THE STATUS OF TEACHERS AND THE TEACHING PROFESSION

PART IV of THE EVIDENCE BASE

TEACHERS AND PUPILS: MINORITY ETHNIC TEACHERS, TEACHERS IN SPECIALISED ROLES or SETTINGS and PUPILS’ VIEWS

Introduction

This document forms part of the Evidence Base of the Teacher Status Project, a nationwide study of the status of teachers and the teaching profession in England. The research was carried out at the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education and the Department of Media and Communication, University of Leicester. It ran from September 2002 to December 2006, and was commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) following a process of competitive tender.

The project had three main aims, and the methods used to address these aims are listed below:

The aims were:

1. to establish a baseline and monitor changes in perceptions of the status of teachers and their profession, among teachers, associated groups and the general public, between 2003 and 2006
2. to understand the factors that might influence perceptions of status and teachers' attitudes
3. to identify how perceptions of teacher status can be improved.

The Teacher Status Project: research design

The first aim was addressed through a series of cross-sectional national surveys of the opinions of the groups listed above, and a longitudinal survey of teachers’ opinions. The main surveys were conducted in the first and final years of the project. In the intervening years, a programme of school-based case studies and focus groups of teachers was carried out in order to address the second aim. Particular emphasis was placed on the perceptions of the individual teacher throughout the project. The media study, which also addressed the second aim, followed a similar pattern with surveys of national and selected regional press coverage of teachers, teaching and education conducted in 2003 and 2005. Interviews with education correspondents and a retrospective survey of press coverage dating back to 1991 were carried out in 2004. The third research aim was addressed within the surveys and case-studies and through a synthesis of their findings.

The research methods and findings are presented in the Teacher Status Project Evidence Base (RR831B) of which this document forms one part. The Research Brief (RB831) summarises the whole project, and a more detailed overview is provided in the Teacher Status Project Synthesis Report (RR831A).

The timeline below shows how the results reported in this part of the Evidence Base fit into the project activities as a whole.

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1 Originally the Centre for Mass Communications Research
The Teacher Status Project research activities

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Part IV of the Evidence Base contains the following chapters:

Chapter 14 - The status of minority ethnic teachers
Chapter 15 - The status of early years teachers
Chapter 16 - The status of teachers of children with special educational needs
Chapter 17 - The Status of Teachers Working in Pupil Referral Units
Chapter 18 - The Status of Supply Teachers
Chapter 19 - Teachers engaged in CPD and Research
Chapter 20 - Pupils’ views of the status of teachers
PART IV: CASE STUDIES III: TEACHERS AND PUPILS: Minority ethnic teachers, teachers in specialised roles or settings, and pupils’ views

The major case study elements to this project have been designed to capture, firstly, the views of teachers, generally, with respect to their status and the status of their profession and secondly, teachers’ perceptions of the impact of certain school statuses/classifications (e.g. Beacon, Leading Edge, Serious Weaknesses etc) on their status.

It is acknowledged, however, that certain groups within the teaching profession may share the same experiences as the general teacher population but might also have perspectives which are derived by virtue of the particular responsibility they have or the category/group within which they fall. The project has included, therefore, a third phase of case studies which have employed, mainly, focus group interviews with teachers from the following groups:

- Teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds
- Teachers responsible for early years provision
- Teachers responsible for Special Educational Needs
- Teachers working in Pupil Referral Units
- Supply teachers
- Teachers involved in CPD and research

Each of the above groups has been treated as unique projects, researched by groups or individuals within the research team, thus enabling the researchers the scope to conduct in-depth investigations. The varied approaches, described in each of the following studies were, therefore, tailored to the circumstances of the groups investigated and have added the rich contributions of various actors in each category with respect to the distinctive issues relating to status and professionalism. Finally, chapter 20 presents pupils’ views collected during our school based case studies (Part II).
Chapter 14: The status of minority ethnic teachers

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Introduction and overview
This chapter is concerned with the status of teachers from various minority ethnic backgrounds and addresses two of the project’s aims: to ‘understand the factors that might influence perceptions of status and teachers’ attitudes and to ‘identify how perceptions of teacher status can be improved’. Throughout this study respondents to surveys and interviews offered their views concerning issues such as the attractiveness of teaching as a career, teacher status over the years and teachers’ perceptions of their own status. In assessing these contributions, however, we are conscious of further possible dimensions to teachers’ understandings of their professional identity and status which may be influenced by their own ethnic origins and the reactions and attitudes of others, both individually and institutionally, towards them. This report is structured around the two key questions below.

1. What is the status of teachers from minority ethnic groups within the profession?
2. What factors encourage teachers from minority ethnic groups to remain in or leave the profession?

Analysis of teachers’ discussions in relation to the above questions has identified several key findings, four of which are included below.

- Although a few teachers were able to identify examples of equal opportunities, most minority ethnic teachers expressed impatience with school leaders’ inequitable approaches to promotion. Teachers believed that coupled with the personal esteem to be gained through securing sought after positions in schools, it was also important for their colleagues, pupils and the wider community to appreciate the fact that minority ethnic teachers are capable of holding influential positions.

- School managers’ handling of the government’s workforce reform initiative, has proven to be a cause for concern for many minority ethnic teachers participating in this study. Disparities were evident in the experiences of teachers and, whilst a few teachers were content with the outcomes of the changes, most teachers felt that the government had handed to headteachers licence to discriminate unfairly.

- Minority and majority ethnic teachers alike considered the respect and attitudes demonstrated by their colleagues and others within their schools to be essential to their sense of status. However, minority ethnic teachers, particularly African Caribbean teachers, experienced negative stereotypical and ‘racist’ attitudes from people at all levels in schools, which served to undermine their positions and demonstrate their relative status.
African Caribbean teachers felt that their ability to realise and express their professionalism, through the delivery of meaningful teaching and learning strategies to minority ethnic pupils, was frustrated by inflexible attitudes towards the national curriculum and the unwillingness by some teachers to appreciate the needs of an increasingly diverse pupil population.

The Evidence

This report begins with a brief background to some of the issues which various commentators have deemed relevant to the discussion about the role of minority ethnic teachers within the teaching profession in England. After a summary of the methods used for this study, the next two sections present teachers’ responses to the questions: ‘What is the status of teachers from minority ethnic groups within the profession?’ and ‘What factors encourage teachers from minority ethnic groups to remain or leave the profession?’ The final section provides a summary of the findings.

Background

Concerned about the volume of complaints received from minority ethnic teachers (20 years ago), about discriminatory practices in schools with regard to recruitment and promotion, the Commission for Racial Equality (1988) conducted research collecting ethnically-based data from schools. The study concluded with several findings which remain relevant today, namely that:

- ethnic minority teachers are few in number, that they are disproportionately on the lowest salary scales, and that they are concentrated in subjects where there is a shortage of teachers or where the special needs of ethnic minority pupils are involved. They do not enjoy the same career progression as white teachers, even when their starting scales and lengths of service are similar nor do their headteachers encourage them in the same way as they do white teachers to apply for vacancies within their school ...

Stating their mission to increase the proportion of minority ethnic teacher trainees by 2005/6, the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA, circa 2003) calculated the proportion of minority ethnic pupils in schools to be 17.1 per cent and aimed to increase the proportion of new entrants, from minority ethnic backgrounds, to initial teacher training to 9 per cent. The Runnymede Trust’s (2003) examination of the factors affecting minority ethnic teachers listed several issues of concern, most of which feature in this study of the status of minority ethnic teachers, they include:

- ‘subject stereotyping, promotion only available through specialist routes that do not lead to headship, expectation that they will ‘deal’ with parents or children from minority ethnic backgrounds, expected to legitimise school decisions that they expect may have discriminatory origins, perception of teaching as low status among certain minority ethnic communities, encountering racism during training/teaching practice’
The General Teaching Council for England (GTC), through its Achieve network, have sought to encourage equality and diversity in schools and support the recruitment, retention and professional development of minority ethnic teachers. Highlighting the importance of a more diverse workforce, the Vice Chair of the GTC (Sivaloganathan, 2005) said, ‘BME [black and minority ethnic] teachers need a better deal in their own careers ... they are underrepresented in senior management positions and in headships. That needs to change too’.

Rattansi (1992) made the point that the by-product of stereotypical attitudes is racial prejudice which seeks to devise ‘hostile or negative attitudes based on ignorance and faulty or incomplete knowledge’. In their argument for greater efforts to increase the proportions of minority ethnic teachers, commentators such as Coard (1971), Wright (1987) and Rattansi (1992) identified a contentious relationship between minority ethnic pupils and white teachers, founded on stereotypical notions of minority ethnic cultures and abilities. Compounding the likelihood of failure for African Caribbean pupils, argued Bourne et al. (1994), is the tendency to exclude pupils on the basis of social and cultural misunderstandings, which ‘tend to see black children as having particularly intractable behavioural problems by virtue of their culture, family structure or upbringing’. Minority ethnic teachers with their abilities to interact, positively, with the cultural complexities of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, present government and schools with an invaluable teacher workforce capable of engaging with the mission to raise standards in education for all pupils but in particular for minority ethnic pupils. McCadden (2000) found in minority ethnic teachers, a workforce equipped with the expertise and cultural understanding to meet the demands of minority ethnic pupils in order to stimulate academic prowess.

Methodology

The investigation of minority ethnic teachers’ status was conducted in focus groups of teachers holding a range of professional roles in schools and local authorities in three regions. The objective was not to make generalisations about the population of minority ethnic teachers, rather to gain an understanding of the social, political and cultural developments that influence their perceptions of their status. The level of interest in this study displayed by minority ethnic teachers was encouraging, however, translation of that interest into committed participation was somewhat challenging. Teachers were asked to participate and share experiences of a sensitive nature pertaining to past and current school experiences. Fear of reprisals punctuated their reasons for non-participation.

Candid discussions with participants revealed that one of the chief fears was the prospect that information about their presence and contributions at the meetings might reach their headteachers. Teachers suspected that a sinister agenda might exist in the association of this project with the DfES. An Indian teacher shared the views of her colleagues who had decided against attending a focus group:
She said “Whatever we say, these people are always connected and we could fall in trouble”. So I thought that there is an issue where ethnic minorities don’t feel confident. She said “even if they say it’s completely confidential, it’s not”. She told me “Be careful what you say”. You need to work on building confidence in these minority ethnic teachers.

Also, a common accusation, even from those who attended focus groups, was the charge that valuable research which challenges the activities, motives or policies of government and school management would fail to achieve sufficient exposure.

**Data collection**

Data collection took place between May 2005 and April 2006. African-Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani teachers were invited to participate in one of four focus groups held in their local authority areas. In addition, interviews were conducted with five teachers who chose not to participate in group sessions.

Focus groups were held in the North-west, the West Midlands and London where there were schools with substantial numbers of pupils and teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds. All participants were assured anonymity, therefore their names, their local authorities and their schools are not divulged in this report. The main method of gaining access to these teachers was through negotiations with local authority representatives, teachers’ union representatives and various minority ethnic teachers’ network groups. The GTC’s Achieve Network was also generous in publicising the study to its network members.

These focus groups were conducted with qualified minority ethnic teachers who were working in maintained schools or attached to various local authority school support services. The research took place in 6 local authorities and included 14 teachers from London, 14 teachers from the North-west and 21 teachers from the West Midlands. From the four ethnic groups 33 African Caribbean, three Bangladeshi, seven Indian and six Pakistani teachers participated.

The following section presents the findings from each of the focus groups.

**What is the status of teachers from minority ethnic groups within the profession?**

In this first section of the findings, which seeks to understand how teachers feel about their relative status within the profession, teachers present a rationale for the necessity for schools to promote equitable career opportunities, based on the national desire to raise standards in education. The next part of the section, under the heading ‘Attitudes towards government’, reports teachers’ views on the impact of government policy initiatives which they feel have a direct or indirect impact on their status. In the final part of this section teachers offer suggestions of ways in which teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds might gain enhanced status within schools, through forms of ‘Ethnic monitoring’.
Meritocratic advancement for all?

Teachers, as with people in any other profession, are entitled to equality of access in all areas of their careers but minority ethnic teachers have serious concerns about the reality of this principle with regard to recruitment at various levels, professional support/collegiality, continued professional development and promotion to all strata of the profession. For many minority ethnic teachers, their low status and desire to attain the more senior positions in schools, including headship, or to see other minority ethnic teachers in such positions, is closely associated with their desire to tackle the problem of the underachievement of minority ethnic pupils in schools. These teachers felt that minority ethnic teachers generally held low status positions, a situation which they felt contributed towards minority ethnic pupils’ understanding of the hierarchical location of their communities within society. Minority ethnic teachers argued, therefore, that their inability to secure senior positions had a negative effect on pupils’ self-worth, aspirations and ultimately their academic performance. An African Caribbean deputy headteacher in London stressed her impatience to see the proliferation and nationwide acceptance of minority ethnic people into all spheres of public life in Britain. From her viewpoint, it is essential for the self-esteem and confidence of pupils to be enhanced by the presence of minority ethnic people in the most influential positions negotiating public governance. It is these positions that she feels minority ethnic children should be encouraged to pursue:

*We need more at the top of the ladder because that’s where you’re going to make the impact. Not only as a headteacher, you need to start going into the council because even if you’re a headteacher you’re curtailed by them [local authority officers and elected members]. You have to start moving into local government, into government. Black people have been around [in England] from time immemorial, how many are in parliament? How many in really influential jobs? This is why we need to educate our children. We need to say ‘you get in there, don’t look at the colour of your skin ... you need to go out there and show I am who I am, it’s not the colour of my skin but what I can do.*

An African Caribbean primary headteacher, also based in London, agreed with the view that minority ethnic people needed to secure senior positions and influence policy decisions within local authorities. For her, the challenge to raise the academic attainment of African Caribbean pupils rested not just with schools but required the attention of the whole of the local education service. She said that in her local authority, whilst schools had a ‘fair number of black headteachers, none of the LEA senior management or advisory services are black’.

Bangladeshi teachers were also convinced that their status in schools played a major role in encouraging and inspiring Bangladeshi pupils to succeed academically. A Bangladeshi teacher from London insisted that Bangladeshi pupils needed to draw their confidence from examples of successful Bangladeshi people in management positions within schools and the public arena. He drew an analogy with local governance, explaining that a previously disinterested local Bangladeshi community had started to take their political responsibilities more seriously since they became more politically aware, following the accession of Bangladeshi citizens to policy-making positions in local government. A Bangladeshi teacher from London acknowledged that most Bangladeshi people who were serving as elected
members were first generation Bangladeshi and perhaps did not have sufficient grasp of the role, but nevertheless he was confident of their future success. However, his point was that the political headway being made in this area of London by the Bangladeshi community had not filtered through to the education system, where Bangladeshi teachers were under-represented at the most senior levels and which had an adverse effect on the academic attainment of Bangladeshi pupils. He argued that the local Bangladeshi community were more likely to engage with school activities if they could relate to the people who were making influential decisions affecting their children’s lives:

If there are Bangladeshi people in the decision-making process, in the schools, in the educational set-up they feel that they belong. In this borough 50% of councillors are from the Bangladeshi community and that has given the Bangladeshi community some political confidence, although their contributions might not be that much, but at least there’s a presence, a political presence. If that is true for the political world then in the educational world it is also very important. At the moment it is perceived that decisions are being made by somebody else and we don’t see the community in the decision-making system.

Two regional examples of headteachers who were prepared to support the advancement of minority ethnic teachers, were shared by teachers, who, as a result of their headteachers’ actions felt they were valued members of their schools. The first example was that of a school in London where two of the teachers attending a specific focus group with African Caribbean teachers, had worked at the school, at different times but with the same headteacher. A head of department with the role of AST, commended the white headteacher at her school for her ability to recognise teachers’ strengths and support their progress to senior positions. She recalled the pace with which she was able to gain promotion, ‘within 2 years I was head of department and within 3yrs I was an AST. I didn’t think it was a race thing at all’. She pointed out, that at that stage, all of the school’s ASTs were from minority ethnic backgrounds, a situation which changed as white teachers started to obtain these positions also. She added ‘...I don’t know if it was something consciously done by the head or not, I can’t imagine it would have been. I think she just went for teachers that were working really hard and getting good results and having a positive effect on their students’.

The second example of positive support from headteachers was mentioned during the conversation between two African Caribbean teachers in the North-west. One of these teachers was attempting to console the other, whom she had previously taught, as she bemoaned the lack of professional development since the school’s appointment of a new headteacher. She explained to her colleague:

the two previous heads that you’ve had have been way ahead of their time, in terms of incorporating and promoting black people. Although they were white they were always progressive, and whatever schools those heads were in they wanted to make sure they had good teachers including black teachers and so on as role models for the kids. And this person [the new headteacher] has come along and does not understand the ethos of where the previous two heads have come from and that’s the difference. So this person is what we would normally
expect but it’s come as a shock to your system. Those two were so good at drawing you in and nurturing you so that you could have the confidence.

Another African Caribbean assistant headteacher in the West Midlands, who was working towards his National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH), had had mixed experiences with headteachers in the local area. He was graphic in his explanation of the ways in which he believed headteachers influenced the status and careers of minority ethnic teachers. One of his headteachers had failed to acknowledge his expertise until he decided to leave the school to work at a school where the headteacher was more attentive to his teachers’ professional development needs. He explained his previous headteacher’s attitude: ‘… me and the Head were best friends until I told him I was leaving and the man cursed me, he said “You can f’off, don’t let me f’ing see you come back here again ...”’ He said that, during his first year at his current school, his new headteacher had done more for him than his former headteacher did during the 4 years that he was in post. He explained how he had benefited from the move, ‘the Head there [at his new school] gave me a five year action plan and said that in 5 years you want to be moving out. It’s like now I’m on the NPQH and he’s saying “start looking now, we’ve promoted two long-standing teachers here to deputy Heads, there’s not going to be a deputy Head position coming up within the next 5 years”’. These are just a few examples of ways in which headteachers have demonstrated an even hand when devising strategies to support the career advancement of teachers. Unfortunately, however, those cases are outweighed by the multitude (too many to include in this report) of examples where teachers of all minority ethnic backgrounds have complained about inequitable opportunities for promotion and a depressed sense of status. A few of the comments from teachers of each of the minority ethnic groups provide a flavour of the resentment that teachers felt towards their school’s management of their careers. These cases reveal a range of problems such as lack of awareness, patent nepotism and exclusion from cliques. Pakistani teachers in London and the North-west were just as concerned at the low numbers of minority ethnic teachers in senior positions as other minority ethnic teachers. Review of the comments of a few of the Pakistani teachers revealed concerns about the extent to which they appeared uninformed about the professional opportunities available to them as teachers. One of these teachers said that on entry to the profession she was totally unaware of the hierarchical structures in schools, and thought that ‘… you had to be either a classroom teacher or a headteacher and that was it. I didn’t even know ASTs existed’.

Another Pakistani teacher, also in the North-west, although she had secured an AST position, felt she had been duped into accepting the position at the cost of forfeiting the chance of a deputy headship, which she felt would carry greater kudos. Whilst for many the AST role is a sought after position, it does carry the requirement for teachers to excel in and concentrate on a specialised subject/area. Deputy headship, on the other hand, requires a more general all-round set of skills and management techniques. She said ‘I’ve been kept in Year 6 due to my specialism but if I’d known that I could have applied for a management position I wouldn’t have taken the AST. I’m going to apply for NPQH next year but I’m not sure if my Head will support me.’ This teacher also had concerns that although she was included in the school’s leadership team her relative status was clear as she felt excluded from genuine decision-making processes and felt that her headteacher had deliberately thwarted a vital career opportunity for her. The resilience and determination of this teacher
to manage her own career development is, perhaps, commendable as she was prepared to challenge her headteacher on the issue. She said:

*In my performance management meeting I reminded the new head of my desire for NPQH and challenged her for excluding me from leadership discussions. I said, “You don’t acknowledge me as a member”. A year ago I would have cried but now I won’t. This is an Asian girl who they don’t respect but she’ll keep asking “why?”*

Indian teachers also spoke of the difficulties that existed for their communities, with regard to accessing certain positions in schools. An Indian London-based supply teacher, who had been working in the same school for four years, explained how she saw a chink of light when the school appointed an African Caribbean deputy headteacher with responsibility for teacher recruitment. A sudden strategic change was required, however, when the headteacher discovered a change in the normal pattern of recruitment. The teacher’s tone was lamentable as she described the situation,

*‘In our school one SMT is black, she is deputy head but the rest are white. They put her in charge of recruitment last year and she recruited three staff, two black and one Asian. And when we started the new term in September that responsibility had been given to someone else, she’s white’. *

Other teachers have spoken about the reliance upon the perceived fairness of minority ethnic teachers in management positions for career breaks, such as the Indian head of department, this time in the West Midlands, who was fortunate to have an African Caribbean headteacher who recognised and rewarded his expertise. He complimented her, *‘For my head of department post I had to apply for jobs at various places, it took me 5 years and in the end I believe the single factor that got me this post was the fact that the head was an African Caribbean head and she gave me the opportunity’. *This teacher felt that a more ethnically diverse school management was one of the few ways in which minority ethnic teachers could breach what he viewed as the closed networks which served to promote nepotism. He explained, *‘... that’s what stops us from encouraging our kids to come into teaching ... we don’t have access to the networks that are there’.*

Concern was raised by a couple of the Indian teachers about the tendency for headteachers to be more attentive to the needs of those minority ethnic teachers, particularly African Caribbean teachers, who are prepared to present their case for professional advancement in a more forceful manner. An Indian teacher in the West Midlands felt that she, as with other Asian teachers, may have been forced out of the promotion arena, unfairly. She concluded:

*I think Asian teachers don’t kick up as much of a stink as do other teachers. I’ve got other Asian teachers who work with me and we keep in the background, we don’t fuss. There are lots of things we disagree with but we just keep our noses out of things because I’ve found, over the years, that we’re not taken seriously with a lot of things.*

Some Indian teachers felt, therefore, that they, and other Asian teachers, needed to take action to promote their own status in schools. An Indian teacher from the North-west described what she had done to take control of her own career advancement,* ‘I think I’ve..."
learned to control my professional development now and I’m logging everything that I’ve asked for. I’m not prepared now for management to repeatedly ignore my wishes. What I do is to ask for it, log it, take action if I need to take action. I kind of feel a bit weary to have to push against every damned thing’.

