' or 'No'.	Yes
	If 'Yes', how recently was it conducted?	On update service for school 18/03/2016
Participant involvement	What will the participants be asked to do in this study (e.g. number of visits, time, travel required, interviews etc.)?	
	Participants will be asked to take part in interviews, focus groups and to be observed in meetings and other interactions where field notes will be recorded (normal work activities). The main resource requirement will be the time to conduct interviews or focus groups, as well as reviewing research literature and to have meetings to discuss the findings with members. Participants do not require travel as they will be conducted in our current school setting – in a venue of their choosing.	
	How will the potential participants be recruited?	

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Participants will be staff members at Stokesley School or Arete Learning Trust and will represent different layers of the school's organisational structure.
How will you gain informed consent from the participants?
I will provide all participants with a participant information sheet aligned to the university guidelines and this will be coupled with a participant consent form which also meets standards required by the University of Leeds.
How will you make sure that participants understand the information you provide about the project?
All participants will be adults who work in the educational setting and as such they have sufficient literacy skills to understand the process and research that they are being asked to take part in. Further information will be provided via the participant information sheet.
Will interviews/ questionnaires discuss any topics or issues that might be sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting? In the main you are advised to avoid such topics. If questions on such topics are unavoidable, what strategies will you adopt to prevent your questions causing distress and how will you deal with distress if it is caused?
No. The topic is on research literacy and the value, importance and use of it in the case study school setting. Any names will be redacted with responses anonymised to (Leader 1, Leader 2, Leader 3 etc.)
What are the potential benefits and risks for participants?
The potential benefits for the participants are that the case study leads to improvements in outcomes for the subject area and the school as well as recommendations on how to improve research literacy through workplace policy and practice The risks would include anyone staff member identified from data in a way that could be detrimental i.e if they have given honest responses that could be perceived as negative responses and these somehow impact relationships with other colleagues through the loss of confidentiality.
Does the research involve any risk to you as a researcher? If yes, what is the risk?
There are no high likelihood or risk physical, psychological, socio-economic or legal risks that I can perceive.
How will you ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the participants?
To ensure these ethical practices are in place I will ensure these aspects are understood by participants in the informed consent document. I will maintain anonymity by ensuring the participants are not identified by name, specific role or any other data that could identify the respondent in a case study of a single setting.
What will you do to keep the personal information you collect as secure as possible? Please note: you are required to keep data on your M-Drive or university Cloud space or under lock and key if hard copy.
Any data stored will be retained on password protected, encrypted systems as per university policy and good practice.

DECLARATION

TO STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS:

This declaration is to be completed by the student, signed by the supervisor and counter-signed by another academic, before data collection can begin. Supervisors who are unclear about whether to

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give the project ethical clearance may consult the School of Education Ethical representatives or the Head of Taught Postgraduate Area.

I agree to adhere to the procedures outlined in this plan. Student signature: ███████████	Date: 25.1.24
I give permission for the research outlined in this plan to go ahead. Supervisor signature: ███████	Date: 25.1.24
I give permission for the research outlined in this plan to go ahead. Counter-signature of programme academic: ████████	Date: 30.01.24

Appendix D – Participant information sheet

School of Education

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Participant Information Sheet

Research informed leadership – An ethnographic study into the value of engaging with research for successful leadership and school improvement.

The study will review the research literacy of leaders at Stokesley School and will consider the impact of engaging in and with research for school improvement.

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a research project that is part of my MA in Education at the University of Leeds. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the project?

As a practicing secondary school senior leader, I am very interested in understanding the components of successful schools. As part of my MA in Education I am completing a dissertation study into research literacy at Stokesley School. I will be conducting the study throughout the spring and summer term of 2024. My aim is to conduct an analysis of the research literacy and engagement of members of the leadership team and how this impacts strategies related to school improvement.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen as you are a leader within Stokesley School. As a leader you will have a role in school improvement and development planning. As part of this role you may have a view on the importance of research literacy in school improvement.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time without it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to in any way. You do not have to give a reason.

What do I have to do?