Bangladeshi teachers spoke about the ways in which their lifestyle differences, due to adherence to their Muslim faith, exclude them from certain situations. One of these teachers was particularly concerned about exclusion from teachers’ social settings, to which he felt membership was a significant advantage, increasing the potential for promotion or other professional development. He said:

There are barriers. Bangladeshi Muslims will not go to the pub for social evenings. So it’s the socialisation factors in establishments, especially higher up [senior managers], where decisions are taken in the pub in a place where we don’t go ...Even if formal decisions are not made, what happens is that you will lose out, the fact that you are not there in the social group, then you’re disadvantaged in terms of the information, extra friendships etc.

African Caribbean teachers spoke about the same issues from their perspectives, many of them reserving their most scathing comments for headteachers who they felt, generally, served to hinder their professional development. A teacher in the North-west spoke about the willingness of headteachers to keep certain teachers away from positions of responsibility. She said:

I don’t think that Heads will do anything unless they have to. I think they’re quite happy with the status quo, they will keep black people where they are because most black teachers will work really hard. I know in primary, there are lots of women who are there working their socks off doing everything they can, giving of themselves and they’re not really believing that they need to get anymore from it because they’re quite happy with the amount of money they’ve got, they’re happy with the fact that they know they’re doing a good job and it’s all intrinsic.

For some minority ethnic teachers, it was only after external influences came to bear upon headteachers that they saw any chance of promotion, or at least recognition for their expertise, and the associated enhanced sense of status. The teacher above referred to her own situation, in which she felt the catalyst for her career progression came from an external source, rather than through her headteacher. She said:

‘... even though the Head eventually promoted me, she only promoted me after OfSTED came and gave me the highest [ratings] of all the teachers. I got excellents and very goods throughout my teaching and I wasn’t being given anything. The inspector was responsible for two areas and he sat down with me and looked at the progression I was taking the school through, the leadership that I was offering and he said “And you’re not getting anything for this are you?” I said “well I don’t need anything because I’m enjoying my work, I love what I do”. The inspection was July and September I was offered the promotion.'
A similar situation was described by a primary school headteacher in London, who, whilst being content with her progression through the profession, was also rewarded for her work at the behest of external authorities rather than her own headteacher. Her story, whilst over 20 years old, almost mirrors the aforementioned, perhaps demonstrating the limited extent to which attitudes and actions of headteachers have changed. She explained that her breakthrough to seniority occurred after being observed by the HMI who complimented her, ‘She said “this is wonderful, this is great, I’d like you to come to the headteachers’ conference to talk at the conference about your topic and why you did it this way”. I took it to the headteachers’ conference and got job offers from all over England’. The same HMI told her that she could be a headteacher by the time she reached 28 years of age (she actually became a headteacher shortly after her 28th birthday). The HMI designed a career development plan with her and promised to transfer her from the school that she was in at the time as she felt that the school management would hinder her professional development.

In their discussions about the insufficient numbers of minority ethnic headteachers within the teacher workforce, African Caribbean teachers were concerned about the limited extent to which they felt minority ethnic headteachers were able to make the desired impact that they thought was needed to change the status of teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds. A teacher attached to a local authority EMA (Ethnic Minority Achievement) team in the North-west was doubtful that significant change was on the horizon and felt that any prospective headteachers form the African Caribbean community would enhance their chances of success by concealing any inclination towards equal opportunities. She remarked, ‘I think that if you come across as a bit vocal or anything to do with black issues, well you can forget management. What you have to do is to keep shtum and if you get the management job then do what you want with it.’ An African Caribbean teacher in the West Midlands, continued the theme reflecting on examples of African Caribbean headteachers who had found it difficult to implement certain policies in the face of local authority and teacher opposition, she suggested:

... even black teachers are under pressure to maintain the status quo. I know black teachers who have become heads and they have had to toe the line. It’s either that they toe the line or they’ve had so much hassle that they’ve had to give it up, they have no support. It’s like the Red Sea, everybody parting and not supporting them at all, and they’re left to stand alone and of course their policies are just not going to work.

**Attitudes to government**

As teachers felt that their status in the profession was affected by their difficulties in securing senior positions in schools, they were asked to comment further on the issues which they felt served as barriers to their career progression, and the extent to which they felt government directives aided or hindered that progress. The bulk of their concerns surrounded issues related to headteachers’ management of government initiatives and their wilful neglect of equal opportunity requirements. In terms of government policy initiatives, perhaps of most direct concern to the status of minority ethnic teachers, has been the perceived fairness, or otherwise, of the implementation of the government’s reformation of the school workforce (DiES, 2002b) in schools. A Pakistani teacher in the North-west was of the opinion that, during recent years,
teachers had experienced a decline in their status, mainly due to workforce restructuring. She contended:

_There’s been a big turnaround over the last five years due to TLR [teaching and learning responsibilities] and all the restructuring that schools have done. There’s no longer any clear steps to promotion. I know an assistant head, who’s an Asian woman and before she was told that she was in line for promotion but now, because of TLR, she’s been taken off the ladder for promotion._

Another Pakistani teacher felt that headteachers’ restructuring of staffing levels left minority ethnic teachers at a disadvantage, due to the types of responsibilities that headteachers had apportioned them and found it difficult to believe that the government will preside over what she feels to be an inequitable system. She predicted that the government would reverse the policy within the next five years because, in her view, ‘all ethnic minorities will be at the bottom, it was hard enough for ethnic minorities to get appointments before but now it will be even harder’. She spoke about her headteacher’s attitude towards the new structure, after a meeting that was held to explain the new system to staff, ‘after the meeting the head asked me how I felt about it and I said that the new structure was not going to help a lot of people. All she said was “If people are going to lose money then they lose money”’.

Indian teachers made very few comments with respect to the programme of restructuring which schools have undertaken and appeared content that they had been sufficiently well catered for, as one of the London-based teachers explained, ‘our headteacher has balanced it out very well and she has been ready to talk to any of the teachers who are losing out and she’s giving them positions so that they don’t lose too much. She’s negotiating with them personally, maybe giving them extra responsibilities.’ Bangladeshi teachers, on the other hand, were apprehensive about their prospects under the new structures, feeling that their ability to advance had been hampered. A Bangladeshi teacher felt slighted when she was asked to take over coordination of PHSE (personal health and social education), a subject area which afforded her no responsibility credits, and consequently no associated salary enhancement. She complained that ‘TLR has had an impact on the opportunities available as I am struggling to get on that ladder’. A Bangladeshi primary school NQT explained that she was reconsidering her choice of specialism as ICT no longer attracted TLR credits at her school. Although she held an ICT related degree she was prepared to hone her skills and divert her attention to an alternative area which would be reflected in her salary and provide the scope for higher status opportunities later on in her career.

A few of the African Caribbean teachers were satisfied with the ways in which headteachers had conducted the restructuring of their teacher workforce. One such teacher, in the North-west, noted her headteacher’s fairness in ensuring that staff were treated equally. This teacher recognised the fact that the reform ‘could be open to misuse’ by headteachers wishing to employ discriminatory practices but contended that ‘...you’d have to be pretty screwed up to do that kind of thing’. But this is precisely the situation which an African Caribbean teacher felt she had faced at her school where she feared the new structure may disadvantage minority ethnic teachers. She explained, ‘Progression is difficult enough for existing black teachers. When this system comes into play, how are they going to implement it in order for progression to be fair? People are running scared because they fear that their management points will be taken away.’ Another teacher based in the North-west was convinced that headteachers had been granted licence to perform blatant
discrimination by rewarding those closest to them. She said ‘it’s all about money, Heads are going like this [rubbing hands together] saying “I can save some money here and I can get rid of such and such”. It’s the old-boy network, it’s “You’re alright because I’ll make sure you have three people under you”.’ Another African Caribbean teacher, attending the same meeting, felt that ‘with the freezing of the management points, if there’s a black teacher in the school who’s perceived as being too vocal, that could be mismanaged by certain headteachers to get certain teachers out of their school. It’s a weapon that can be used by various headteachers’.

Another area of concern, particularly for African Caribbean teachers, related to the ways in which they felt that school’s interpretations and application of the national curriculum had a negative effect on their sense of professionalism. They felt that teachers demonstrated their worth and justified their status through their successful teaching of the content to diverse pupils groups, but they were dissatisfied with what they felt was a rigid curriculum, lacking flexibility to cater for the learning needs of minority ethnic pupils. For an assistant headteacher, in its current form, the national curriculum did little to enhance the status of the teaching profession, she explained:

‘Teaching is about raising the expectations of all children no matter what your colour is, so to me it’s about everybody in my class counts. To me it’s about looking at teaching, raising the status of the teaching profession, looking at addressing the national curriculum. The national curriculum is white middle-class, it doesn’t address the cultural needs of different pupils.’

Some teachers have succeeded in adapting their learning materials and teaching styles to satisfy the learning needs of their classes, but found that their headteachers had not always been supportive of their strategies. An assistant headteacher explained that she resorted to covert measures with her primary class of pupils of various ethnicities, when she incorporated their own histories into her teaching of historical events. She explained that her white colleagues and the school management opposed any deviation from the traditional history syllabus. During a discussion between teachers in another focus group in the West Midlands, about the constraints of the mathematics syllabus, an assistant headteacher felt teachers needed to be prepared to stretch the boundaries in order to aid the development of minority ethnic pupils’ understanding of the subject, and justify teachers’ own claims to any professional standing within schools. He argued that teachers should employ their own strategies to ensure that the pupils gain the knowledge they need to attain the results, regardless of the restrictions placed upon teachers. Thus, for these teachers the mere semblance of status was insufficient as they saw their true professional status as dependent upon their possession of the knowledge, skills and freedom to serve all of their pupils’ learning needs. A supplementary report (to be published by DfES) uses data from this study to discuss the factors pertinent to teachers’ perceptions of the barriers to their professional aspirations, which emanate from a desire to tackle the persistent underachievement of minority ethnic pupils.

African Caribbean teachers in London and the West Midlands felt that, compounding the negative effect of a mono-cultural curriculum, some of their colleagues failed to appreciate the necessity and/or lacked the will to engage with inclusive teaching approaches which often depended on their engagement with minority ethnic pupils’ cultural differences. A West Midlands-based teacher explained situations where African Caribbean pupils had been misunderstood by white teachers and how her intervention had brought about mutual
understanding between parents, teachers and pupils in dealing with cultural and language differences. Teachers’ further explanations of the vital importance of a more flexible approach to the requirements of the national curriculum and a preparedness on the part of all teachers to accommodate the oral and body languages of diverse pupil populations are detailed in Cunningham (2006).

Ethnic monitoring

Challenged to suggest ways in which the status of minority ethnic teachers might be enhanced, ‘tracking’ was viewed by most minority ethnic teachers to be the key strategy capable of increasing the likelihood of fair access to a meritocratic teaching profession in which teachers are evaluated and rewarded on the basis of their knowledge and expertise as opposed to their ethnic origin. Teachers called for a mandatory system which would apply pressure to employers and education providers to monitor people as they entered the profession and throughout their careers. Indeed, one of the recommendations made to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) by Osler et al. (circa 2002) was to ‘Review DfES Code of Practice on LEA – School Relations to ensure that it enables the effective collection of data required to enable schools and LEAs to carry out their duty to carry out race equality (as service providers and employers) under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act’. An African Caribbean teacher, now working as an LEA behaviour and attendance consultant, aired her thoughts during a focus group session held in the North-west:

I think there needs to be some sort of tracking system in education anyway, so that for the people who are experiencing staying in the same job, not moving on, the school must run a much tighter ship. So they can track that this person has come in as a Year2 teacher and they systematically have appraisals where they move that person’s career on. There has to be some guidance on that by the DfES.

Similar views were expressed by other African Caribbean teachers who placed the emphasis on the school’s responsibility to ensure that teachers are given sufficient opportunity to progress their careers, however, these teachers were not convinced that headteachers would enforce such monitoring procedures voluntarily, and that ‘the DfES should produce this as law, rather than good practice because if they produce it as a document of good practice, these people [headteachers] will not take note’.

Suspecting a systemic strategy to exclude minority ethnic teachers from high status positions in schools, an African Caribbean teacher in the West Midlands was convinced of a conspiracy on the part of school managers to maintain a quota of minority ethnic teachers at senior levels, he explained, ‘the system is very smart because we will get promoted but we won’t be promoted to tilt the balance. He provided the example of an African Caribbean teacher who had been occupying a senior management position for a few years, however, ‘no other person can break into that level, simply because the ratio is already met, they don’t need to promote anybody else.’ One of the teachers attending the same focus group suggested the DfES ran a pilot project which would: ‘take a sample of people qualifying in a certain year, from different backgrounds and track them every so many years and see where they are, what they’re up to, what their experiences are and why is it that this group of people have gone ahead’. African Caribbean teachers felt, strongly, that positions of
seniority in schools should be awarded on merit and not as tokenistic gestures by school managers in order to save face or to maintain quotas. They felt that such specious appointments would create a lack of confidence in the abilities of minority ethnic teachers and undermine the status of the teaching profession.

Teachers also rejected, as untenable, the idea of positive discrimination, which would ensure certain proportions of teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds. Teachers felt, strongly that these ideas were unsustainable and ran contrary to their desire to ensure high quality teachers for pupils. One of these teachers in the West Midlands spoke of the burden that a teacher appointed on this basis might have to bear, ‘I don’t believe in positive discrimination, and if you get into a position just to get the numbers right you’ll always be looking over your shoulder and think “this doesn’t feel right”, you’re not valued, you’re just there because they’re making the numbers right’. Although a minority view, a couple of the African Caribbean overseas (Jamaican) teachers, based in the West Midlands, were prepared to challenge the premise that greater numbers of minority ethnic teachers would equate to improved academic attainment for minority ethnic pupils or tackle racism in recruitment. One of these secondary school maths teachers was unequivocal in his assertion that the argument was flawed and said, ‘if we ask for it we’ll be sorry in the long-run. In my school, I’m sure if we work out the ratios there would be too many black teachers there, then some of us would have to go.’ The point is made that by asking for policies which seek to match the proportion of minority ethnic teachers to the proportion of minority ethnic pupils, then once those proportions are fulfilled in specific schools, headteachers would not feel obliged to recruit further from minority ethnic groups, and serve as a deterrent to potential teaching applicants of minority ethnic backgrounds.

When asked to comment on the significance of a teaching workforce to reflect, more accurately, the ethnic composition of the pupil population in schools, Bangladeshi teachers expressed similar concerns to those raised by African Caribbean teachers. Although they felt that greater numbers of Bangladeshi teachers would demonstrate to Bangladeshi pupils that they too have a place in a profession which is considered by their community to be of respectable status, Bangladeshi teachers were curious to know more about the ethnic breakdown of the current teaching workforce and, most importantly, the proportions occupying middle or senior management positions. One of these London-based teachers, working now with the local authority’s Learning Support Service, also wanted knowledge of the precise minority ethnic backgrounds within the teacher workforce. From his perspective, as a specialist in the management of pupil behaviour, he felt that more Bangladeshi teachers in schools would produce positive outcomes for pupil attainment, ‘I think definitely there would be an impact because if children can relate to their teachers in terms of their background then it’s good for class management. This expectation could be by law in these Boroughs [local authorities with high proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds] with teachers from the different ethnic communities as they do understand their communities. Most teachers in this borough are middle class white people, a few live in the borough but most of them live outside. So, do they know the dynamics of this community, the difficulties, challenges, aspirations, their hopes?’ Another London-based Bangladeshi teacher, whilst anxious that some action would be taken, was less certain about the merits of any attempt to match proportions of teachers to the pupil population. She explained:
That way you won’t get white teachers in all black schools and no black teachers in white schools. But I feel that raising the profile of black teachers and developing opportunities naturally, not tokens, for black teachers may help. People who are graduating want to get into jobs where they see career progression but what role models of BME [black and minority ethnic] senior managers and heads do they see?

The view from a Bangladeshi teacher from a different area of London was that Bangladeshi teachers needed to be more assertive in their demands for equality of opportunities and higher status in schools. He said that the Bangladeshi community ‘needs to be more vocal, stand up and be counted. Also the government needs to be more interventionist. Positive discrimination is not justified but there must be positive action’. He conceded, however, that ‘... it’s not going to happen in one or two generations, it will take longer’.

Teachers, regardless of ethnicity, will want to receive the due respect commanded by their relative position within their school, to enable them to carry out their responsibilities effectively. It is conceivable that the esteem in which teachers, from majority or minority ethnic backgrounds, are held will have some impact on their determination to remain or leave the profession. Minority ethnic teachers, however, speak in the next chapter about their struggles to command such respect.

What factors encourage teachers from minority ethnic groups to remain or leave the profession?

In this section we discuss some of the factors that affect minority ethnic teachers’ sense of status and have an impression on these teachers’ resolve to remain or leave the profession. Specifically, in the first part of this section teachers speak about the uninformed and potentially damaging stereotypical attitudes of teachers, school managers and pupils. Closely allied to the issues related to stereotyping teachers, the following parts to this section discuss issues of respect, where teachers talk about their struggles to gain the respect of pupils, parents and their teaching colleagues.

Stereotyping minority ethnic teachers

Being the lone, or one of a very few, minority ethnic teachers in a school can be a daunting experience. Many, however, have endured this situation at some stage during their careers. The attitudes and practices of their colleagues can play a significant role in shaping the experience of such teachers and affect their feelings of belonging and either boost or depress their sense of status. Long-standing stereotypical attitudes towards certain minority ethnic communities are shown here to be demoralising for teachers. African Caribbean teachers spoke about their ‘first contact’. A teacher from the West Midlands said ‘on my first day, walking through the doors, the reaction was “Oh the cleaners go through that door”’. Most interesting about such experiences, perhaps, is the lack of surprise among focus group participants, who have had similar encounters themselves. Another London-based teacher recalled her first experience at a school located in an area of London with a large minority ethnic community:

I remember my first teaching job in a school with 98 per cent minority ethnic children and probably one other black member of staff. I walked in and the
Headteacher didn’t think that I was the teacher. I was an angry parent coming in to complain about a child. So I sat outside the room for about half an hour. I suppose that was his way of “let her calm down while I do what I have to do”. Eventually, he was so embarrassed when he realised that I was the class teacher. You could see the face going red and he couldn’t face me, he sent the secretary out to do whatever [the paperwork for her] and she took me to the classroom.

Several teachers concluded that headteachers also held stereotypical images of an aggressive and irrational African Caribbean community. During the few years that he had been teaching in England, a teacher in the West Midlands described what he perceived as astonishment of white teachers at his ability to hold rational and meaningful discourse during meetings. He explained, ‘they are not expecting black people to reason, and we’re thanked for reasoning which to us is a normal thing. You can see them looking perplexed afterwards because they’re expecting us to get mad but we’re not getting mad we’re showing them that we’re professional …’. Another African Caribbean overseas teacher concurred, claiming that ‘there’s an extra burden that we face because we’re Jamaican … they expect that you’re going to be more aggressive than the so called black British’. Another African Caribbean teacher, in the West Midlands spoke of her annoyance at the frequency with which her colleagues brought disobedient pupils to her, presuming that she would be able to bring them in line. She spoke about her own childhood disciplinarians, which she expected most families would have benefited from, in order to make the point that her experiences were not too far removed from other teachers in the school, and as such their presumptions were founded in stereotypical notions of African Caribbean women. She said:

It used to bother me but I know that in my school they have a stereotype. I didn’t do a course to learn it, my mom, my grand-parents, my dad told me. I went to a behaviour venue and they had on it [teaching materials] “Miss Wilson (stereotype black name) and she’s a single woman and she was biggish - it was stern Miss Wilson, the one that the children will not mess about with. And I’ve spoken to most of my black colleagues and it’s the same thing; the preconception that black teachers are able to cope with discipline.

Apart from the Pakistani teacher from the North-west who said ‘I’ve had a NQT who, when I started, presumed that I was a caretaker’, no further such encounters were voiced by minority ethnic teachers from other backgrounds participating in focus groups. Teachers argued that these stereotypical attitudes were evident of the low esteem in which their colleagues held them and were often the source of ‘racist’ practices by teachers and school managers, which might work towards discouraging minority ethnic teachers from considering the teaching profession as a long-term career.

African Caribbean teachers were disappointed that their pupils also held similar stereotypical attitudes with little conception of a professional African Caribbean teacher. An African Caribbean deputy headteacher in a London-based school shared her story about the expectations that pupils often have of African Caribbean people. She described the awkward introduction to pupils on the first day at her new school:

The children amazed me, they first of all went through a line of things that I could be which was “are you so and so’s mum?”, “No”, “are you the cook?”
“No”, “are you the helper?” “No”, “are you the cleaner?” “No”. So it makes you consider the things that children think of black people. When they see them they don’t see them as professionals, it’s the menial jobs first and then ...When I said I’m your class teacher for today they said “No!” It was shock, horror. This is what saddened me and what I think made me continue in teaching. It saddened me to think that this school was 90% minority ethnic pupils and their reaction to a black teacher in the school, they just couldn’t understand that here was a black person coming to teach them.

Gaining respect from pupils and parents

Clearly, the level of respect received by teachers plays a major role in forming their sense of status in their schools and influencing their determination to remain in the profession. Asian teachers may not have suffered the ordeal of negative stereotyping to the same extent as that discussed by African Caribbean teachers above, but they have, however, had their authority challenged by parents and pupils. An Indian teacher in the West Midlands was most offended at the behaviour of a white pupil and his father, explaining:

I was abused last year by a parent in front of my whole class because of this child who was constantly disruptive and rude to me. He was brushing himself up against me and the remarks he was making I could have had him for sexual harassment. He called me a Paki, everything, you name it. Yet I had to teach this child and his father came in and called me all sort of names, right in front of the whole class, yet this child was still not removed from my class.

A Pakistani teacher, also from the West Midlands, commented that she had had negative confrontations with parents of minority ethnic as well as white backgrounds. She was most disturbed, however, by what she felt was threatening behaviour of African Caribbean parents and parents of mixed heritage. The climax of this incident came when she was accused of racism, she said ‘it was the worst year I’d had, they were just a horrendous Year 6 and several times this parent [African Caribbean] had reported me for being a racist. At that point I was at my lowest.’ This teacher explained that this incident, coupled with the lack of support from her headteacher, almost drove her to leave the profession.

Teachers also took exception to the ways in which parents expected them to tend to the pastoral needs of their children, commenting that parents considered them to be ‘either a god or a childminder, nothing in between’ (Pakistani teacher in the West Midlands) and ‘you’re either a social worker ... teaching goes out the window at times’ (Indian head of department in the West Midlands). Bangladeshi teachers, in London, described a quite different teacher/parent relationship. Two teachers spoke at length about the extent to which Bangladeshi parents relied upon them for their ability to interpret non-Bangladeshi teachers’ comments. One of the teachers explained the importance of Bangladeshi teachers in schools in her area of London:

Their very presence can help some parents who don’t feel comfortable confronting a white teacher. So parental confidence is important, many parents won’t go to a white teacher because they don’t know how to speak any English. Although schools provide translators, they [parents] are definitely vulnerable in
front of a white teacher who is knowledgeable. If there are more teachers from the [Bangladeshi] community then there will be more interaction with the community and they say that where parents take more interest children do much better.’

These sentiments resonate with the experiences of the other Bangladeshi teachers in the same focus group but she felt that Bangladeshi teachers should be remunerated for providing what she considered a free interpretation service which schools would otherwise have had to pay for. She said:

*I’ve been at schools where teachers have difficulty explaining or they need interpretation of whatever needs to be said to the parents and they’ve had to hire out TAs and get them to do overtime. The TAs can claim overtime when they’re interpreting, whereas because we’re [Bangladeshi teachers] bilingual we’re expected to do it and we’re not getting anything extra for it ... So there’s more that we have to cater for because we’re bilingual, they’ll approach you more than they’d approach a white teacher because there’s a language barrier there.*

African Caribbean teachers have experienced a range of positive and negative experiences with parents and their children, and as with the Bangladeshi teachers, the majority of positive encounters have been with parents of the same ethnicity. It was from these teacher/parent relationships that teachers felt they gained most respect and were credited with the due status that encouraged them to remain in the profession. Having worked in a number of schools in London, an African Caribbean teacher attending one of the focus groups in London spoke about the benefits and the progress that could be made working with more ethnically diverse teacher workforces and pupil populations. She said:

*You felt that you could be yourself with the parents and the children. And the parents, even though they gave you the respect, when you told them something about their child “wait until I get home ...”, they gave you that respect and you felt that they were engaging and they would come to you and tell you “Well Miss XX, I can’t read but can you help my child”.*

Other African Caribbean teachers spoke about ways in which they had worked with parents to raise the attainment of their children. Another teacher, also in London, spoke of her efforts to be a positive image in the eyes of white parents, stating:

*I don’t think it’s always been good. I think my relationships with parents have changed because they got to know me and I hope I’m a role model so that when they come in and meet another black teacher they won’t be all stand-offish. I hope through meeting me they will change their views about what black teachers are like and what black people in general are like.*

A teacher, in the West Midlands, spoke of his astonishment at the reaction of a parent who respected his judgement of her child’s behaviour. He works in a school that he describes as ‘challenging’, and said:

*The kids are not too bad. I think the biggest problem we have is with the parents, not the children. In fact I quite happily say to the parents that they are worse than the kids. I phoned a parent today and told her that her son was
behaving like an imbecile and to my absolute surprise, this was a white parent, she said to me “I will deal with him when he comes home, love”, I was quite shocked.

He went on to explain how he was satisfied with this mother’s response but felt that generally parents were less supportive.

Gaining respect from colleagues

For many teachers, as shown in earlier chapters, the level of respect and workplace collegiality enjoyed in schools is of great importance and can influence their feelings of self-worth, their impression of the profession and their understanding of their own importance within the teaching community. Positive and negative teacher interaction, at all levels of hierarchy, was discussed in focus groups to understand teachers’ impressions of their relative status in schools and the extent to which they felt inclined to remain or leave the profession. Indian teachers spoke chiefly about situations when they felt excluded from meetings and had to endure racial discrimination from white colleagues. An Indian teacher said, ‘I think favouritism happens a lot in junior schools and primary schools’. Although he is a secondary school teacher, his daughter teaches in a local primary school and ‘she complains about primary headteachers’. During this focus group, held in the West Midlands with Indian teachers, there was consensus that discriminatory practices by headteachers were more severe in primary schools. A primary school teacher agreed:

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\text{The other member of staff [also Indian] who I work with, she’s been there about 16 or 17 years and she said it’s always been like that. She said she was qualified as a teacher but when she was first employed she used to float around the school doing odd jobs until she was put into a classroom. We often sit down together and discuss, how is it that we, being Asian, are put aside and our views aren’t counted or we’re not asked? It’s a case of favouritism.}
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Minority ethnic teachers were aware of forms of indirect racism that hindered their careers by discouraging them to obtain or remain in senior positions. Armed with the knowledge that senior managers at his school would seek to impede his success as head of department, an Indian secondary teacher, also based in the West Midlands, explained the way in which he challenged his line manager by saying, ‘I said to the senior teachers “I know your role is to monitor what I do but I also know that your role is to support me. Now, if you support me I will shout about that but if you don’t support me I will shout about that” and they’ve been very good. We shouldn’t have to run around for support.’

Indian teachers in London were concerned about more direct forms of racism. One such teacher spoke of her shock at discovering, while working as a supply teacher in an area with just one per cent minority ethnic pupil population, ‘the students were giving me respect, some of the staff I’ve received racism from but not the students’. Another Indian teacher spoke about her attendances at teacher training sessions at her local authority’s professional development centre, where she could always anticipate being isolated by the majority of teachers, particularly when they were required to form work/discussion groups. She described one incident in which she ‘was very slowly pushed off as they turned around to form their group’. During the lunch break she spoke to an African teacher who had a similar experience, she explained, ‘... a teacher from Ghana said “I’m going to write in the feed-
back form, do you see how we’re treated?". She asked the teacher about her experience, ‘and she gave exactly the same story’. This Indian teacher is resigned to the view that ‘you can’t wipe this thing out, it’s a permanent thing in this society but we need to learn to deal with this.’

Pakistani teachers spoke about their struggle to gain respect from white teaching staff in positions junior to their own and were ‘disheartened because I’m climbing the ladder of success, they don’t realise how hard I’ve worked to get it, they think it was just given to me’ (Pakistani teacher in the North-west). This same teacher was angered at her colleagues’ lack of cooperation which she felt obstructed important tasks, she said ‘planning wasn’t done as a team because teachers wouldn’t respond, until the headteacher stepped in and said “what’s the problem, why are you not giving XXX your cooperation with planning?”

Another Pakistani teacher, also in the North-west, felt aggrieved at what she viewed as another form of racial exclusion, performed regularly by teachers at her school, when celebrating special occasions; an attitude which she felt served as a reminder of her relative importance in the school. She spoke about the inconsistencies of teachers’ attitudes towards the acknowledgement of Muslim celebrations. ‘It’s like when we celebrate Eid, we spend time with the children and have a good celebration and stuff but not with the staff. When it’s Christmas or any other celebration the staff go out as a group but we don’t go out to celebrate Eid.’

Another Pakistani teacher from the same area, who said she was reconsidering her position within the teaching profession, had problems with a ‘racist’ teaching assistant and felt that as far as white teachers were concerned ‘they just see you as stupid’. She clarified, ‘When the Head asked me to relay information to other management colleagues, they were horrified that I could be given this important role. One teacher refused to take part and the other was negative, and neither of them spoke to me for the rest of the day.’ She said that an African Caribbean teacher at her school left her post last year as she had had similar problems. ‘I don’t understand why they have to be that way’.

African Caribbean teachers repeated stories similar to those mentioned above, in relation to colleagues’ acceptance of their authority and attitudes which they interpreted as directly and indirectly racist. Struggling for recognition, an African Caribbean teacher in the North-west felt that she needed to suppress her knowledge and appear to be less astute in order to be accepted by white teachers. She said:

For a long time in order to get myself accepted I had to pretend that I didn’t know and that they had to teach me but when the time was right I came out and I showed them. Even today I still have to bring things like dictionaries, I still have to provide evidence to prove that what I’m saying is right and to prove them wrong; things like grammatical errors. Some times the consultant [local authority consultant] would help me because I would say something that nobody would believe, then the consultant would come and say it, and then they would believe it.

An African Caribbean deputy headteacher in London had adopted a similar strategy during her early teaching career, as she explained, ‘in the past I’ve been happy to play the idiot and just keep my head down but I found the older I got, the more confident …’.
In one of the West Midlands-based focus groups, a teacher spoke of the lack of support that he felt African Caribbean teachers received from their white colleagues, particularly when managing projects. He said ‘You might be doing something which would benefit the school but I don’t think, as a black teacher, you get a lot of support from your white colleagues. They’re looking for it to fail’. He explains that while other minority ethnic teachers would offer support ‘white teachers would not like to see black teachers benefit from any success’. A teacher in London agreed commenting, ‘at the end of the day you have to be better ... in the eyes of white teachers because they’re just waiting for you to fail’. Summarising his concerns about what he saw as deliberate strategies by headteachers to keep minority ethnic teachers out of senior teaching positions and the unwillingness of white teachers to receive instructions from minority ethnic teachers, an African Caribbean teacher in the West Midlands said, ‘if you’re making decisions that are affecting them [white teachers] they’re not going to like it, so it’s “we’re not going to promote you to a position where you’re going to have to be responsible for making decisions”’. 

During another focus group session, also in the West Midlands, a teacher found that she needed to confront her headteacher with an ultimatum in order to obtain her promotion, she said:

_I made it absolutely clear, “I’m off if I don’t get promoted”. They had to do something and my impact now is with all staff. I have a direct impact not only on all pupils but with all staff and over a period of time they are getting used to me because they are ignorant -the staff- they are ignorant of black teachers which is probably one of the reasons why they didn’t want to see me in that major role’. _

The headteacher of a London-based school defended her opinion that the levels of racism in schools had not subsided over the years, by recalling her own experiences. She came to live in the UK when she was 11/12 yrs old and had a tough time in secondary school. This headteacher described the historical involvement of African Caribbean teachers in British schools and felt that despite the public drive to recruit more minority ethnic teachers, these teachers struggled to acquire any sense of belonging within the profession due to long-standing ‘racist’ attitudes within the teaching profession. She recalled:

_Although I was a very intelligent child who could read, I was put into the bottom class because my English [spoken English] wasn’t good enough, and we had nasty teachers who told us to go back to the jungle. But it’s interesting that we’ve got teachers in this school saying “the LEA’s put a monkey to lead us”, so it’s gone full circle. It’s gone from teachers, when I was at school telling us that we’re monkeys and to go back to the jungle, to two teachers in this school, where the majority of children are from minority ethnic groups, who are saying “we’ve got monkeys leading us”._

This study has revealed the serious concerns of minority ethnic teachers about the influence of their ethnicity on their status in schools and the factors that affect their sense of belonging to the teaching profession. The concluding section assembles some of the key points made by participating teachers.
Summary
During examination of the plight of minority ethnic teachers within the British maintained education system, it is perhaps unsurprising that matters of race and culture permeate this report. It must be acknowledged that these teachers might be those who have had particularly negative experiences as regards their promotions, and relations with other teachers, pupils and parents. When recognising the limitations of this study of the perceptions of 49 minority ethnic teachers, it should be borne in mind that the views expressed are those of teachers who, voluntarily, attended one of several focus group sessions held in six local authorities in the West Midlands, the North-west or London. Whilst we do not attempt any generalisations from these findings, we are confident that the research strategy adopted was sufficiently robust to ensure the validity of the methods used. First, the fact that any teachers had cause to express these views is not acceptable in any profession. Second, these findings are congruent with those of research which has been conducted simultaneously by others. The GTC (2006) survey, for example, identified similar issues with regard to the promotion of minority ethnic teachers. Maylor (2006) has also found similar situations among London teachers where lack of staff development and promotion, lack of transparency in recruitment processes and racist experiences in the day to day professional experiences of ‘black’ teachers had negative implications for recruitment and retention within schools. In other words the present findings are supported by other studies and this increases our confidence in their authenticity. It is an unfortunate commentary but many of these teachers felt, in the face of their encounters with school management, that they had very low status. In their deliberation of matters significant to their status within the teaching profession, teachers have shared their anxieties about matters that they perceive to exist on account of their ethnicity, some of which are summarised below.

- Minority ethnic teachers committed themselves to the cause, to raise standards in education, amid what they viewed as direct and indirect racial injustice meted out by white school managers and teachers seemingly intent on maintaining the status quo by excluding them from professional development and other career advancement opportunities. Speaking about their status, relative to their white counterparts, minority ethnic teachers spoke of feeling undermined by colleagues and headteachers, over-stepped by less experienced colleagues and their reliance upon school inspection officials or, the even more uncommon, fair-minded headteachers, to recognise and reward their knowledge and expertise.

- There appeared to be a growing impatience on the part of teachers from each of the minority ethnic groups who felt that headteachers had, in many ways, hindered their professional development. With few exceptions, headteachers are portrayed as unsupportive and grossly biased in terms of their strategies for rewarding teachers for their efforts.

- Teachers were opposed to the idea of being promoted in order to indulge headteachers’ tokenistic gestures but felt passionately that a system should prevail which would reward excellence, rather than allegiance. African Caribbean and Bangladeshi teachers were most vocal and most supportive of the notion of ethnic
monitoring, seeing it as a positive development, and suggesting the government take an even more interventionist approach, such as tracking the career progress of minority ethnic teachers. Forms of racism were claimed by teachers who felt they had a range of negative experiences evidenced, for instance, through their verbal and physical interactions with colleagues and school managers and in the manner in which they felt their professional development and promotional opportunities had been hindered.

- Bangladeshi teachers felt, strongly, a responsibility to support the development of their community at every level and argued that such work needed to start at schools where they could influence Bangladeshi pupils’ aspirations. They recognised, however, that the mission required the participation of a wider range of Bangladeshi professionals in various sectors of public life equipped with the intellectual strength to influence decision-making processes. Bangladeshi teachers therefore, in recognising their own relatively low status, within the teaching profession, placed an emphasis on the necessity to stimulate a community spirit capable of motivating their children.

- Bangladeshi, Pakistani and African Caribbean teachers held concerns about the ways in which headteachers had implemented the government’s initiative for the remodelling of the school workforce. Bangladeshi and Pakistani teachers were untrusting of headteachers whom they felt had assigned teaching and pastoral responsibilities, deceptively, in order to exclude them from positions for which they would gain teaching and learning credits. African Caribbean teachers shared these concerns but feared also, that the government had provided headteachers with the scope to oust teachers discriminatively. These teachers felt that ‘racist’ practices at these levels, although by no means a recent phenomenon, when coupled with enhanced headteacher autonomy and nepotistic silos, threaten to alienate further a vital teacher workforce. Teachers holding a range of roles and at different levels of seniority have expressed concerns about what they view as the new freedom from accountability afforded headteachers as a result of the government’s school workforce reform directives. For these teachers, less headteacher accountability and transparency equates to a diametric opposition to their chances of equitable status within the profession.

- Minority ethnic teachers considered the attitudes of white teachers and headteachers towards them to be of crucial importance to their sense of status and belonging to the profession. However, present among the list of negative experiences endured by minority ethnic teachers in this study has been the unwelcome stereotypical attitudes which block teachers’ understanding of other cultures and can generate, consciously or unconsciously, racist attitudes. Teaching staff, pupils and parents alike have held opinions of minority ethnic teachers which have prevented them from being viewed in a positive light, and as a professional body of capable teachers.

- Teachers participating in focus groups were forthright about the necessity to achieve professional status through their interaction and ability to cater for the learning needs
of ethnically diverse pupil groups. They remain perplexed, therefore, that an education system which purports to be striving to raise the attainment of minority ethnic pupils should continue to administer a mono-cultural and inaccessible curriculum to generations of the minority ethnic population in England, for whom they believe this policy has consistently failed. Teachers’ requests, of the government and headteachers, are for greater autonomy to adapt their lesson plans in ways that they feel would render them culturally relevant to minority ethnic pupils. This freedom, along with more inclusive attitudes from their colleagues towards the cultural diversities and learning needs of minority ethnic pupils, might contribute to raising pupil attainment and, simultaneously, a renewed self-esteem among teachers.

- Some of the loudest voices in our focus groups were those of community-minded teachers who may have entered the profession at an early age, only to find themselves, in their opinion, struggling against the same ‘racist’ attitudes from individuals and institutions some 20 years later. The anguish for these teachers is clear as they ponder their resolve to continue the fight for pupils’ equitable access to good education, and recognition for themselves through unbiased career advancement.
Chapter 15: The status of early years teachers

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Overview
This chapter on the status of early years (EY) teachers responds to the project’s second aim ‘to understand the factors that might influence perceptions of status and teachers’ attitudes’. It is not typical of the Type III case studies on specific teachers because it draws EY teachers’ responses to the surveys, as well as interviews conducted with Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 teachers and practitioners as a normal part of the programme of Type I and Type II case studies. It therefore presents both qualitative and quantitative evidence. These findings were published as a paper in the *Early Years* journal in July 2006 (Hargreaves and Hopper 2006) and this report consists in large part of the contents of that paper. It considers the sense of status held by teachers from nursery, infant and first schools, covering an age range from 3 to 8 years, and compares their perceptions with those of teachers from primary (ages 5 to 11) and secondary (11 to 18 years) schools. These comparisons were guided by the following research questions:

- How do EY teachers define a high status profession, and how far do they consider that teaching conforms to this definition?
- What are EY teachers’ views of recent initiatives, and their impact on their status?
- What are EY teachers’ perceptions of the esteem in which they are held by groups such as pupils, parents and the public?

The main findings of the chapter are:

- EY teachers agreed with other teachers that high status professions were characterised by *reward and respect* and were just as uncertain as other teachers about whether *external control* typified high status professions.

- Again EY teachers agreed with other teachers that the teaching profession is characterised by *external control* but their views varied over *reward and respect*. Whereas primary and secondary teachers ‘disagreed’ that the teaching profession is characterised by *reward and respect*, the EY teachers were significantly more likely to be ‘not sure’.

- Teachers’ higher ratings of surgeons, doctors and barristers, compared to their own professions gave further credence to the argument that the ‘mystique’ and distance maintained by these professions served to raise their status. Teachers also recognised that the teaching profession’s close proximity to their clients and their parents, contributed to teachers’ status. This situation is clearly an issue for EY teachers who
depend on parental involvement within and outside of the classroom to support pupils’ learning.

- The 2003 survey of teachers showed that the most consistent reasons for teachers’ decisions to be a teacher and their reasons for being a teacher today, was to work with children. This desire was most evident in EY teachers’ responses which were more positive than all other teachers.

The Evidence

*PASSION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN IS PART OF THE CULTURE OF PRACTITIONERS. PASSION MUST BE ALLOWED BOTH AS A PANACEA FOR COPING WITH CHALLENGING PARADOXES AND ALSO FOR INSPIRING PROFESSIONALISM IN THOSE WHO WORK AND PLAY WITH THE YOUNGEST MEMBERS OF OUR SOCIETY (MOYLES, 2001:93).*

Moyles (2001), supported by her own and others’ research, argued that passion for young children is a vital part of professional practice in early years education. In the same year, Hoyle (2001), in his analysis of the status of teaching, hypothesised that, ‘*it is ... the teacher’s relationship with pupils which has the strongest impact on image and hence on prestige*’ (p.140) adding that this relationship is ‘*the most intractable barrier to enhanced prestige*’ (p.143). He suggested that status depends on the image of an occupation, and, in the case of teaching, this involves children in school on an involuntary basis, often in large numbers, and so with an ever-present potential for disorder unknown in other professions. If Hoyle’s hypothesis is correct, the status prospects for EY teachers look rather bleak. On a more positive note, Hoyle hypothesised that the sole aspect of their status which teachers themselves can enhance is the esteem in which they are held through the qualities which they bring to their work, i.e. their dedication, expertise and competence.

Hoyle’s definitions refer to public designations of teacher status. Hoyle maintains that the prestige of an occupation is determined by its perceived image in the public eye. The image of the teacher, he suggests, ‘ultimately stems from the fact that the teachers’ immediate clients are children’ (Hoyle 2001: 141). If as he indicates, teachers’ prestige is relatively low, and teachers feel the need to apologise for their occupation, the fact that EY teachers’ work with the youngest children is likely to render their occupational prestige below that experienced by teachers generally. In relation to occupational status, Hoyle points out that ‘school-teaching’ achieved formal professional status when the Office for National Statistics placed it in category 1.2 along with doctors, barristers, solicitors, clergy, librarians and social workers for the 2001 census. He goes on to say, however, that the ‘semantic status’ of teaching, that is whether knowledgeable groups refer to teaching as a profession, remains questionable, despite, for example, teaching’s all-graduate status and rigorous training. We shall argue below that some recent government policies, on the one hand, and high profile research in early childhood education on the other, have the potential to enhance the professionalism of EY teachers and ultimately raise their occupational status. Further, despite Hoyle’s gloomy predictions for their occupational prestige, EY teachers are better placed than other teachers to raise the esteem in which they are held. Since EY teachers have closer links with members of the public, that is parents and carers, who bring their children
into school, they have more opportunities to demonstrate their expertise, commitment and competence, and so enhance their occupational esteem, than do teachers of older children.