The case study will be conducted during the spring and summer term of the 2022-23 academic year. Participants will be asked to take part in the case study in three ways.

1: Two interviews (lasting approximately 30 minutes) which will be mainly based on open questioning and will be focused on the seeking the views of participants on research literacy at Stokesley School.

And

2: By reading and reviewing research literature related to a subject identified area for improvement.

And

3: Through participation in a focus group meeting related to the research literature.

Project title	Document type	Version #	Date
Research informed leadership – An ethnographic study into the value of engaging with research for successful leadership and school improvement.	Participant Information Sheet	1	1.1.24

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What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no foreseeable disadvantages to taking part in the project but involvement in the project will require participants to give freely of their time for interview

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this study will enable school leaders to consider ways to positively impact whole school priorities as well as shaping our policy and practice related to research literacy.

Use, dissemination and storage of research data

The interviews will be recorded (audio only) using an encrypted portable recording device and then transferred onto a secure computer drive to which only the researcher will have access and which will be password protected. These recordings will be transcribed either by the researcher or a professional transcription service. These transcripts will be anonymised, meaning that they will not contain any information that could be used to identify you. The audio and/or video recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis and for illustration in conference presentations and lectures. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

A series of field notes will be recorded by the researcher when observing meetings or focus groups which may include transcripts of discussions and the researcher's observations of discussions and interactions.

Consent forms may be signed digitally or in person (in the case of interviews). Physical copies will be scanned and then destroyed, the digital copies of these will be stored securely on encrypted, password protected drives to which on the researcher has access. Once this has been signed by all parties the participant will receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form and a copy of the participant information sheet.

What will happen to my personal information?

Your participation and the information we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential.

Only members of the research team and responsible members of the University of Leeds may be given access to data about you for monitoring purposes and/or to carry out an audit of the study to ensure that the research is complying with applicable regulations. Individuals from regulatory authorities (people who check that we are carrying out the study correctly) may require access to your data. All of these people have a duty to keep your information, as a research participant, strictly confidential.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

All the contact information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will stored separately from the research data. We will take all possible steps to anonymise the research data so that you will not be identified in any reports or publications.

Results of the research may be published through the University of Leeds or in presentation to the Yorkshire Leadership Community. Copies of the final research paper will be made available to all participants.

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Research informed leadership – An ethnographic study into the value of engaging with research for successful leadership and school improvement.	Participant Information Sheet	1	1.1.24

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Data collected during the course of the project might be used for additional or subsequent research.

What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project's objectives?

The information sought from you will relate to your thoughts and views about the importance of research literacy and using research for school improvement.

Who is organising/ funding the research?

There are no organisations funding this research project.

Contact for further information
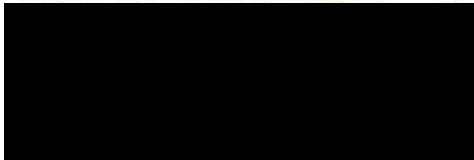
School of Education
University of Leeds
Leeds
LS2 9JT
United Kingdom

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and considering taking part in this study.

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Appendix E – Participant consent form

School of Education

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Consent to take part in "Research informed leadership – An ethnographic study into the value of engaging with research for successful leadership and school improvement."	Add your initials next to the statement if you agree
I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information sheet dated 1.1.24 explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. I understand that if I choose to withdraw I should contact ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ (lead researcher) on ▓▓▓▓▓▓ or by emailing ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓. Any data already provided will be deleted and this will be confirmed by the lead researcher.	
I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential.	
I agree for the data collected from me to be stored and used in relevant future research in an anonymised form.	
I understand that other genuine researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	
I understand that other researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	
I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study, may be looked at by auditors from the University of Leeds where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the lead researcher should my contact details change during the project and, if necessary, afterwards.	

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Name of lead researcher	▓▓▓▓▓▓▓
Signature	
Date*	

*To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant.
Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/ pre-written script/ information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents which must be kept in a secure location.

Project title	Document type	Version #	Date
Research informed leadership – An ethnographic study into the value of engaging with research for successful leadership and school improvement	Participant Consent Form	1	1.1.24