**Developments in early years education in England**

The past decade has seen several initiatives which have the potential to enhance the status of EY educators both within and outside the profession. First of all has been the formal recognition of three to five year olds’ education as a ‘key stage’ to be known as the Foundation Stage within the National Curriculum, in the Education Act (2002). This precedes chronologically the other key stages that have been established in primary schools since 1988 namely, Key Stage 1 (five to seven year olds) and Key Stage 2 (seven to eleven year olds). The earlier introduction of Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (DfEE/QCA, 2000), the establishment of statutory Foundation Stage assessment in 2003 (despite its double-edged impact) and the unprecedented expansion of initiatives and government investment in early years education identified by Moylett and Abbott (1999) illustrate this potential.

Anning et al. (2004) critically elaborate this theme and argue for the importance of informed pedagogical knowledge developed through awareness of, and/or participation in, recent national research projects. Thus knowledge of, and response to, the findings of the longitudinal Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) project (Sylva et al., 2003) which identified, for example, the positive benefits of having qualified teachers in EY settings, and the effectiveness of sustained shared thinking in promoting learning, has the potential to deepen teachers’ professionalism and professionalise teaching. Other examples of central investment in EY research include the Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY) (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002) and the Study of Pedagogical Effectiveness in Early Learning (SPEEL) (Moyles et al., 2002, Fleer et al., 2004). Anning and Edwards (1999), for example, involved EY practitioners from education and day care roles in a collaborative action research project designed to bring together their expertise and develop a curriculum model for literacy and numeracy in young children. Despite these positive developments, Brock however warned of threats to EY teachers’ professionalism from ‘downward’ pressure to conform to the needs of primary schools to meet performance targets:

> [whilst] early years is at the forefront of educational change in the United Kingdom... ... the stresses to meet the demands impacting from primary education filter down from schools into nurseries and early years provision, many early years educators have believed that they are losing opportunities to be creative autonomous professionals (Brock 2001: 2).

In effect the barriers to teaching being recognised as a high status profession that were identified over 30 years ago by Banks (1971) continue to be promoted in EY education. These include the employment of a large workforce, largely consisting of women, many of whom have low level qualifications, who lack lengthy training and do not possess a recognised body of knowledge and expertise. Thus as Abbott and Moylett pointed out,
whilst the status of EY education may have been boosted by recent events, the status of its practitioners is less certain:

*If we give high status to early childhood as a phase in its own right then we should give high status to all our youngest children's educators. With high status comes recognition of skills and knowledge and organised professional development* (1999: 196).

Fumoto et al. (2004) take this a step further in arguing for a reappraisal of the concept of teaching, and the extension of the title ‘teacher’ to include all EY practitioners. There is a danger here that artificially raising the status of all EY practitioners to teacher status, will devalue the lengthy training and specialist expertise that are teachers’ claim to professional status.

Finally in this section, the government, through HM Treasury (2004), have proposed to, ‘improve the qualifications and status of EY and child-care workers’ (para 6.8). This commitment and recognition of research showing the value of settings with qualified staff (e.g. Sylva et al., 2003) would seem likely to raise the status of EY practitioners. On the one hand it should pre-empt a reinstatement in early childhood education of the obstacles listed by Banks (1971) that once faced the majority of state school teachers. The potential effect on EY teacher status of the Ten Year Strategy’s suggested creation of, ‘a new profession combining learning with care long the lines of the continental ‘pedagogue’ model’, with the ‘flexibility to work alongside teachers in the school system’ (HM Treasury, 2004, para 6.10) is a debatable issue. On the one hand, it would potentially allow EY teachers to focus on pedagogical issues, thus rendering their roles less diffuse and reducing another of the factors Hoyle regards as a barrier to enhanced prestige for teaching. On the other, unless the public were aware of the different professional areas of expertise held by the EY teacher and the ‘pedagogue’ working alongside him or her, it could merely maintain perceptions of the diffuseness of the EY teacher role. The Ten Year Strategy begins with a statement of the government’s intention to make, *‘working with pre-school children...have as much status as a profession as teaching children in schools’* (p.4 and p.45). The government is keen also to raise the status of the teaching profession, including that of EY teachers, but the effects of recent and current policies on teacher status, remain unclear, party because it is not possible to find state-funded schools or teachers that are not subject to these initiatives to use as a reference point.

**Methods**

The data presented here come from the public opinion survey of 2003 (Chapter 2), the teacher and associated groups surveys (reported in Chapters 4 and 5), and interviews conducted with teachers, senior managers, teaching assistants, pupils, parents and governors in the case study schools. The case study schools include 15 primary schools and 5 infant schools with nursery classes. The interview extracts reported here are the result of systematic analysis to identify themes in the EY teachers’ opinions on issues relevant to their status and esteem. The case studies also included interviews with mixed gender groups of pupils (see
Chapter 20) where EY children were asked to draw pictures to illustrate a headteacher’s job and a teacher’s job and to provide commentaries on their drawings. Two drawings have been used to illustrate highly typical themes in the children’s observations of the work that teachers and headteachers do.

In the 2003 teacher survey (N = 2350), 146 of the teachers described themselves as nursery, infant or first schoolteachers. In 2006 (N = 5340), 730 teachers were in these categories. The questionnaires asked about status, professionalism, reasons for being a teacher and respect and responsibility. The data were factor analysed and reliable scales were constructed. Scores on these scales between different groups of teachers, such as EY and secondary teachers were compared using standard parametric and non-parametric tests.

**Characteristics of the early years teachers**

Our survey sample of 146 EY teachers consisted of teachers from nursery, first and infant schools. 93 per cent of them were women: compared with 69 per cent of all other teachers (3% of both groups did not give gender information). Their age profile did not differ significantly from that of other teachers, with 21 per cent aged 32 or less, 46 per cent in a middle age range, and 30 per cent aged 51 or over. EY teachers were significantly more likely to have a Certificate of Education (45%) than other teachers (28%). Of these, 53 per cent had a degree and a teaching qualification compared with 70 per cent of primary teachers and 81 per cent of secondary teachers. In summary, the EY teachers were very likely to be women and non-graduates.

**Teaching: a high status profession?**

The questionnaire began by asking the teachers to define the characteristics of ‘a high status profession’ in terms of 19 statements drawn from the literature and our teacher focus groups. As explained in Chapter 4 of this evidence base, the teachers rated their levels of agreement with each statement about a ‘high status profession’ on a five point scale ranging from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’. Typical statements from the list were:

- Is trusted by the wider community to perform a service for them.
- Enjoys high quality working conditions
- Has mutual respect between colleagues
- Has members who are a recognised authority in their area of expertise
- Is subject to external regulation
- Is valued by government
- Enjoys high financial remuneration

The results formed two virtually independent factors which showed that teachers saw a high status profession as characterised by *reward and respect*, and that they were ‘not sure’ whether *external control* was also characteristic of a high status profession. These results provide a teachers’ definition of a high status profession, and early years, primary and secondary teachers’ views were almost identical (Figure 15.1a).
We then asked the teachers to say whether the same characteristics were typical of the teaching profession. The results, in Figure 15.1b, were almost the reverse of those concerning a high status profession. Teachers from all phases agreed strongly that teaching is characterised by external control, and disagreed that teaching is characterised by reward and respect. The teachers’ views were identical in regarding external control as highly characteristic of teaching, but whereas primary and secondary teachers disagreed that the teaching profession is characterised by reward and respect, the EY teachers were significantly more likely to be ‘not sure’. This uncertainty may reflect the ambiguity surrounding the status of EY teachers.

Figure 15.1a Status characteristics of a high status profession
In our case-study interviews, we asked teachers to say how they think ‘others see them’. Two typical comments from EY teachers revealed:

*I’m proud to be a teacher but you don’t boast about it because I don’t think other people necessarily feel the same about teaching as I do. People don’t really understand.*

*[I] don’t feel valued by some people outside. .... Some think you are silly- [it's] not perceived as a well-paid or important job – they wouldn’t want to do it. Not in the corporate world, so [a] silly job to do.*

These statements tend to confirm the view that EY teachers’ sense they are accorded low status by the outside world. In Hoyle’s terms this might refer to the teachers’ sense of their occupational status - how they are perceived by knowledgeable others. An infant school headteacher, however, spoke in terms of prestige, relating teachers’ skills to those of other occupations.

*Our people management skills, our communication skills are undervalued by people in other professions...we are exceptionally good leaders and managers that other professions could learn from but we always seem to be the poor relation in that regard, I think.*

We shall return to the teachers’ sense of prestige below, after considering the EY teachers’ attitudes to external control and the teaching profession. In common with other teachers, and
in comparison with a high status profession, EY teachers perceived *external control* to be strongly characteristic of the teaching profession, as one pointed out:

*I enjoy teaching, I love working with the children but I find there is a lot of political things and paperwork that are taking us from the classroom...all these extra things...coming from the government...it takes away from education and the children.*

When this was explored later in relation to teacher professionalism, EY teachers felt significantly more strongly than secondary teachers that central control of the curriculum and assessment undermined their autonomy and professionalism. Again the interview data typically supported this view, for example,

*... this Literacy and Numeracy Strategy dictated in many ways ...what a good lesson was like...now that suits some situations, some times, but that certainly isn’t the only way that children learn particularly in respect of Early Years...the need to integrate children’s learning when they’re young ... I think that was lost.*

*...This political interference is not in the best interests of the children*  
*...The Government’s document ‘Excellence and Enjoyment’², when I read it I thought, ‘this is what it was like before the National Curriculum, before the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies’. Why don’t they just leave us alone?*

The strength of feeling on the part of EY teachers compared with secondary teachers, may well be explained by the long term existence of external curricula and examination syllabi in the secondary phase, compared with the relatively recent introduction of the National Curriculum and Literacy and Numeracy frameworks (DfEE, 1998; DfEE, 1999) for teaching at Key Stage 1, and the even more recent introduction of formal assessment and Curriculum Guidance in the Foundation Stage (2000).

**Occupational Status**

In another section of the survey, we asked teachers to give each of 16 occupations³, including primary and secondary teachers and headteachers, a rating of 1 (very low status) to 7 (very high status) for ‘the status they have’ and ‘the status they should have’. EY teachers agreed with other teachers that the highest status occupations were surgeons, barristers, doctors, solicitors, vets and accountants but they gave barristers, solicitors, secondary headteachers and secondary teachers significantly higher status ratings than did other teachers. By awarding relatively higher status to secondary teachers, they were implicitly awarding themselves relatively lower status ratings.

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³ The occupations were: accountants, barristers, doctors, librarians, management consultants, nurses, police officers, social workers, solicitors, surgeons, vets and web designers, as well as primary teachers and headteachers and secondary teachers and headteachers.
When asked to rate the ‘status that they should have’, the EY teachers’ ratings resulted in rankings identical to those of other teachers. They placed surgeons 1st, doctors 2nd, and nurses 5th. Secondary heads went from 8th to 3rd, and primary heads from 10th to 4th. Secondary and primary teachers were promoted in an ideal world to 6th and 7th from 12th and 14th respectively. Management consultants and web designers were relegated to 15th and 16th places.

One feature of a high status profession is that of both a literal and metaphorical distance between the professional and his/her clients. The inaccessibility typical of say doctors and barristers, has served to sustain a professional mystique that, until recently (Sachs, 2003) has induced trust in professional expertise and respect for authority. These qualities have tended to elude teachers, especially EY teachers whose professionalism would tend to prize accessibility, welcoming parents and carers into the classroom, getting to know the families, and visiting new children at home. Breslin (2002) discusses in detail the teachers’ dilemma as regards, on the one hand, exclusivity as a feature of high status professionalism and on the other, the professional familiarity that enables teachers, especially EY teachers, to help children learn. An EY headteacher suggested that, as EY teachers

...we make ourselves too available because we are considering the children...

...by making ourselves open. I think has perhaps undervalued the profession to some extent...

and she continued:

But I think where the teaching profession has, and the government and other people have, made a rod for our back is that we have endeavoured to work with parents and we have encouraged parents to become involved. We’ve been very open. ...a lot of people think that they can do a teacher’s job because everyone has been to school.

Thus EY teachers’ availability and lack of exclusivity might depress what Hoyle calls their occupational prestige and status. However, using Hoyle’s hypothesis that teachers may be able to enhance their occupational esteem through their contacts with parents and carers, we would argue that EY teachers have greater opportunities to enhance their occupational esteem than their primary or secondary colleagues. Their availability allows parents, who are also members of the public, to see the teachers’ commitment and skill in teaching, managing, and caring for children.

To test this hypothesis we turn briefly to the survey of public opinion that was part of the Teacher Status Project. The survey revealed that parents of dependent children were significantly more likely than non-parents to have an image of what teachers do that is more concerned with teaching and learning. For example, when asked, ‘When you think of the activity of teaching, what three things come to mind?’ parents were more likely to suggest the following:

• responsibility for children
• preparing children for future careers
• working with children
• preparing children for exams.

Non-parents were more likely to say controlling a class. This would support Hoyle's hypothesis that the public’s image of teaching focuses on teachers as managers of behaviour, whereas parents of school-age children had more realistic and educationally oriented views. A Foundation Stage teacher said,

There are some who feel you are an authority figure and some who feel I have a nice little dolly life. I go to work at nine; I pat my children on the head. Not parents, those who I deal with at the moment know that I work quite hard. But people who are past that point with their children or have never accessed that think it’s all 9 to 3 and long holidays.

Returning to the teacher survey, we tried to gauge teachers’ perceptions of the esteem in which they are held, by asking them to rate how much respect they felt they received, and how much importance they placed on the respect received from different parties, on a very coarse 3-point scale from ‘none’, ‘a little’ and ‘a lot’. The various parties were as follows:

(1) inside school: pupils, fellow teachers, senior management, support staff,
(2) outside school: parents, governors, local community, general public, media

Figure 15.2a Perceived respect from inside school: pupils, teachers, support staff and senior managers

Figure 15.2b Perceived respect from ‘school associates’ (parents, governors, local community)
As shown in Figures 15.2a and 15.2b, EY teachers perceived significantly more respect than did secondary teachers, from the ‘inside’ school groups, although a few EY respondents were moved to comment spontaneously on the questionnaire that EY teaching was detrimental to their status:

_The higher the age of the children you teach the greater the status. I was moved from Year 3 to Reception, and promoted, but parents said I would be ‘wasted down there’._

_Addressing status within our profession is also an issue between secondary and primary and in particular raising status of early years educators i.e. nursery as an equal partnership. This needs to start by further raising status of younger children’s needs within the UK education system._

_Two or three (colleagues) say you just play- they don’t see what goes into the play, the language etc. Others who have seen what is involved are more appreciative, recognise it is hard work. They don’t recognise the work you do at home because you don’t have marking. They are sort of patronising you._

Despite these comments, the survey results as a whole showed that EY teachers perceived more respect, and placed greater importance on respect from people inside school as well as ‘school associates’ such as parents and community, than did secondary teachers. This perception of respect from groups associated with their schools but not members of it provides some support for our hypothesis that EY teachers are held in greater esteem than their counterparts who teach older children.

The lowest perceived respect for all teachers was from the media and general public. Here, EY (and primary) teachers perceived even less respect from these two outside sources, than
did secondary teachers. All teachers, however, rated these sources as important. Some teachers felt that the media were partly responsible for influencing the views of the general public, yet at the same time their personal experience was of positive views, as shown in the following quote:

Well you have comments that you see on TV and things in the papers and people always say, 'Oh they have all those holidays!' but from my point of view I've always heard people saying, 'It's a lot of work, you know'...My view would be a positive one but...sometimes you feel that you can't win as a teacher.

All these results together suggest that EY teachers feel more strongly than secondary teachers that they have more respect from people with whom they come into regular contact than from the general public or the media. This, we argue, supports the idea that EY teachers enjoy more occupational esteem than their counterparts in other phases.

**Policy developments and their impact on teacher status**

Next, we shall consider the views of the EY teachers on recent policies and potential change. In the questionnaire, teachers were shown a list of recent initiatives and were asked to say whether an increase in each of these would have a positive, neutral or negative effect on their status. Example items included:

- Teacher input into policy reform
- Levels of teacher workload
- Opportunities to engage with educational research
- Availability of classroom support
- Opportunities to develop partnerships with parents
- Understanding by policy makers of the practicalities of classroom life
- The visibility and impact of the General Teaching Council
- Pupil choice of ways to represent their learning.

EY teachers’ opinions matched those of other teachers closely. All teachers considered that the initiatives which would increase public awareness of the demands of teaching and increase teacher involvement in policy reform and curriculum content, would have a very positive effect on their status.

A greater emphasis on pupil issues was seen having a positive impact whilst teachers were unanimous that constraints such as increased workload or more national testing would depress their status. EY teachers were significantly more positive than other teachers on two specific issues. First they felt that an increase in the visibility and impact of the General Teaching Council for England would have a more positive effect on their status than did other teachers. Secondly all teachers thought an increase in the availability of classroom support, such as teaching assistants or technicians, would have a very positive effect on status, but EY teachers were more positive still. This probably reflects their greater experience of working in teams in nursery settings and suggests that they see this managerial aspect of their teaching role as having the potential for increasing their status. In our
interviews, there was a general view that the government failed to understand the complexities of the EY teacher’s work, and typical comments about recent government initiatives included:

I find the plethora of initiatives from the DfES and the demands it makes on the school are negative and that has certainly contributed to my decision to take premature retirement

A headteacher was concerned that,

This notion of the government that you can download plans from the internet and give them to somebody to deliver to a group of children completely undervalues the profession of what a teacher is. You can’t deliver the curriculum, you teach the curriculum.

On the other hand, as suggested earlier, the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (CGFS) has been welcomed. When asked whether the CGFS had had any effect on the status of EY teachers, a Foundation Stage co-ordinator said,

I really do, I really do because all of a sudden we've got our Foundation Stage curriculum we really needed something like that and it's...it's really made the status of play whereas before we had our areas of learning but we didn't have an official 'this is our curriculum' and I think it's made a huge difference...and I think for the rest of the school as well to have the staff in the school here who perhaps just saw it as, you know, play and nothing much going on, and all of a sudden we can now get out our curriculum and say well this is why we do it all.

This statement, and similar responses, point to a critical issue in considering the status of EY teachers, namely the erstwhile lack of an established body of knowledge. The same teacher described the situation prior to the introduction of the CGFS as a time when EY education:

...didn’t have anything really solid about it...there were so many people were doing it in so many different ways. You had some really formal schools, some were doing play and you know there wasn’t any real guideline like there is now in the Foundation Stage document

In other words, the CGFS would seem to be a major step towards the professionalisation and potentially enhanced status of EY teachers. Indeed, our survey revealed that EY teachers were more likely than other teachers to value a shared specialist language for teachers as an aspect of professionalism. The effects of the introduction of ‘Every Child Matters’ (DfES 2004) which proposes closer links between the care and education sectors, as well as EY teachers working as experts in multi-professional teams remains to be seen. As Siraj-Blatchford (2004:147) suggests, this will be more likely to have a positive effect on the status of EY teachers if we, ‘value and reposition teaching as central to quality in early childhood education’.
Status, care and relationships

In this final section we return to the issues raised at the outset, namely the importance of relationships and concern for young children in EY education, and the relative status of education and care in this phase. One of the most consistent responses to our questions about why our interviewees became teachers was the desire to work with children usually spoken with the passion referred to by Janet Moyles (2001). Our teacher survey findings showed that working with children was given as the most important reason not only to become a teacher but also to be a teacher today especially by EY teachers, as shown in Figure 15.3.

Figure 15.3 ‘Working with children’ as a reason for becoming a teacher and being a teacher

In the words of a nursery teacher, the opportunity to develop relationships and be autonomous was paramount:

*What I really love is that you’ve time to have a bit of a chit-chat and you can find out, you can talk to the children. It’s not as pressurised, I haven’t got to produce this or that. We can pursue children’s interest.*

Conclusions

This chapter has attempted to show that EY teachers sense greater occupational esteem - that is respect from people who regularly see their daily work - than secondary teachers. Their occupational status and prestige, however, depend on the public’s views and compared with secondary teachers, EY and primary teachers perceived less respect from the general public and the media. This seems to confirm a sense of inferiority of occupational status. All
teachers felt that their status would be enhanced if there were greater public awareness of their work and if they had more input into policy making. Early Years teachers were more positive than others about the role of the General Teaching Council for England and the availability of classroom support in raising their professional status. The latter finding possibly reflects their greater experience of working in teams. Whilst EY teachers were more concerned than other teachers about loss of autonomy, the introduction of CGFS appears to have been seen as an asset to status. The impact on EY teachers’ status, and sense of status, of the proposals in the Ten Year Strategy for Childcare (HM Treasury, 2004) for a high quality ‘children’s workforce’ and a new profession of ‘pedagogues’ who combine learning with care provides an interesting question for long-term investigation. As yet, it is too early to judge progress of the government’s goal, expressed in ‘Every Child Matters’, to make ‘working with children an attractive, high status career’ (DfES 2004:10).
Chapter 16: THE STATUS OF TEACHERS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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Overview
This chapter explores the perceptions of teachers who work with children who have special educational needs (SEN). It addresses two main research questions:

• What are the perceptions of teachers who teach pupils with special educational needs about their identity and status?

• What factors affect their perceptions of status?

Teachers from a range of SEN settings participated in one of eight focus groups, consisting of six to ten participants, held in different locations across the country. In addition, individual interviews were conducted with a range of other professionals.

The main findings of the chapter are around:

Special needs teachers’ identities
Special needs responsibilities are wide, as are the professional identities of the teachers. Identity and status are not only determined by a particular position in the school’s management structure, but are associated with personal and professional credibility, knowledge, skills, responsibilities and on how the SEN task is perceived. Many wanted to undertake sustained professional development, not only to do the job better, but also because having specialist qualifications is crucial in establishing credibility and status with parents and colleagues.

The working environment
Teachers of pupils with SEN work in a range of settings and there is huge variation in forms of provision across different local authorities. Settings and working environment are directly linked to status. Many did not have adequate resources to do the job, because it was seen as low status work in some schools.
The nature of their work
The special needs task is complex and varied. In part this is because of the contested nature of the special needs task and a lack of agreement about best practice. Many reported tensions between the teaching and management functions of the role. In a rapidly changing field there is a lack of consistency in expectations, roles and responsibilities, especially for SENCOs.

Being a trusted professional
The growth in the number of teaching assistants has affected status. Many SENCOs are being trusted to manage adults, but the message is that unqualified people can do this job. Status increases because the role involves managing adults, but it also decreases because of the belief that unqualified adults can do much of this kind of work.

The children they teach
The status of teachers is linked to the status of the pupils. In the current competitive context, high achieving pupils may be perceived as being higher status than those who struggle, but this view varied across schools. In schools where there was progress in the implementation of inclusive policies and practice, respondents reported that pupils had equal status. In turn this increases the status of their teachers.

Career opportunities
National and local policies and practices have provided new career opportunities for some teachers of children with special educational needs, for example through the provision of ‘outreach’ and consultancy work. Many primary SENCOs saw the role as a good preparation for increased responsibility, including headship.

The perceptions of others about SEN teachers
Status is linked to levels of respect from colleagues, children and parents. The skills and attributes of the special needs teachers themselves is a crucial factor determining status. There was widespread consensus that SEN teachers are held in high esteem by parents and governors.

Introduction
This strand of the Teacher Status Project explores the perceptions of teachers who work with children designated as having special educational needs (SEN). It has been designed in order to answer the following research questions:

• What are the perceptions of teachers who teach pupils with special educational needs about their identity and status within the teaching profession?
• How does the broader special needs policy context and other recent developments affect teachers’ perceptions of their status?
• Is status affected by the nature of children taught, the type of school in which they work, the working environment or by the professional qualifications of the teachers themselves?
• Do special needs teachers hold perceptions of their role, which makes teaching more or less attractive to them?

Background and policy context

It is important to examine the historical developments in the field of special educational needs in order to understand the current context in which teachers of pupils with special educational needs are working. All areas of education have changed during the past twenty years. The reform of school systems, including major changes to governance, accountability and funding mechanisms, together with the introduction of the national curriculum and national approaches to assessment have significantly affected the nature of teachers’ work. In addition, the concept of special educational needs itself has evolved to incorporate new understandings about the interactive nature of children’s special needs. In turn these new understandings are reflected in special needs policies and laws that have been introduced during the past two decades. Such developments have substantially altered the field of special education during the careers of many teachers. Further, these changes have resulted in greater complexity and new uncertainties.

Before 1970, certain children with complex and severe difficulties were considered to be ineducable and were placed in long stay institutions or training centres where they were the responsibility of health or social services. Following the implementation of the 1970 Education Act in 1971, all children became eligible to attend school and became the responsibility of local education authorities. The old training centres were redesignated as schools for the educationally sub-normal (severe). During subsequent years, many of the staff in these newly created schools were accorded qualified teacher status.

Following the Warnock Report in 1978 (DES, 1978) and the associated 1981 Education Act, there was a growth in special needs provision in mainstream schools and increasing awareness that up to 20 per cent of children may have difficulties in learning at some stage of their school lives. These changes in thinking lead to a substantial growth in local authority support services in the 1980s with new posts in peripatetic teams and special needs advisory services being created.

In addition new career routes opened up in mainstream schools for what were then called remedial teachers. A series of new award bearing courses became available to support teachers and developments in mainstream schools. Some were at certificate level such as SENIOS (special needs in ordinary schools) or OTIS (one term in-service); others were more substantial leading to an advanced diploma or a master’s degree in special needs. Full-time secondments were available to support many of the teachers who undertook these courses. In addition, there was an initial teacher education route into special needs work leading to the BEd (special), although this came to an end in 1988. Also in the late eighties, funding for full-time
secondments began to disappear and most professional development for SEN became part-time.

Following the introduction of the first special needs Code of Practice in 1994 (DfEE, 1994), the role and status of special needs teachers continued to evolve. By now most mainstream schools had a special needs co-ordinator (SENCO), although their role and status was variable. New approaches to statutory assessment through the ‘statementing’ process and the introduction of individual education plans (IEPs) led to more transparency and greater accountability, but increased bureaucracy. In addition, consultation with parents and liaison with external agencies meant that in many cases the role of the SENCO became more administrative and organisational. The growth in the popularity of whole school approaches to meeting special needs saw many SENCOs working in a consultative capacity with their colleagues, especially in secondary schools. Furthermore the huge increase in the deployment of teaching assistants meant that many SENCOs became managers of adults in addition to being teachers of children. Thus the role of SENCO has significantly changed during the past decade at a time when substantial award-bearing professional development opportunities became increasingly hard to access.

Currently, with the exception of teachers of the blind and the deaf, there are no nationally mandated qualifications for teachers of pupils with special educational needs despite attempts of many pressure groups to extend the requirement for mandatory qualifications. However, there have been national initiatives, as the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) – now the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) - produced their National Standards for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators in 1998 and the National Special Educational Needs Specialist Standards in December 1999. A number of higher education providers developed courses in response to these Standards and there was some funding available to local authorities and schools through the Standards Fund, but there was no requirement that teachers undertaking the role of SENCO or specialist teacher should attend such courses or gain particular qualifications. Further, in many parts of the country there was a lack of professional development opportunities leading to formal qualifications. Except for autism and dyslexia, where the pressure groups and voluntary associations have succeeded in convincing parents that teachers of their children should have undertaken a specialist course approved by the association, there are few nationally approved qualifications for working with children who have special educational needs.

Since 1997, the policy context is one that supports inclusion of pupils with special educational needs into mainstream schools subject to certain conditions. Some local authorities have made significant progress in the development of inclusive practice, which has entailed the large-scale relocation of teachers from special schools to either mainstream or local authority support services. Nevertheless, whilst many pupils with physical or sensory impairments and those with mild and moderate learning difficulties are now successfully educated in mainstream schools, the numbers of pupils educated outside the mainstream in special settings remains more or less constant at around 100,000. In part this can be explained by the increase in the numbers of children, predominantly boys, who are now described as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD), and who are educated outside the mainstream in special schools or pupil referral units.
The influence of certain national and local pressure groups and associations that exist to promote the cause of particular ‘types’ of special needs is also an important contextual factor. For example, children described as having autism or dyslexia have well organised voluntary societies that have skilfully used the media and to influence local and national government. This influence can be seen not only in the ways in which children are supported directly, but also in the ways in which funding for professional development for teachers is allocated. As a consequence, it could be argued that in the allocation of funding for special needs, there are ‘worthy’ and ‘unworthy’ groups of children. Clearly, if this is the case, then there are likely to be implications for the status of teachers who have (or have not) undertaken such specialist professional development courses in order to teach these different groups of children.

It can be seen that the current policy context is one that has been influenced by a raft of changes. Many of these policies are supportive of inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream schools, most have implications for the role and responsibilities of special needs teachers. The list of policies and initiatives is long and it includes:

- DfES Removing Barriers to Achievement
- DfES (2003b) Every Child Matters
- DfES Guidance on Inclusive Schooling
- National literacy and numeracy strategies
- Workforce agreement
- The SEN and Disability Act (SENDA) and Code of Practice on schools’ disability duties
- OfSTED Guidelines on Inclusive Practice
- DfES Future Role of Special Schools

In addition, other reforms and initiatives have also impacted upon the nature of the special needs task and the perceived roles of teachers of such pupils. For example, in parallel with developments in inclusive practice, all schools are held accountable for the levels of attainment of their pupils. In this competitive context, highly achieving pupils may be perceived as being more valuable to schools than those who struggle to reach the specified levels of attainment. It could be argued therefore that the status of teachers might well be linked to the perceived status of the pupils they teach.
Further, increased delegation of funding to from local authorities to schools has significantly affected special needs provision. In many cases this has left local authorities unable to maintain their central support special needs services. As a consequence, members of local authority support services have either lost their jobs or have been relocated to schools.

The rapidly changing policy context, together with uncertainty about how best to organise and deliver special needs provision leads to a range of understanding about the purpose and nature of the special needs task. Thus special needs provision varies from school to school and from local authority to local authority. Therefore any exploration of the status of teachers who teach children with special educational needs has to take into account the complexity of the special needs task. Such complexity arises from uncertainty about who the children with special needs are, the ‘type’ of needs they have, the range of settings in which they are educated, the professional qualifications of the teachers themselves and how teachers construct their own professional identity.

**Methodology**

This strand of the study was designed to explore how teachers of pupils designated as having special educational needs view their status relative to other teachers. It was conducted using qualitative strategies, specifically focus groups and individual interviews, designed to explore perceptions of a range of teachers working with the full range of pupils designated as having special educational needs. The objective was not to make generalisations about SEN teachers, rather to gain an understanding of the educational, professional and policy context that influence perceptions of their status. Inevitably, the findings reported here are those from a particular sample of teachers, but they were selected to represent the widest possible spectrum of teachers within the constraints of a relatively small-scale study.

**Data collection**

Data collection for this strand of the study took place over a two-year period from January 2004 to December 2005 and the main method used was focus groups. Teachers from a range of SEN settings were invited to participate in one of eight focus groups held in different locations across the country. The groups ranged in size from six to ten participants. In addition, individual interviews were conducted with local authority special needs and inclusion managers and special and mainstream school headteachers and heads of special needs departments. More than 90 per cent of the participants were women, reflecting the overall gender balance of teachers working in the field of special educational needs.

Participants were guaranteed anonymity, therefore neither the names of participants, the names of their schools, nor local authorities are included in this report. Focus groups were held in the North of England, East Anglia, the Home Counties and a London Borough. The focus groups consisted of special needs co-ordinators (SENCOs), special needs teachers in mainstream and special schools and members of local authority special needs support services. Use was made of existing networks, such as local SENCO support groups and a national special educational needs support association. Three focus groups were conducted with teachers on award bearing continuing professional development courses for special
educational needs. All participants in the focus groups were volunteers. The focus group sample consists of special needs teachers who belong to networks, support groups or are undertaking professional development courses, therefore they are by definition, representative of teachers who take their role seriously. As such they are a self-selective sample and may not represent the views of a wider group of special needs teachers who do not participate in such activities.

The data from the interviews and the various focus groups have been analysed in relation to the research questions and are present in the subsequent sections.

The Evidence
The findings have been organised under a series of themes that emerge from the data, namely: identity; roles and responsibilities; working environment; being trusted, the children taught; career opportunities and perceptions of others.

Special needs teachers’ identities

The range of teachers who have special needs responsibilities is wide, as is the extent to which special needs responsibilities form part of a teacher’s professional identity. Identity is complex but it is influenced by a range of factors explored below and further under other themes later in this report.

Primary teachers are more like to see their identity as a class teacher first, then as a SENCO second, whereas secondary special needs teachers are more like to have made a specific career choice and are more like to have undertaken additional professional development leading to qualifications. Thus, secondary special needs teachers are more likely to describe themselves as ‘a teacher of children with special educational needs’ than are primary teachers. Similarly, teachers in special and local authority support services are more likely to have a clear professional identity as ‘special needs teachers’. According to the respondents, there is considerable variation in status between mainstream special needs teachers relating to particular school policies and the nature of special needs provision within the school. In some schools SENCOs have significant influence and a high level of management responsibilities. Often they are members of the senior management team, at the level of assistant or deputy head. In other schools special needs provision is marginalised and the SENCO may not even have qualified teacher status. Although status is linked to pay, those that took part in the focus groups saw status as being not only determined by a particular position in the school’s management structure, but also as being associated with personal and professional credibility, knowledge, skills and responsibilities.

The identity of special school teachers seems more likely to be associated with their schools and with the children they teach. This is because the schools in which they teach serve children with particular ‘types’ of difficulty. For example, they often talk about themselves as ‘a teacher of the deaf’ or ‘I teach children with autism’. For some teachers who previously worked in special schools, identity has been affected by inclusion, especially for
those teachers who have made the move from special to mainstream schools. Some ex-
special school teachers commented about loss of status associated with the move to a larger
mainstream school, particularly when it was associated with undertaking a less clearly
defined role (see below) and a lower position in the school’s management hierarchy. Others
however, commented that although their identity was less clear, their status was higher now
that they taught in the mainstream.

Differences in professional identity are also associated with whether the teachers have
specialist qualifications and have made deliberate career choices to work with children who
have special educational needs. Whilst some primary SENCOs have such qualifications there
are others who see it as a stage in their career, something they will undertake to get extra experience, or because ‘it’s my turn’. There are those who see being a SENCO as
valuable preparation for headship in the primary sector. Many SENCOs, especially in
smaller schools, also have other responsibilities such as literacy co-ordinator. Most primary
SENCOs do not hold specialist qualifications for the role (see Dyson, Millward etc). Several
reported that they became special needs teachers by accident or because the work was
available on a part-time basis and it fitted well with other commitments when they returned
to teaching.

> When I decided to return to teaching the only part-time work was to help with
the reading groups in a local primary school. Then the National Literacy
Strategy was introduced and I went full-time. Later I became the SENCO, but
I had to learn about this role on the job. Previously I was a secondary
teacher of English.

The picture then is complex. Special needs teachers come from different professional
backgrounds, their identity and status is influenced by a range of factors including where and
who they teach and because they have a range of different experiences and qualifications.
Nevertheless, a common theme emerged throughout the focus group discussions. Most
special needs teachers believe that they can make a difference to children’s lives. Many said
they were motivated by a desire to help vulnerable children. One spoke of being,

> ....a safety net, the only chance that these children have for staying connected
to school and receiving any kind of education.

Others spoke of the satisfaction of helping children overcome difficulties. As one respondent
stated,

> There is no greater professional satisfaction than helping a child to realise
that they can do it after all

Another recurrent theme in the discussions was the broader social importance of the work,
Other children learn in spite of the teaching they receive, but I believe that I can really make a difference to the kids with SEN. This is challenging work, it’s not easy, but it is crucial, not just for them and the school, but for society.

Some spoke of how working with children who find learning difficult had helped them to develop as teachers,

*I am happy to describe myself as a teacher of children with special needs, it is where I learned to be a good teacher. All my colleagues should take this work seriously, there would be benefits for all children. They would have to think carefully about what it is to be a good teacher.*

However, there were many respondents who recognised that some teachers’ professional identity is defined by the subject they teach. They see such teachers as not interested in working with those who they think are not capable of learning their subject.

The working environment

Teachers of pupils with special educational needs work in a range of settings including mainstream primary and secondary schools, special schools and units, pupil referral units, local authority support services, voluntary organisations, provision that is sometimes referred to as ‘education otherwise.’

During the focus group discussions it was clear that there are huge variations in forms of provision across different local authorities. In part this can be explained by different histories and traditions especially in the field of special needs. Many local authorities have high status special needs policies and provision, others have not emphasised or organised the work in the same way. Thus the nature of the working environments varied between respondents in this research. Nevertheless as with all teachers, having a positive working environment is crucially linked to status. Many SENCOs talked about having sufficient ‘space and place to do the work’.

Further, allocation of spaces and places to do the work was mentioned by many members of the focus groups as being significant in feelings about status.

*We know our work is valued here because we have a well-resourced base that is central to the school. We are located between the head’s office and the library, not hidden away down the end of a corridor or in a hut across the playground.*

However, others spoke of the frustration that although they were responsible for working with external agencies, they were not given the facilities to carry out these tasks, for example, a room for meeting parents or outside specialists, where sensitive matters could be discussed in private, easy access to a telephone, a lockable filing cabinet or a dedicated
computer for keeping confidential files. However, the biggest complaint related to the lack of time to do the job properly. As a primary SENCO complained,

*How can being a SENCO be seen as high status work when I am given no time to do it, because I have full-time teaching commitment with my own class.*

Resource allocation is an area that affects how special needs teachers feel about their status. Many SENCOs do not understand or have details of the SEN budgets for their schools. Few primary SENCOs understood the funding formulae for special needs and some were not involved in discussions with the governors or senior management team about how human and material resources should be distributed.

There were also many comments about the lack of sustained professional development opportunities. One SENCO commented that, *I operate on a wing and a prayer, half the time I don’t know what I am doing.* Local authorities generally provide professional development for SENCOs but many complained that it only covered the administrative aspects of the job, such as how to do IEPs or manage the statutory assessment process. Other mentioned that parents were often better informed than they were because of easy access to information through the internet or information provided by disability organisations. One questioned whether special needs work could be considered high status work when she had to cover the costs of her master’s degree out of her own resources. She wondered, *how many lawyers have to pay for courses out of their own taxed income?* Many felt that they needed time and support to undertake sustained professional development, not only so that they could do the job better, but also because they saw having specialist qualifications as a crucial aspect of establishing credibility with parents and their colleagues. Higher status is associated with credibility and greater confidence.

**The nature of their work**

The special needs task is complex. In part this is because of the contested nature of the concept of special needs outlined above and a lack of agreement about what constitutes best practice. Special school teachers report having the clearest role descriptions, although many special schools are now reconfiguring their roles and are providing support to mainstream schools through ‘outreach’ arrangements. Because of delegation of funding from local authorities to schools, many central support services are currently being reorganised. Members of support services spoke of a lack of clarity in their new roles and worried about how they would manage the expectations of schools and parents who do not understand the implications of the new funding arrangements. Those who had lost their jobs in the support service and had been relocated to schools felt that the change had resulted in a loss of status.

Given the rapidly changing policy context and other complexity, it is inevitable that special needs roles and responsibilities will vary between schools. However, when mainstream special needs teachers are asked about the nature of their roles and the tasks they undertake, a long list is produced. It includes; teaching, assessing, counselling, administrating, organising, liaising with external agencies, consulting with colleagues, providing staff
development, and managing other adults. Many SENCOs reported tensions between the teaching functions and management and consultancy functions of the role.

Such wide-ranging tasks require knowledge, skills and attributes that not all SENCOs feel they possess. Some referred to the TTA SENCO Standards (TTA, 1998) and other TTA Specialist Standards, but they lamented the lack of opportunities to develop such skills. As one SENCO commented,

*When I came into the work, it was to teach children. Now most of my time is spent working with other adults, such colleagues and assistants, external agencies and families. I have never received any support in making this move, so whilst in some ways it has raised my status, it has undermined my credibility.*

Recent initiatives such as *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003b) is likely to mean that special needs teachers will be undertaking more multi-agency work with social services, school psychology services and health authorities. Most respondents saw this as a positive development for vulnerable children, but also wondered whether it would be properly funded and supported,

*Will ‘Every Child Matters’ be yet another initiative that depends on the goodwill of teachers and other professionals?*

Many respondents spoke of the difficulty in managing the demands from colleagues, children and parents. One of the biggest challenges is convincing colleagues that they are also responsible for children with SEN,

*My colleagues always want me to deal with their problem pupils and I find it difficult to say no because I don’t want to see the kids struggling. I know that the more I agree to do this for them the less likely they are to see it as their responsibility…it’s a kind of learned helplessness I suppose.*

The overall picture is one of a rapidly changing field in which there is a lack of consistency in the role and responsibility of many teachers of children with special needs, especially for SENCOs. The nature of tasks and responsibilities varies from school to school. In part this variation arises from differences between school policies and the perceived skills and attributes of the SENCO. Most however, speak of a role that is overloaded and confused. Thus the status of SENCOs varies from school to school.

**Being a trusted professional**

Elsewhere in the Teacher Status Project an important element of status relates to being a respected and valued authority. For special needs teachers the picture in this regard is
complex. Many are seen as being trusted professionals; others describe themselves as glorified child minders, part of the schools ambulance service picking up the casualties:

Yes they trust me to care for these children and I have high levels of trust from the parents and governors, but some of my colleagues are very patronising...you know the kind of comments, ‘Cathy you are so wonderful with these kids...we don’t know what we would do without you’, they have no idea or interest in what we are doing.

Many spoke about the increase in accountability and scrutiny. Most were critical of OfSTED claiming that in many cases inspectors did not understand what they were trying to do. Others however, pointed out that since the introduction of the new OfSTED guidelines on inspecting inclusive practice things had improved.

Accountability was mentioned by several respondents and it was widely agreed that more people are now interested in the performance of the children with special needs. Many felt that there had been an increase in external control and regulation. A senior member of a local authority support service pointed out,

In the past as long as the children were happy and they were ‘out of the way’ no one scrutinised what we were doing. Now it’s different. And this is a paradox. One on hand we have to demonstrate that these children can learn and that’s a good thing. The national curriculum and the strategies might have helped here, even though the national system of assessment still does not enable all children to participate. On the other we have lost professional autonomy and judgement. We should be trusted more to know what is in the children’s best interests.

Others felt that the national strategies had not helped teachers to improve achievement of children with SEN. They complained about the rigidity of the strategies and some felt that whilst they had raised standards for some, there had also been casualties. One SENCO commented,

As long as the strategies are in place we will produce more children with special needs. The Additional Literacy Strategy was a disaster here. Why should assistants be expected to do the hardest thing in schools? It’s bad for the kids, but good for me I suppose. I’ll never be out of a job while we carry on making kids feel stupid and bad about themselves!

One of the biggest changes to views about whether they felt that they were trusted professionals is associated with the growth in the number of assistants. Many SENCOs are being trusted to manage adults, but the message is also that unqualified people can do this job. The rise in numbers of assistants who now carry out much of the face-to-face work with children was raised in all the focus groups. But there were many different accounts about whether the increase in the use of assistants was a good or a bad development. It was
acknowledged that many parents liked the notion of their child being ‘helped’, even when it did take them away from qualified teachers and other children. One local authority manager claimed,

            The demand from parents for individual help has backfired. *Who would have thought that parents would be happy with unqualified help for their children that separates their child from the teacher and from other children? It’s a national scandal.*

Many SENCOs described the paradox of working with assistants. On one hand it increases status because it involves the management of adults, but at the same time it decreases status because of the widespread belief that unqualified adults can do much of this kind of teaching. Many were angry about the growth in the belief that any one can do this kind work. One secondary SENCO commented,

            *Why does the government think that the least well-qualified, least rigorously recruited, least well-paid people can reach the hardest to teach?*

Others commented on the difficulty of recruiting good assistants and were generally happy with new courses and career structures such as higher level teaching assistants. However, they were less confident that the Workforce Agreement would improve the current situation.

One of the biggest reasons for dissatisfaction was the increase in numbers of SENCOs who are not teachers. Many felt that the message is that the special needs role in schools is one of managing assistants and IEPs, which renders their work largely organisational and administrative. One irate SENCO commented,

            *In a secondary school I know the SENCO is not even a teacher, he’s an assistant. It gives the message that you do not need any qualifications or knowledge of children’s special needs or how they learn or why they have difficulties. It’s only about how best to deploy resources and to keep the kids quiet. I’m not sure I want to carry on being a SENCO if the LEA and government think that this situation is OK and anybody can do this job.*

The children they teach

It was argued earlier that the status of teachers might well be linked to the status of the pupils they teach and that in the current competitive context, highly achieving pupils may be perceived as being higher status than those who struggle to reach the specified levels of attainment. During the focus groups and interviews this question was explored, but there was no clear consensus. It was generally believed that high achieving pupils have higher status in schools, but this view varied across schools. In schools where there had been real progress with the implementation of inclusive policies and practice, respondents reported that pupils were seen as of equal status and that teachers’ status was not defined by who was taught. However, this view was not always the case as explained by one local authority support teacher,
I work in several secondary schools and the differences are stark. In one of my schools the top streams get the best teachers and the best resources. The bottom sets and special needs children get what’s left. They are hidden from view and largely forgotten. In another one of my schools all pupils are valued and get a fair share. Experienced teachers work across the school.

In spite of the difficulty with definitions about who are the children with special educational needs, it was clear that there are status differences between children with special needs. This is complex and disputed territory, but even amongst teachers of pupils with SEN there are beliefs that some children are more worthy than others, because their difficulties are not their fault. This can be seen in the growing need to have biological or psychological explanations for children’s difficulties in learning, communication, or with behaviour. In other words, when difficulties can be given a label such as autism, dyslexia or ADHD, it provides a focus for the mobilising support for the child and it provides an easily understood pseudo-medical explanation. Clearly it is not their fault, nor is it the fault of their parents or teachers, but the fault of the syndrome that they have. Conversely, when difficulties are seen as related to intellectual, socio-economic or cultural differences, the children are often seen as ‘unworthy’. Therefore, the nature of, and explanation for, children’s difficulties affects perceptions of the importance and status of the work.

In addition some SENCOs talked of the reputations that their schools had developed for dealing with difficult children and how this was not always seen to be positive. One SENCO claimed that she was told by her head teacher,

*There’s no need to do your display at the open evening this year. We don’t want to get a reputation for being too good at this kind of work.*

Teachers of children with SEBD are a particular case. They sometimes describe themselves as having low status because the children they teach have low status, others see themselves as high status because they *are good with these kinds of kids* who have often been excluded from their original schools. Some teachers speak of working in a *war zone* and they describe a perverse sense of achievement linked to beliefs that most other teachers could not do this work.

**Career opportunities**

National and local policies and practices have provided new career opportunities for teachers of children with special educational needs. Such opportunities have arisen in support services or through the provision of ‘outreach’ work from special schools. There has also been in an increase in the amount of school-based staff development that is provided by SEN teachers. These and other developments have raised the status of SEN teachers, but delegation of funding from local authorities to schools and, in some cases, badly implemented inclusion policies have lowered the status of the work.

It was interesting to hear how many primary SENCOs saw the role as a good preparation for increased responsibility including headship. As one primary SENCO stated,
How many other roles in the primary school provide opportunities for learning about managing budgets and other adults, for working with colleagues across the school and with families and external agencies?

A secondary teacher commented that the current policies for inclusion had raised her status in the school.

Until a few years ago I was a traditional SENCO doing my own thing under the radar of the rest of the school. With the appointment of the new head and new policies of inclusion, I became Inclusion Manager in charge of the school’s review of teaching and learning. I have seen my status rise as colleagues realise that I have a real contribution to make to how they do their work.

Such changes have occurred in some schools but not in others and there is still a confusing picture about how and where SEN teachers fit into a rapidly changing educational system.

The perceptions of others about SEN teachers

Status is linked to levels of respect from colleagues, children and parents. Many respondents commented that respect and gratitude from parents is vital.

We don’t always get that and some parents are unrealistic in the expectations of their children. The media doesn’t help with its promises of miracle cures. Part of my role is expectation management. Raising the expectations of my colleagues and the pupils I teach whilst at the same time lowering the expectations of some the parents.

In spite of developments in understanding about the nature of the special needs task, there are still widely held perceptions that special needs work is more about caring and less about curriculum, teaching and learning. Such views can be heard in comments such as,

'It must be such rewarding work’ and, ‘you must be so patient’

Teachers of children with special needs who have undertaken award-bearing professional development are seen to have higher status in the eyes of their colleagues.

I don’t know if it’s because I am more confident now I have my master’s degree or whether my colleagues recognise that I know more about teaching and learning. Whatever the reason I am treated with greater respect now. They listen to me and seek my advice
Sadly many teachers who took part in the focus groups have not had the opportunity of undertaking award-bearing courses.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the views of teachers who specialise in, or spend time working with children deemed to have special educational needs, on their status within and beyond the teaching profession. The work of these teachers is distinguished by its range, complexity and variety. Their expertise in supporting the learning of children learning difficulties must include critical fundamentals of pedagogy, knowledge of different types of special needs and the skills to work with other adults. Yet, the boundaries of their work are arbitrary, given contested, resource-led definitions of what constitutes special needs. Their working environments, despite the vulnerability of their pupils, can range from a bench in a corridor to a well-equipped unit, or within the mainstream classroom. Time and resources to support their work varied accordingly. Whilst many have funded their own CPD in order to gain qualifications to improve their practice and their status, the increase in the numbers of teaching assistants, who lack any teaching qualification to do the face-to-face work with the children, is a serious threat to the SEN teachers’ status, and to the welfare of the children. In the present performance-led climate, they have little chance of achieving high status through their pupils’ achievements. Not surprisingly, their status is at best ambiguous, and is sometimes low. They are, however, often held in high esteem by parents, governors and other teachers, who see the benefits of their work. Given the importance of their role, one might expect them to have a higher status within the teaching profession. Clearer policies, more time and resources for them to do their work, together with recognised, funded training would help to raise both their perceived and their actual status within the profession.
Chapter 17: The Status of Teachers Working in Pupil Referral Units

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Overview
This chapter aims to explore the factors influencing the status of teachers and explores the perceptions of teachers working within pupil referral units (PRUs). More specifically, the research was conducted to:

- understand how teachers working within PRUs feel about their status as teachers
- establish whether their perceptions of status are similar or different to teachers working in mainstream schools
- understand what particular factors shaped by working within PRUs contribute to their perceptions of high or low status.

The research was conducted through qualitative case study research in six PRUs in three LAs. The main findings of the chapter show:

- External status is not a driving motivation of PRU teachers, rather teachers within PRU draw pride from their abilities to develop relationships with pupils, manage behaviour and inspire change in pupils’ achievements. The possibilities of doing so are encouraged by the small size of the units and less hierarchical working relations developed between pupils and staff in PRUs.

- Teachers in five out of six PRUs expressed great dissatisfaction with what they considered to be inadequate buildings and facilities, which they saw as indicative of their low status. It appeared that PRU teachers were not overly concerned with career development, given that many were working under temporary contracts.

- Teachers in PRUs experience their teaching and learning skills differently to mainstream schoolteachers. Rather than drawing status through specialised training (whether initial training or through CPD) PRU teachers expressed how they benefited from learning by experience of the personal skills required on the job. They also reported enjoying more autonomy through adapting the national curriculum to individual learners’ needs.

- PRU teachers felt they were seen as lower status than other teachers by the government and LA. They felt marginalised within the profession, evidenced, they suggested by the application of inappropriate pay structures and policy initiatives, and some teachers felt frustrated by the lack of control in decision-making. In contrast, teachers in PRUs felt they were valued by those working in other agencies, other teachers who they come to contact with, and the general public, who respect the challenging work they do.
An introduction to PRUs

In the past, the two major forms of alternative education for excluded pupils have been placement in a special unit or education at home (Blyth and Milner 1996). However, in 1993, the Education Act placed a duty on LAs to make provision for children out of school for whatever reason, resulting in a new type of school, the Pupil Referral Unit. Although the DfES defines PRUs as ‘legally a type of school’ (DfES 2004), there are key differences between PRUs and mainstream or special needs schools. Managerial responsibilities of PRUs are decided by LAs, and as such they do not have a Board of Governors and the headteacher may not be formally employed in the same capacity as in mainstream schools. The curriculum taught within PRUs need not follow the full National Curriculum and not all pupil referral units are registered with the DfES, so only those registered are subject to OfSTED inspections. It can be argued, therefore, that they have an ambiguous nature when compared to mainstream schools.

However, although teachers working within this sector are marginal, it is interesting to consider their perspectives, not least because there has been a tremendous growth in both the number of Pupil Referral Units and the numbers of teachers employed within them since 1993. Pupil Referral Units rose from 309 to 452 over the last 8 years (Crace 2005), and ‘between 2001 and 2003 there was a 25 per cent increase in the number of pupils educated in PRUs’ (OfSTED 2005). In 1997 there were 3460 teachers working in PRUs and other ‘education elsewhere’ provision, but by 2004 there were 5730 (National Statistics 2004). Moreover, PRUs represent an area of increased government expenditure; Stephen Twigg indicated that planned net expenditure on PRUs in England was £100,309,321 in 2000-01, and £198,460,713 in 2004-05 (House of Commons Hansard Written Answers for 21 Feb 2005: pt 75).

Discussing PRUs is also complex because they are very varied both in size and scope. Some are located on a single site, whilst others operate over several sites, with a ‘teacher in charge’ (rather than headteacher) running the smaller units (see methods section for further details of the variation in PRUs studied in this research project work within). Many offer support to schools and pupils in mainstream schools, or share joint provision with a child’s mainstream school, although they also provide full time education packages to some children. Two thirds cater for secondary pupils only, and the majority work with 14-16 year olds. Pupil numbers vary from single figures to over 100, although most units have between 10 and 30 pupils (OfSTED 1999).

Given that other areas of the Teacher Status Project (the public opinion surveys and type I and type II case-studies) identify discipline issues as an important factor in relation to teacher status and other studies reveal that teaching as a profession has status hierarchies within in (Banks 1971, Hoyle 2001) it is necessary to explore more how teachers working within such contexts perceive their status. To date, there is very little literature on these issues, apart from Garner’s small-scale study of two London PRUs, in which teachers as well as pupils felt ‘both marginalised and undervalued’ (2000: 7). Certainly, a study of Pupil Referral Units and the teachers within them is timely in the light of current political debate.
on the increased levels of pupil misbehaviour in schools, the introduction of strategies to tackle this, calls from the unions for further action, expansion in the number of children being educated in PRUs by Labour, and the suggestion of the introduction of ‘turnaround schools’ from the Conservatives.

Methods

Six case studies were conducted with teachers working in Pupil Referral Units. The case studies were drawn from three LAs, including inner city London, the Midlands and a predominantly rural county in the South East of England. They comprised five focus groups conducted in PRUs A-E and one semi-structured interview in PRU F, where, following the cancellation of a focus group, only the deputy head was available. In total, 22 teachers participated in the focus groups, which included 6 heads or deputies. Of these, 20 were white and 19 female. The selection represented a range of PRUs, including:

PRU ‘A’: The PRU catered to around 55 Key Stage 4 pupils, and was now in its third academic year. It had modern purpose built premises, although prior to this, the head established and ran provision from two caravans. Seven female teachers attended the focus group.

PRU ‘B’: The PRU catered to 49 Key Stage 4 pupils at the time of the research, although has had up to 120 students enrolled. It consisted of a main building and several mobile classrooms. Three female teachers participated.

PRU ‘C’: Up to 100 pupils of all ages were at the PRU, which had a particular focus on pupils with behavioural difficulties. The unit shared premises with other LA services, including Educational Psychology. Two female and one male teacher participated.

PRU ‘D’: This long running unit was set up 13 years ago, and was designed to cater for mainly school-phobic children, with less emphasis on behavioural problems. There were around 30 children at the unit, which was based in premises near to an EBD school, with whom it shared some facilities. Four female teachers attended the focus group.

PRU ‘E’: The PRU catered mainly for recent immigrants to Britain who had poor English language skills, with fluctuating numbers between around 130 and 200; it was temporarily housed in a disused secondary school. Two female and two male teachers attended.

PRU ‘F’: The PRU was based in centres in many different geographical sites run by a ‘teacher in charge’, offering primary, Key Stage 3 and 4 provision for around 200 pupils, and offering its services to mainstream schools.

All interviews except one were tape recorded, transcribed, and open coded using the coding framework as discussed in Chapter 6. As in the type II research on teachers in schools selected for their particular status, however, these codes were modified through the creation of additional codes, in response to data arising within the interviews.
Evidence

The findings of the research are discussed in four sections in turn, referring to:

- teachers’ perceptions of their status
- internal school relations/working environment
- teaching and learning
- external relations/external regulation and control

Teachers’ perceptions of their status

As was common in the type I and type II studies of teachers drawn from survey and classified schools, teachers within PRUs did not mention status as a motivation for pursuing teaching as a career. Neither does it appear to be an overwhelming concern in the daily lives of PRU teachers and managers; many even find the concept irrelevant to the sort of work they do. A teacher in PRU A expressed, ‘I think if you’re worried [about status, prestige and esteem] you wouldn’t be here’, whilst another offered a more pragmatic reason for their lack of concern, ‘the thing is you’re so worn out you don’t care’. Most participants chose to work within PRUs not to seek promotion or to otherwise enhance their career prospects or status, but rather because the work contributes to their sense of personal identity. Many moved into the sector after having worked with more challenging children in mainstream settings; those working in PRU D also particularly reported being attracted to the work after having gained experience working in the field of special educational needs. Teachers reported a high sense of self esteem that was gained intrinsically through the work they do within PRUs; one teacher summed up, ‘I was thinking, well yes, I think I have more self esteem here than the last year or two when I was in mainstream school’ (PRU B). Their status rests on feeling different to mainstream teachers, as particular specialists in this sort of work, as the following comments reflect:

*I think really there’s a PRU...I think you are a kind...I think not of a kind, I mean we are very different people (PRU A)*

*I feel as if I’ve got out of the rat race and just found a little niche (PRU B)*

*I don’t think of myself as being superior or inferior to anybody in mainstream schools. I feel more empowered about my own knowledge base, my own professionalism, my own understanding, because I’ve been given that opportunity to learn about it...I feel empowered, that’s all, but I feel the same (PRU D).*

All but one of the teachers appeared to get a high level of esteem and satisfaction from working with the most challenging pupils, even when they encountered problems:

*T2: You do get a nice afternoon; you do get a nice sense of achievement in this job, though, that we can manage the most difficult children.*
A clear finding, and common to the findings with supply teachers, is that pride and professional identity for teachers working in PRUs are derived from their relationships with pupils and their skills in behavioural management rather than subject knowledge or teaching skills. A deputy head in PRU F stated, ‘success with a challenging pupil is particularly satisfying’. When probed about the qualities that are important in being a successful PRU teacher, participants talked about their skills in behaviour management and their ability to remain calm and focused. These were often discussed in positive self-evaluations of their psychological qualities:

And we talk about being a big person here and I think you do really have to be a big person here because you have to soak it up. You can’t be the one that needs the attention really, but they do. My experience in school is particularly...I worked with a lot of PE teachers and ego was like everything and the confrontation was ‘don’t you talk to me like that’ and they had to have the last say. And actually here it’s much better if you say ‘I’ve been there; I know exactly where you’re coming from’. And you do have to be...you can’t come with a lot of baggage. You have to be pretty well sorted out yourself really (PRU A).

The possibility for teachers to build up such relationships is afforded by the particular occupational contexts of PRUs, which benefit from small unit sizes, informality with and proximity to pupils, limited private staff space and a flatter management structure. Teachers in PRUs are involved with numerous tasks, have no breaks when pupils are on the premises and eat lunch with them, which create closer relationships between staff and pupils. This is a positive benefit, as teacher at PRU A states, ‘In terms of satisfaction, it was the small intimacy of the thing’. Teachers referred to how pupils saw them as different to mainstream teachers, and felt they were ‘on the same side’. Many teachers reported how students value the time spent there, respect the teachers and even became fond of some PRU teachers.

**Status as reflected by the working environment**

Although the teachers drew status from the sort of work they do, most staff felt that if status was indicated by the premises and resources they worked in, they were seen as low status. Only one of the PRUs visited was purpose built; most units occupied small sections of buildings and were shared with other LA departments, and these conditions provoked a great deal of commentary. Few units had playgrounds or adequate funding for staffrooms and even senior management had to share rooms with clerical staff, with no confidential meeting space. One indication of this is shown in the fact that one interview for the research was conducted in a stationery cupboard, which was apparently used frequently for meetings. An
article in the Guardian highlighted these conditions, referring to a teacher who taught in Pupil Referral Units for 20 years but left on sick grounds; it described the increased class sizes, the ways in which units are run as a Cinderella service and referred to how much teaching is conducted in prefabs (Naylor 2005).

In line with the type I and type II case studies, a sense of pride is expressed when staff work in good premises. The headteacher of PRU A which had been formerly housed in caravans had successfully pushed to have a purpose built building, and explained how this changed the ways the teachers could present themselves to parent, pupils and the community:

> When they [parents and pupils] come I always say to them and I say this with real confidence, I always say to them ‘this isn’t rubbish. You’ll find really good teachers here. We’ve got really good rooms and you’ll get really good teaching and people will treat you decently’ (PRU A).

Another teacher there felt the facilities meant the unit was highly regarded:

> Certainly within the local area I think we’re highly respected because we do have a nice place and nicer than most of the schools actually and we keep it nicer than most of the schools. And teachers that come from mainstream say to me, ‘it’s so much nicer here’, because schools get a bit run down. So I think there is a profile in the community (PRU A).

However, the conditions reported at PRU A were not shared by most. In the majority, the poor material conditions were reported as having consequences for teachers’ sense of esteem, morale and value, and provoked some exasperation. It is worth quoting at length some of the problems reported:

> I get the impression that the [named LA] doesn’t take teachers at all seriously or doesn’t take the PRU teachers seriously at all. We’ve got a venue which is so clearly inappropriate for a school. I didn’t have a desk for the first two weeks that I was here. A new person’s been employed and there’s no desk for them. There are no computers for the staff to use in the staffroom. You have to go down and share computers with the students...Not fixing security doors. Trying to get security doors in a PRU for goodness sakes! You would have thought that the borough would have a system in place so that if there’s a problem with a pupil referral unit that needs security for the health and safety of those staff, you would have thought would have been quite a high priority (PRU C).

> We have got some nice buildings. This is probably the worst. That office in there is the hub of the service with eight people working in there, it’s dreadful. It floods. You only have to look at the outside of this building to see the state of repair... But trying to get the drains sorted out, that’s a two year job. Trying to get the gutters sorted, the hole in the roof...so premises really does bring us down. The fact that the leadership team of the service haven’t got an office is not very good from that point of view. So premises are an issue (PRU F).
This was reported to be particularly problematic at PRU F, which is organised on nine sites, but does not get a budget that adequately corresponds to its size:

_In terms of numbers of pupils, we’re not massive. We’ve probably got throughout the whole year 500 pupils. But nine buildings. And that’s quite an issue. Frequently the fact that we are on nine sites but we are a single PRU means we get one amount of the grant for improving teacher staff rooms for example. Well we’ve got nine staff rooms to improve....In general I think the staff feel well supported and well recognised in (this authority). But there are things like the building that don’t help._

Another problem for PRU teachers’ status arising from their working conditions is that their conditions of service are also variable. Some teachers work on temporary contracts, because pupil numbers are not consistent, and PRUs have a regular turnover of children present as they are excluded from school or leave to be reintegrated in other schools. One supply teacher, retired from mainstream, welcomes the flexibility afforded by her work contract, but others must patiently wait their turn to move into a permanent contract:

_I think our difficulty is the temporary contracts because the income is not... we can’t say it’s permanent income....So temporary contracts do cause a difficulty for staff. They’re more flexible I think. But what tends to happen is the people who have had a temporary contract, when a permanent vacancy comes up, they just shift them on (PRU F)._ 

Two senior managers expressed that there were opportunities for progression through this type of work, as the Deputy in PRU F stated, ‘it does put them in a very good position for deputy head in primary and leadership posts in secondary’. However more teachers referred to the lack of posts available and the limits for promotion when, ‘there just aren’t the posts available’ (PRU D). As such, it would appear that teachers working in PRUs do not especially seek status through career enhancement when undertaking this work.

**Status through teaching and learning**

Although, as demonstrated below, the research shows there is a higher perception of autonomy for teachers working within PRUs, initial teacher training for working in referral units is non-existent. Teachers cannot gain QTS whilst working within a PRU. This is a barrier to high status, as generally, a body of theoretical knowledge and lengthy training are often considered one indication of professionalism (Winch 2004, Revell 2005). Rather in PRUs, preparation is not gained through initial teacher training courses, but through experience, initially in mainstream schools.

In terms of the specific teaching and learning skills that are stressed by PRU teachers, there is also a contrast with the profession generally. Research shows that traditionally primary teachers have been considered of lower status than that of teachers of older age groups (see Banks 1971) but in PRUs, it is exactly these primary and basic skills teacher training qualifications which are particularly valued. A teacher at PRU B stated, ‘I think the expertise is the fact that I am one of the few people in this unit that has been trained to teach basic
numeracy and literacy’. Indeed, subject specific knowledge can even be a hindrance, as one teacher explained, ‘it’s difficult if you come here wanting to do your subject. That’s not the way into the students’ (PRU A). PRU teachers by contrast, ‘teach every subject, and many are primary trained, which is valuable because of this’ (pilot interview, teacher 1). Furthermore, having the personal skills of being able to build rapport with pupils are particularly important, as the following teachers expressed:

*I think our expertise is in working with these particular students and with their particular needs rather than a subject.*

*I think staff here understand young people much better than the majority of people working in schools (PRU A).*

However, some teachers felt that their skills are misunderstood. Their abilities to calmly deal with behavioural problems and downplay swearing for instance, are felt to be underrated by other teachers, even though internally they themselves feel high self esteem through these capacities:

*If they [other teachers] look from the outside and judge my god how wet are they? Because when kids kick off we don’t pin them up against a wall and threaten them. We talk them through things and we even talk them through just to give ourselves time (PRU A).*

The fact that there is no specialised initial training route to this type of teaching is also reflected in the opportunities for CPD, which existed to varying degrees within the units. OfSTED (2005) notes that there are limited training opportunities for teachers to develop strategies for working with difficult pupils. Given this absence of lengthy training and particular kinds of abstract and practical knowledge for PRU teaching (factors which are, according to Winch 2004 and Revell 2005, key markers of a high status discipline) the knowledge, skills and expertise of these teachers might be perceived as of lower status: a craft rather than a science. Meo and Parker found in the study of one PRU that although the teachers claimed specialist professional knowledge, ‘the majority of teachers conceded that their occupational training within the context of SEN had been informally constructed’ (2004: 107). Indeed, PRU teachers felt that they did not learn much from external courses, which seemed irrelevant to their work and felt that they learnt much more from internally provided training, observation of colleagues and learning by on-the-job experience. Thus rather than seeking a body of theoretical knowledge, an amalgam of flexible techniques was used by PRU teachers:

*In my case, I’ve been teaching for an awful long time and you pick up things and you know what works and what doesn’t. Obviously if you have a response from [the pupils you’re] teaching you’re obviously doing something right. When I came to work here I went on additional courses that we had but I think there is a big tendency to be a bit robotic about it…The way I go around it is to look at something that you feel comfortable with and adopt that and change it to suit your own style. Then there is a danger of somebody… if you take the big expert on behaviour… with working with kids, I don’t think anybody could end up like him…. He’s got some wonderful
tips and things that will help you but I think you have to pick a bit from this one and a bit from that one because otherwise you are just a machine really (PRU C). Indeed, general ‘experience’ is cited as the most valuable aid in working in such schools; some mentioned that having children of their own helped with understanding how some teenagers behave. In this light, whereas length of service might become a disadvantage in mainstream schools with tight budgets, in the Pupil Referral Unit, it is welcomed, as the following experienced teacher reflected:

\[I \text{ think there is flexibility of time and the experience of many years that I can bring to it. And you are not proving anything anymore, you know, I don’t want to go off and be a bossy boots anymore (PRU B).}\]

In discussing their status, many teachers working at PRUs expressed that they felt a higher level of autonomy than their peers working in mainstream schools. Although the teaching profession as a whole is felt to have suffered diminished autonomy over recent years through government intervention (Judge 1995, Johnson and Hallgarten, 2002, Cunningham 1992, Revell 2005) PRU teachers felt they were left to get on with the job as they felt appropriate, and as a result felt more trusted in their own expertise. One teacher explained, ‘generally speaking they leave us to our own devices. But that’s because they think we know what we’re doing’ (PRU A). Another confirmed this sentiment of trust in their professional knowledge, as she said, ‘I think that is because there’s not many more people who know more than we do (PRU A). Again, another teacher in PRU E believed, ‘we don’t have the constraints...I don’t think, do we? To that extent, I think there’s a certain amount of freedom’. The views on autonomy coincide with the teachers observed in Meo and Parker’s study (2004: 108) who, ‘clearly distinguished their work from that of mainstream settings’, in the, ‘considerable degree of freedom’, they had over the delivery of the curriculum. These views were confirmed by others:

\[I \text{ also think, my husband works in a large mainstream school and doesn’t have a lot of influence really. I think they are little fish in a big pond there and that frustration of not being able to influence.... I do think here we do... there is a bit more of throwing in your ideas and taking more responsibility. Some people like that and some people don’t. Some people say ‘ooh I’m not...’ but if you’re not a jobs worth and you’re willing to sort of go along, I think it’s a nice thing to be part of. - So do you have more autonomy? Oh god yes. And nobody touches us really, so that’s good (PRU A).}\]

For some teachers, the lack of adherence to a National Curriculum was felt to free them from more prescriptive ways of teaching, especially when working with much smaller groups of pupils. One teacher was attracted by, ‘the lure of no national curriculum... and I thought ‘yes that appeals’. And here I am’ (PRU A). Another pointed out,

\[The \text{ difference is in a mainstream school you are very much dominated by the National Curriculum, so you don’t, this has been the change while I have been}\]
teaching, your whole life is dominated by targets, forms and you are having to get the whole class through a hoop, whereas in here I think, luckily, the children are still the important thing. I am still convinced that actually you cannot have children being dominated by the exams, and you were in mainstream school, whereas here the children are still the children, and they're the important things, so you deal with them (PRU B).

Although all the PRUS were guided by the National Curriculum, they could adapt it creatively to the needs of the pupils. This is because a rigorous curriculum was inappropriate in PRUs, where teachers work with a rotating body of students, some of whom demonstrate high rates of absenteeism. These factors also limit the use of performance indicators which are the usual markers of the quality of teaching, confirming as OfSTED found, how few PRUs have effective performance management and self evaluation processes. But a teacher explained the difficulties, stating, ‘you can’t have the same success criteria as you do in a mainstream school can you? We don’t keep the kids long enough’, and another in PRU B stated, ‘you don’t get that get kind of continuity as you would, in preparing in mainstream’.

Status through external relationships: LAs, the government, other schools, agencies and the public

Although teachers working in PRUs feel that they have greater autonomy in the curriculum and pedagogy, this is undermined somewhat by the higher levels of control of school management, where LEAs retain greater control over management decisions. School managers, including ‘teachers in charge’ may not even have the formal status of headteacher, and have far less control over budget and recruitment than their counterparts in mainstream schools. Strategic management is usually through the LA rather than a governing body, as a manager expressed, ‘A PRU isn’t a school...Our managing body doesn’t have the power like a governing body (PRU F). This situation had various implications discussed by a headteacher, who explained how frustrated she had been in trying to secure more points for staff members through the LA’s Human Resources department. The findings of OfSTED (1999), support this, reporting that the ‘LEA and management committees were insufficiently supportive in some cases’. This was contrasted with the autonomy of managers allowed in other LA schools where:

The heads have the final decision, [they] would go to the governors and given it was a rational argument say yes yes yes...PRU staff are centrally employed and PRUs don’t have governors. They have a management committee that don’t have the same sort of authority as governors. [We] can’t go to the governors and get them to agree to changes...The LEA is our governing body as such (Headteacher, PRU A).

The status of headteachers (or ‘managers’) could be perceived, therefore, as of lower status than that of headteachers in mainstream schools. This problem compounds by a general impression, expressed by a number of teachers, that the government and LAs sees PRUs as marginal. Although officially, OfSTED (1999) comments that, the ‘quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in two thirds of units, and very good in a third in over a quarter of lessons’, teachers working in PRUs did not feel recognised by the government for their
work. They felt they were subject to increasing pressure to take ever growing numbers of pupils, and suggest that their marginal position meant the staff were often sidelined, as the following comments suggest:

*We often get lumped - and I don’t mean that in a nasty way - but with special schools, special schools and PRUs. And actually it doesn’t fit as well as fitting in with mainstream to be honest* (PRU A).

*When they talk about national issues, we’re the sidelines* (PRU A).

*We struggle. For a long time, they [the LA] didn’t even know we were here* (PRU A).

*I still don’t think we get anywhere near as much visibility as we should be getting* (PRU E).

It was also felt that government initiatives in tackling pupil behaviour increase the workload in PRUs. The increases in workload, especially when managed on tighter and tighter budgets (with consequent limitations imposed on pay and staffing levels) have a knock-on effect on the morale of teachers. This was demonstrated when one focus group in PRU F was cancelled because the teachers felt under stress.

One key factor which contributes to these feelings of marginalisation was reported as the imposition, since September 2005, of an altered method of payment. From this time, additional pay scale points are gained through teaching and learning duties, rather than pastoral duties. Yet many teachers expressed uncertainty and demoralisation at the proposed alterations and this was cited as the major reason for the cancellation of the focus group at PRU F. Teachers felt that their existing pay was threatened, with the potential for lower pay being interpreted as indicative of a lower status:

*We’ve got 74 staff who have a management allowance and it’s going to be very difficult to find a way for all those 74 people to still be paid the same by Christmas. So that’s not going to do teacher status much good…I think the main thing is that teachers feel apprehensive. Some of them are going to feel demotivated and demoted as a result of this TLR [teaching and learning responsibilities] thing. Some of them will end up with no management points and I think there’s probably a few that will view that in rather a poor light.*

However, despite the low status felt in this regard, PRU teachers felt valued in other external relationships with knowledgeable groups more familiar with their day to day work, such as managers and teachers in mainstream schools and other agencies. In particular, teachers felt outreach work with other schools outside of the PRU, although not typical, was beneficial. In one large LA, staff not only taught within the units, but went out into mainstream schools to train other teachers, putting on courses and doing group work that was observed by mainstream teachers. The deputy head at PRU F felt this process raised their profile and prestige:
I think if you were to ask people in mainstream schools they would respond very favourably about our staff because they see them doing in-school support and they know that they can teach the difficult kids because that what they were doing in the morning before they got there or that’s what they were doing yesterday or whatever. So I think amongst schools we have high status.

Not all teachers had the opportunity to go out into their local schools, yet nevertheless felt that they are regarded highly by colleagues in both mainstream schools. Although many encountered a feeling of disbelief amongst other teachers that they chose to work in PRUs, in general, teachers felt they were subject to awe from other teachers. This sense of respect was also found when working with other agencies that they come into contact with. Although some groups felt that there was a lack of respect for their professionalism, shown by ‘just the odd person; we’ll always be “just the teachers”’ (PRU D) many reflected that:

The agencies that we work with, and people like that, sometimes work with our students after they’ve gone from here, say that the comments they get from the kids and therefore their own respect for us is great. They talk about how the students value the time they’ve had with us here so I think how we’re seen by other agencies is with a lot of respect for what we do with them (PRU A).

Finally, although in general, the teacher status research shows how teachers saw themselves having less status than other high status professions (see Chapter 7) teachers working in Pupil Referral Units felt more positive about the public perception of their status than their peers in mainstream schools. Teachers reported that the general public looked up to them particularly because of the nature of their work. One teacher explained people asked her, ‘how do you do it?’ and ‘you must be brave’ (PRU A). They expressed amazement or admiration that anyone would want to work with such challenging children:

Some people when you say where you work think you’ve lost all your marbles completely or there’s admiration maybe from some people. Or why do you bother with kids like that? I’ve had that kind of thing (PRU C).

Well a lot of them say ‘oh gosh how do you do that? Oh aren’t you brave, what are they like?’ That kind of thing. I think that they probably have an exaggerated view because of what they see in the press and the media. They think that all our kids are really difficult all the time. Well that’s not the case (PRU F).

Conclusion

Teachers working in Pupil Referral Unit tended to have a high sense of status when considering the ‘internal sphere’. Teachers were largely positive in discussing their autonomy, expertise and the esteem they received from pupils, close working colleagues and parents. However, if status is judged from the ‘external sphere’ - by how they perceived they were viewed by the government and their LAs, as evidenced in financial rewards, working conditions, and the level of managerial control placed on the units they work in, they perceived themselves to have low status. This strength of internal/external division may be
explicable by the context that teachers working in Pupil Referral Units worked in. These tended to be very small units, comparable to the smallest sized mainstream school. This may have an impact on the way these teachers perceived themselves in terms of status and self esteem. However, if status is to be judged by working conditions and work contracts, it is clear that teachers working in Pupil Referral Units contrasted negatively in comparison to teachers in mainstream schools, and to the workforce in other occupations.
Chapter 18: The Status of Supply Teachers

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Overview

The second aim of the project was to understand the factors that might influence perceptions of status and teachers’ attitudes. This chapter reports on this aim from the perspective of supply teachers, a group within the teaching hierarchy who potentially suffer lower status than their mainstream peers. The research was conducted to:

• understand how supply teachers feel about their status as teachers

• establish whether their perceptions of status are similar or different to teachers working on permanent contracts in mainstream schools

• understand what particular factors contribute to supply teachers’ perceptions of high or low status.

The research was conducted through qualitative case study research, with nine focus groups held in a variety of both rural and urban regions across the UK (London, Outer London, South West, East and West Midlands, North West, West of England). The data collection was undertaken by Hutchings et al (2006) as part of a larger study of supply teachers. The key findings from discussions with 44 participants are:

• Supply teachers’ sense of status was more markedly influenced by the pupils with whom they work. However they recognised that as supply teachers they were more likely to be subjected to poor behaviour and were more exposed to the falling discipline standards reported more generally amongst teachers. Working continuously in the same school overcame some of these problems, as it established continuity for pupils.

• Supply teachers felt generally happy with their work and felt that schools benefited from their contribution. However, their status appeared to be at risk by the ambivalence within which they were viewed by teachers. They felt they were seen as lesser teachers and some reported their teaching was treated with disinterest by other teachers. Supply teachers also felt they were forbidden to use their professionalism and were socially marginalized in schools. As a result, they bore more responsibility to enhance their status, through the attitudes they displayed.

• Teachers felt the lack of clearly defined organizational procedures structurally led to some of the problems negatively affecting their status. In particular, clearer delineations of expectations of both teaching expectations and non-teaching
obligations would help enhance supply teachers’ status, as would opportunities for CPD and structured career advancement.
An introduction to supply teaching

Although Hutchings, James, Maylor, Mentor and Smart (2006: v) point out that it is difficult to ascertain exact numbers of supply teachers, they estimate that there are over 40,000 teachers who do supply teaching at some point in a year. However, previous research on this sector of teachers is very limited; mainly small scale in scope and conducted under a different educational landscape in which there were few private sector supply agencies operating (see review in Hutchings et al 2006: chapter 2). Hutchings et al’s recent study - the umbrella under which this research was conducted - provides a welcomes contemporary overview of issues around the recruitment, deployment and management of supply teachers in England.

First, the study outlined the great diversity in the backgrounds and motivations of this group of teachers. It identified four main groups of supply teachers. The first group is the largest group of recently qualified teachers coming from initial teacher training or fixed term posts. The majority of these do supply teaching because they are unable to gain permanent teaching posts (p.96-97). The second group were mainly younger overseas-trained teachers who principally do supply teaching in order to travel. The third group is of teachers combining supply work with another occupation, who benefit from the ways the work fits in with family commitments or gives them an opportunity to develop another career. Finally, other supply teachers are retired or retiring teachers, who used supply work to supplement their pensions. Appreciating the diversity of these groups is important, as the differences bear pertinent implications for understanding the status and esteem of particular supply teachers. This is particularly so for the first group, for whom supply teaching is a reluctant default option born of their difficulties in securing employment, rather than a choice, as in the latter groups.

The research also showed that schools employed supply teachers through three means, which again influenced the quality of provision and the supply teachers’ experiences. First, teachers can be obtained through personal contact, such as previous experiences working at the school or word of mouth. The second source is through LA's, although the provision is variable. Finally, the third source is the recently expanded sector of private agencies. In general, larger schools use supply cover more, and the degree of cover also relates to both the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, and GCSE results in secondary schools (with schools with higher percentages and lower results more likely to use supply teachers more). The research also shows that there is diversity in the expectations of what supply teaching involves; the nature of work that supply teachers are engaged in varies both from school to school and also between primary and secondary phases. In secondary schools, many supply teachers are expected to offer only ‘general cover’ and supervision work, which can be ‘a very deskilling experience’ (ibid.:11). Indeed, this echoes with one of the key concerns raised in this study by supply teachers relating to their status, as some reported feeling they were considered not fully qualified, or as ‘not proper teachers’ who were used ‘as a dustbin for the pupils no-one else wanted’ (p.104). However, in general, Hutchings et al’s study reported a high degree of satisfaction with supply teaching,
particularly amongst older teachers. The most positively rated aspects of the work were appreciation of the schools they were placed in, workload and hours of work (p.102).

Methods

For the Teacher Status Project, nine focus group were conducted by Hutchings et al in a variety of regions, with 44 participants teaching across both primary and secondary school levels. The majority of the supply teachers were female and reflected the variety of backgrounds identified above. They ranged from NQTs with no permanent teaching experience to overseas teachers from Australia, Canada and South Africa (all in London) to a retired headteacher and full time teacher with 17 and 35 years’ teaching experience respectively. The average length of service as a supply teacher of this group was fairly short, with most teaching supply cover for around one to two years, although one participant had been supply teachers for nine years.

Evidence

The findings of the research are discussed in three sections, referring to these factors shaping supply teachers’ status:

- the heightened importance of pupil respect for supply teachers’ status
- the influence of other teachers on supply teachers’ professional and personal esteem
- the influence of the organisational context of supply teaching for supply teachers’ status.

The heightened importance of pupil respect for supply teachers’ status

The type I and type II research shows consistently that the relationships with pupils have a very important bearing on teachers’ perceptions of their own status. In this respect, supply teachers face particular problems, as the temporary nature of their teaching affects the regard they can command from children, and can provoke episodes of poor behaviour. Indeed, Hutchings et al’s study revealed that the lowest rated aspect of job satisfaction amongst supply teachers was pupil behaviour (2006: 103). In the focus groups, supply teachers felt they did not command the same level of status in their pupil’s eyes as regular staff. Especially if the appointment is short term, children tended to ‘try it on’, push the boundaries or tell incorrect information about school policies. For instance, in London a teacher reported how a pupil challenged the teacher’s attempts to detain some pupils to clean up the classroom, by saying, ‘supply teachers aren’t allowed to keep us in. And straightaway you know the fact that they can turn around and say that to me, it just takes away a lot of your power’. Inevitably supply teachers see themselves, as participants at West Midlands suggested, as a person who ‘puts himself up to be shot at’. Another suggested, although ‘it is not endemic particularly with supply teachers, it is just that they are seen as easier prey’, by poorly behaving students. A teacher there also commented, ‘if you have supply teacher written across you, you are a stick of death’.
Indeed, the more general problems of pupil behaviour that were judged as contributing to the lower status of teachers (see Chapter 7) was seen as more marked for supply teachers, as the following extract from the focus group in the West Midlands shows:

Q: Do you think there has been a decline in the kind of respect, status you are experiencing over the years?

T: yes I would say 100 per cent in both primary and secondary....where the so called nice classes...would automatically show some respect for you because you were a teacher, because you were an authoritative figure, that doesn’t happen anywhere near as often.

The problem was perceived to be worse for teachers working with older children in secondary schools, an experience that was already more difficult as teachers have to keep introducing themselves to different classes over the school day. In primary schools, the younger children enjoyed the novelty of a new teacher and tried to make a good impression. There were also differences in perception, as supply teachers from overseas compared the poor discipline to their own country of origin, where children showed more respect to teachers, whereas ‘in this country you have got seven, eight, nine, ten kids who are swinging from the chandeliers’ (London). One teacher from South Africa referred to how she was used to more coherent discipline policies between schools, with lots of networking between headteachers about what works.

Perhaps in the light of these challenges, the relative importance of pupil opinion was much higher to supply teachers than may be the case for permanent teachers. They cited their relationship with pupils as the crucial determinant of their esteem and their main motivation to be teachers, as a teacher in the North West stated: ‘the pupils, the children; that is the reason for me being at the school’. Although pupils are potentially the cause of their biggest problems, teachers knew that their success can be made or broken by pupils, particularly as they spend all day with the children, and they are often the main source of information about school procedures. As a result, the challenge of managing pupil behaviour was met by the development of a particular set of skills and abilities amongst supply teachers, who were felt to need to be more ‘behaviour focussed, behaviour centred’ (Inner London). If they commanded respect with the children and that relationship worked well, others (senior managers) started to notice, as a teacher commented, ‘number one priority is the students and then the rest will follow’ (London). A teacher in the East Midlands group suggested,

You know a really good teacher will go in there, the kids will adore them and they can control the class. Then they get the respect from the children and they get the respect from the other teachers and they are asked back over and over again (Outer London).

Confirming Hutchings et al’s (2006) research, supply teachers felt it was easier to command respect when working in a school for longer periods, as they became ‘a common face’. This allowed continuity for pupils and overcame the problem reported by some supply teachers
that some children held perceptions that they were not ‘proper’ teachers. When this occurred, the supply teachers became more like a regular member of staff and thus they did not face the same extent of behaviour problems. Temporary and short-term placements were reported to be experienced negatively by teachers as the disruption was viewed as exacerbating behavioural difficulties in the class:

\[
\text{it is possible to feel extremely isolated and children do say to you, ‘we have a lot of supply and you are just another supply teacher so why should we behave differently for you than we have for all the other people who have come and gone?’} \quad \text{(West Midlands)}.
\]

\[
I \text{ think you can command respect quite soon if you are there on an ongoing basis. You know when I have done five or ten days in a secondary school they can take to me but not in a single day} \quad \text{(North West)}.
\]

\[
I \text{ find if you go from school to school to school, like different schools all the time then you are not establishing a routine and that rapport with students} \quad \text{(London)}.
\]

\[
\ldots \text{after four months the kids behave well because they have got that continuity of that teacher} \quad \text{(North West)}.
\]

Despite some of the concerns raised about the impacts of poor behaviour, the research revealed that generally, supply teachers enjoyed their role as supply teachers. They appreciated the benefits of their job, particularly the possibilities of flexible working. Indeed, the perceived trappings of status associated with being a permanent teacher are not necessarily missed, because there are other advantages that make up for the losses. This is reflected in the following comments:

\[
\text{Sometimes it’s great because you just walk at the end of the day and just go oh tomorrow is a new day! That part is fantastic...If I could supply teach every day I would keep doing it} \quad \text{(Inner London)}.
\]

And:

\[
I \text{ don’t miss not having a long-term relationship. I think that is what some people would miss doing supply, you don’t have your own classroom and your own stuff, [where] you know your own place and almost the status. And that has never bothered me, I have been quite happy not to have that responsibility. But especially now, I feel like I can fill in a gap, you know doing something really useful, so that’s good} \quad \text{(Special School Teacher)}.
\]

**The influence of other teachers on supply teachers’ professional and personal esteem**

The research showed that although pupils were cited as most important in shaping supply teachers’ status, the permanent teachers in schools nevertheless also had an important role in
influencing the esteem felt by supply teachers. Supply teachers felt generally that they had a positive role and are seen as making a valuable contribution to the school system, especially when the schools experience staffing problems. One supply teacher in the London area said, ‘without supply teachers I think the whole secondary system would probably collapse’. Some teachers in the West of England focus group admitted feeling pleasantly surprised at the ways they were received. This was the case particularly when supply teachers were working in regular partnership with a school, or on occasions when schools faced emergencies and they arrived at short-notice. As this teacher stated,

\[ I\text{ think on the whole, teachers within the school are very appreciative of the job that you do and the head of the job that you do, coming in at short notice and taking children that you really have very little idea about sometimes.... I think the other teaching staff on the whole are respectful (West of England). } \]

And another said,

\[ I\text{ think they do respect us particularly here but I think in lots of schools now they know the value of supply teachers...I think the status as I say within the teaching profession has become a little bit more stable and I think they do respect us more (North West). } \]

Despite this general impression, supply teachers reported how they were received by some teachers with ambivalence. A comment by a teacher in the East Midlands captured this, when she mused, ‘overall I think it’s lowish the status. But...I have been welcomed in a school like a knight in shining armour’. Whilst supply teachers felt that schools appreciated what they did and teachers were grateful that they were there, ‘the reality is they do look down on supply teachers’ (London) and think ‘you’re not generally as good as a teacher...and you really are not that committed as a supply teacher’ (South East). Another in the East Midlands reported how, ‘being new to the school you are the lowest rung of the ladder’, whilst another felt her low status arose because she was seen as ‘a lower class teacher like you’re not able to get a proper job’ (South East). Some supply teachers felt poor status because the schools saw them as ‘expendable’. This was particularly the case at poorly run schools, where supply teachers were seen as ‘literally pieces of meat’, as a teacher in the East Midlands expressed, abused by pupils and then not invited back. Others referred to how supply teachers were scapegoated for poor standards in some schools by headteachers when the schools are under pressure. Much of this is related to the fact that, unlike regular teachers, they are not perceived to be interested in the wider issues faced by the schools:

\[ I\text{ know sometimes supply teachers are not looked on with a particular fondness because they’re out of the door at half past three and don’t seem to care (Inner London). } \]

\[ I\text{ think people in general, long term teacher do look at supply teacher with a great deal of disrespect. It’s here today, gone tomorrow (Inner London). } \]

There was great variability between schools as to the extent of this attitude, although it was clear to see from all focus groups that when supply teachers encountered it, it had negative
impacts on their sense of status. In particular, supply teachers felt marginalised when other staff showed little interest from other staff in their work, and operated no checks to see whether the supply teachers were meeting the curriculum requirements. They complained that the lack of accountability made them feel that they were, ‘long-term babysitter[s],’ ‘general dogsbody’ and ‘second class citizens’ (West Midlands). One pointed out dramatically, ‘for all you know, I’m whipping these kids, and no they didn’t give a shit’ (London). She demonstrated some of the dangerous consequences of some of the blasé attitudes, referring how she had been asked to provide accounts of the effort levels of the children, but having only been there three weeks barely even knew their names and thought,

\[\text{OK, let’s make up some data. And unfortunately that is a reality in the high school system as well as a lot of data needs to be generated.....These kids are getting placed in the top sets or bottom sets based on data that supply teachers are pulling out of...}\
\[\text{-Their hats!} \] (London).

Although the notion of supply teachers filling in was supposed to have been erased by the demands of the National Curriculum, it often occurred in practice because schools had simply not prepared anything for the teachers to do (see next section). Yet this limited the extent to which supply teachers could engage in independent teaching, and was very much seen as undermining of their professionalism. A teacher for instance referred to how when teaching art (her subject) she was forbidden access to the stock cupboard, because the children might go in and get things. She interpreted this as a lack of respect for her teaching skill as she said: ‘I feel as though I have been relegated to [a] second class teacher[s]’ (West Midlands). Supply teachers regularly pointed out how they were professionally trained and could be used better, as one said, ‘we do know what we are doing and we could actually have an opinion on a child in that class that means something’ (London). Another said,

\[\text{you are not given a chance to be a good teacher half the time and that makes me very sad. It’s almost as though they expect you to sit there, even the staff sometimes, with a piece of paper in front of you, say to the children, this is what you are going to do and basically let them get on with it....If you actually try to teach them it is, ‘what on earth are you doing, you can’t do that’ and they resent it (West Midlands).}\

Not only was disinterest felt to be damaging to supply teachers’ sense of professional esteem, but it had effects personally and socially. Many complained about feeling marginalised in the schools they taught at, especially in breaks. One in London reported, ‘you feel like such an outsider’ and another in the East Midlands referred to being ignored, often because other teachers are too busy or, as another said, ‘you can often be sitting on your own and however hard I try to talk to other people they don’t want to know. You are only here for the day and not really worth bothering with’ (West of England). Some reported that they avoided going to the staffroom, and would rather use breaks to catch up on marking.

The status of supply teachers vis a vis TAs was particularly interesting. Some supply teachers felt that TAs liked having supply teachers in the classroom, because it gave them the opportunity to run the classroom and teach. Others also reported positive experiences of
team teaching, with TAs an invaluable source of information on school policies, and helpful in disciplining the children. However, on other occasions, friction is reported, where TAs did not inform the supply teachers what they were doing, played the children off against the teacher, diminished their authority for instance by talking over them in class, and as reported by a few teachers, even reported the supply teachers to senior management for problems they identified in their teaching. Moreover, a few supply teachers felt under threat from the increased use of TAs especially in primary schools, who ‘get paid very poor money with not a great deal of training’ (South East). The teacher complained, ‘And it does annoy me that we’ve all qualified and trained and they’re sort of taking over some of the things that we used to do. Because it’s cheaper’.

Supply teachers also commented on a number of strategies which helped reduce these potential difficulties. Some focus group participants (West, Outer London) commented on how a whole school ethos of supporting and welcoming visitors made their jobs easier and more enjoyable. One teacher reported how when supply teachers were brought in to replace a member of staff off sick long-term, they tried to communicate the benefits through the newsletter. But it was also noticeable that in contrast to other teachers, supply teachers suggested that they feel more responsible themselves for how others perceived them. Supply teachers referred to how they bore the responsibility to ‘earn’ respect, and the onus was on them to convince other teachers through their attitude and the efforts that they expended. One teacher in Inner London for instance referred to a pecking order, whereby those supply teachers who are ‘judged sufficient’ and have ‘made the grade’ are invited back. She summarised, ‘if you’ve made the grade with a difficult task, which I did, then that helps. You have to earn the respect’.

The influence of organisational contexts of supply teaching for supply teachers’ status

Some of the factors influencing the low status of supply teachers were seen to arise through the structural and organizational contexts that supply teachers worked within. In particular, the problems were compounded when supply teachers were part of a stream of supply teachers. As a teacher in London said, ‘if they have supply teacher after supply teacher, there is just no organisation. And so I think structure plays an important part of it’. This relates to the findings in Hutchings et al (2006) which reported that the preferred option for the majority of schools was to employ supply teachers through personal contact, as they benefit from working with a ‘known’ body of supply teachers. Indeed, the majority of the teachers reported that they felt more effective when they could ensure continuity and fit into a structured plan, but teachers were surprised that quite often they were in positions where there was nothing properly organised. One teacher reported covering for a teacher, who had suffered a nervous breakdown,

and it was just chaos. No one knew what they were supposed to be doing and no one in the school appeared to know what they were doing…and they put me in there and I didn’t know what was expected (North West).

Another said,
I think there are one or two schools, they seem to be so frenetically busy they haven’t got time for you and you sort of go in and it is, ‘there’s the loo, there is the staff room, there is the coffee, there is your classroom. Bye bye.

- Either that or there is no one in the office area you have to go hunting (West of England)

Government interventions have recently attempted to improve the quality of supply teaching, for instance through more DfES guidance on the use of supply teachers. The 2002d document produced by the DfES, Using Supply Teachers to Cover Short Term Absences, for instance outlines good practice on induction procedures and the preparation of information handouts. However, there are signs that the benefits are restricted when only 36 per cent of secondary schools and 18 per cent of primary schools indicated that they were familiar with this document (Hutchings et al: xii). Significantly there was also great discrepancy between what schools stated that they provided and the percentages reported by supply teachers on the provision of information. Rather the story seemed to be one of great variability; some schools were very well prepared, with clear explanations of school behaviour and SEN policies. Some welcomed new staff, who were greeted, shown around and given a list of lessons and information pack, whereas at other schools, teachers were just expected to ‘get on with it’ and do extra jobs such as photocopying which were left for them to do. This was supported by the following comments:

With some schools you go in and they give you a sheet of paper with the break times and the various logistic things that happen during the day, like assembly times, but there are other schools that you have to go around asking people when is break or ask the children (West Midlands).

one example of a school where I was told very light heartedly, it is a year 6 group, and they have done this, and you can do whatever you want to do with them, that response has been quite common. Right the way down to the other end of the spectrum where everything appears dotted and crossed for you and work is prepared in a very professional and caring manner (West Midlands).

Not only were the difficulties leading to their low status compounded by variability in induction and preparation, but there was also lack of clarity about expectations, with confusion between schools, LAs and different agencies about supply teachers’ contractual obligations. Some referred to how despite only being paid from 9 to 4pm, they were routinely expected to do parent interviews, paperwork, so that one teacher for instance got home at 7-7.30pm. Teachers in the London focus groups reported how some school managers had expectations that supply teachers should attend meetings and cover detentions etc. but others did not, whilst some schools paid extra for additional duties, but others did not. They also felt dependent that if they did not follow the school’s ‘line’, the SMT had the power to ‘suddenly decide we don’t like this guy you are not back the next day’ (London).
This vulnerability was compounded by a wider sense of supply teachers having ill-defined conditions of employment and limited opportunities for professional development. Very few supply teachers take part in CPD activities (GTC 2005, Hutchings et al 2006) and some in the focus groups referred to the difficulties they had in joining a union, because as two teachers commented in the West of England, ‘one or two I got the feeling that you were secondary work force’ and ‘you often can’t find the correct box to fit’. The lack of CPD was more of an issue for those looking for full time work, as a teacher expressed:

*I am just aware that I don’t necessarily have the knowledge anymore to make me feel confident in carrying on and looking for the full time job that I now want* (South West).

Amongst this group, there were concerns that supply teaching was detrimental to their career, and one teacher in the East Midlands even referred to how ‘as soon as you have got supply teacher on your CV regardless of what your circumstances are it’s just career death really’.

**Conclusion**

The research shows that supply teachers felt that they did not command as much status as regular teachers, but understood that they also benefited from the temporary and flexible nature of their work. Teachers felt that pupil behaviour was an important factor which influenced their status, because they were not treated with as much regard as regular teachers. Problems were exacerbated when supply teachers worked short-term, with few clear instructions on both schools’ procedures or sometimes the work expected of them. It was notable that where continuity was most needed, in schools with higher proportions of children receiving free school meals, this option was least possible (Hutchings et al 2006). It was generally agreed by participants in the research that schools should have a developed policy for details around supply teaching, which was reported to be absent in many schools, despite DfES (2002d) recommendations. Details around class teaching, an overview of the stage of the children, even a seating plan would help maintain continuity and improve the status of supply teachers, a group subject to lower status within the teaching profession, by virtue of the nature of the work they do.
Chapter 19: Teachers engaged in CPD and Research

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Overview

This chapter is concerned with the second aim of the research, by gaining understanding of the factors that influence the perspectives of teachers on their status. It is specifically concerned with the influence of teachers’ engagement in CPD and research on their sense of their own status. More specifically, the research reported in this chapter aimed to:

• find out whether teachers actively involved in CPD or research felt that their activities had any effect on their personal sense of status, their status within the profession and the status of their profession

• understand the contexts, processes or outcomes of teachers’ engagement in CPD or research which lead teachers to view these activities as enhancing their own status or that of their profession.

The research was conducted through 6 focus groups, involving 38 teachers and a further 4 individual teachers. These groups and individual teachers were selected so as to represent diverse forms of CPD and research engagement, organised by individual schools, collaborating groups of schools, universities and NCSL (National College of School Leadership), contrasting regions of England and both primary and secondary phases.

The main findings of the chapter are that:

• All the teachers engaged in CPD and research believed that their teaching benefited, through their development of new skills, new understandings, renewed excitement or enhanced self-confidence.

• Most teachers believed that their CPD or research also benefited their schools, through changing practice and enhancing the quality of pupils’ learning and motivation; but there was a strong recognition that schools varied considerably in their readiness to take full advantage of individual teachers’ CPD or research. Where the climate and organisation of schools were such as to take such advantage through the effective sharing of what had been learned, teachers felt their status as agents of that learning was considerably enhanced.

• Among types of CPD, teachers valued school-based provision from colleagues with reliable expertise, networking among schools, and opportunities for extended periods away from school. One-off externally run courses were seen to have little value for teachers or their schools. Opportunities for high quality CPD was seen by teachers as
an indicator of recognition of their professionalism and of the status of their profession.

- Teachers’ motivations for engaging in CPD or research were diverse and often mixed. While some saw these activities as valuable and appropriate as means to advance their career, others were more motivated by personal interest or especially by a concern to do their present job – especially classroom teaching in more informed, enlightened and effective ways.

**Introduction**

This case study was conducted to explore teachers’ perceptions of the effects on their status as individuals and on the teaching profession, of involvement in Continuing Professional Development (CPD), and/or research. Historically, Hoyle (1969) pointed out that a profession ‘should foster the in-service growth of its practitioners’ (p.84) and that ‘each profession has its research element, its avant-garde and its means of disseminating new knowledge’ (p.85). He suggested, 40 years ago, that there might be ‘a suspicion, perhaps even a hostility... ... between those who teach and those who lecture, administer or undertake educational research’ (p.91). Furthermore, Hoyle identified a conflict, and a detriment to the professional status of teaching, between a teacher’s desire for upward mobility in their careers, and the associated likelihood that they would have to leave classroom teaching for a post in administration, inspection, higher education or research.

Today, Qualified Teacher Status requires teachers to improve their teaching ‘by evaluating it, by learning from other teachers and from evidence,’ and to ‘take increasing responsibility for their own professional development’ (Standards for QTS, S1.7, TTA, 2000). The professional significance of CPD has been recognised through the government’s strategy for CPD (DfEE, 2001). The GTC’s questionnaire survey in 2005 examined the range of CPD activities that participants had experienced in the preceding year, and found that 82 per cent had participated in collaborative learning with colleagues and that 38 per cent were doing so frequently. External courses had been taken by 79 per cent and 78 per cent had been involved in school self evaluation activities. Teachers in Day et al.’s (2006) large scale longitudinal ‘VITAE’ study of 300 teachers’ lives and work were generally satisfied with the CPD they had experienced, and saw it as, ‘an important professional life investment, a means of re-charging their batteries’ (p. 123). The VITAE teachers placed a high value on collaborative CPD, but they expressed concern about the limited opportunities available for this.

Whilst the GTC survey showed high percentages of teachers recently involved in CPD, it found also that only 14 per cent had undertaken action research, and only 2 percent had had a sabbatical or secondment. It appears not to have asked about engagement with other forms of educational research. Recently, opportunities to access research findings have proliferated as more and more agencies select, condense and review research findings and make them available to teachers, typically through their websites. Such sources of research findings
include Teachernet, the GTC, the TDA, the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating (EPPI) Centre, and the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE). Furthermore, the National Teacher Research Panel (NTRP), set up by the TTA and DfES in 1999 (now sponsored by the GTC, the DfES and the NCSL) is an independent group of teachers whose aim is to ensure that the teachers’ perspective is represented in research, and who offer advice on how teachers can get involved with research. Until recently, grants were available for teachers to undertake small scale projects with the benefits of the TTA’s Teacher Research Grants scheme and the Best Practice Research Scholarships (BPRS). In 2005 the GTC set up the Teacher Learning Academy in conjunction with the TDA, the NCSL and the NUT, to provide ‘public and professional recognition for teachers’ learning, development and improvement work’. In the last decade, therefore, a very wide range of opportunities for teachers to engage with research and further study, and to investigate and improve their own practice have appeared. These initiatives suggest that if teachers have felt ‘suspicion’ or ‘even hostility’ towards research, and Higher Education (as Hoyle (1969: 91) implied), influential governmental and non-governmental bodies have made significant moves with some potential to reduce this feeling.

Research on collaborative CPD, that is CPD in which teachers work together on a sustained basis, or with a higher education institution, LA, or other professional colleagues, as encouraged in the government’s CPD strategy (DfEE, 2001) has been the subject of a recent EPPI-centre review (Cordingley et al., 2003). This concluded that collaborative CPD was capable of supporting successful outcomes for teachers and pupils. Prior to this review, Harland and Kinder (1997) had made the point that the search for the effectiveness of CPD had focussed extensively on pupil-based outcomes at the expense of teacher and institutional outcomes. They had identified a typology of nine potential outcomes, ranging from ‘material’ and ‘provisionary’ through ‘informational’, and ‘emotional’ outcomes, to ‘institutional’, ‘value congruence’ and ultimately to impact on practice. Their model offers ‘a tentative hierarchy’ of outcomes of CPD, and recognised the complex interplay of potential outcomes from the same CPD provision, depending on institutional ethos and personal values, for example. Our interest in the effects of involvement in CPD and research goes further, to explore its potential effects on the status of teachers and the teaching profession.

In comparison with CPD in general, relatively little research exists on the effects of teachers’ engagement with research. Everton et al. (2000, 2002) explored teachers’ views on educational research and which issues they wished to see research on. They found that teachers concerns needed to be given greater weight, but also that they needed time for further study in order have the knowledge and expertise needed to engage in and with research. Everton and Galton (2004) provided a succinct review of teachers’ involvement with research, since the 1960s. They drew attention to the major contributions of Stenhouse and Elliott in bringing action research within the scope of teachers’ professional practice (e.g. Elliott, 1991). They surveyed teachers conducting small scale projects under the TTA’s Teacher Research Grants scheme, in order to learn about their experiences of supervision and support. They concluded that the most effective support arrangements for teacher
research appeared to be the combination of peer and supervisor support when a group of teacher-researchers worked together, on a topic of particular interest to the supervisor.

Thus the prevalence of teachers’ involvement in CPD since the 1960s, the variety of forms of CPD now available, the ease of access to research findings, and existence of research grants for teachers, suggest that Hoyle’s (1969: 91) hint of ‘suspiccion’, or ‘even hostility’ between practising teachers and those in other educational roles, including engagement with research, ought to have long since dissipated. Now teachers can pursue their professional development without deserting their roles as classroom teachers, and so, without, in Hoyle’s phrase, ‘undermin[ing] the entire educational enterprise’ (Hoyle, 1969: 91). This case study set out to find out whether teachers involved in various forms of CPD and research, felt that their activities had any effect on their personal sense of status, their status within the profession and the status of their profession.

**Methods**

In common with other case studies in this strand of the Teacher Status Project, the study of teachers involved in CPD and/or research adopted the use of focus groups. In order to include teachers involved in a variety of types of CPD/research, we met focus groups whose members had participated in different types of CPD/research including:

- teachers in primary and/or secondary schools who have been involved in LA-provided CPD
- teachers in a secondary school who have been involved in school–based CPD
- teachers involved in leadership-related CPD, perhaps under the auspices of NCSL or NPQH
- teachers involved in university provided CPD that include research activities
- research-active teachers in schools committed to being ‘researching schools’, possibly in a research network of schools.

Four focus groups, arranged by the LA, were conducted in Birmingham. These groups (B) included representatives of all of five categories. In addition interviews with teachers in a committed ‘researching school’ in the East of England, and a large focus group of nine teachers who were in their first or second years of a Higher Education Institution M.Ed. programme. These nine teachers were engaged in individual research projects, and were expected to produce a research thesis of 20-30,000 words. Interviews were conducted in June and July 2005. The focus group discussions were recorded and fully transcribed and have been analysed manually according to the themes included in our interviews but taking into account emergent themes from the protocols.
Participants

Action research, leadership and effectiveness focus groups (A)

Interviews were conducted over a period of two days with four different focus groups. The first group was made up of four primary teachers (all women) who were undertaking Creative Action Research Projects (CARP) which, over three years, can lead to a masters degree with the University of Central England. In each of the first two years, participants undertake an action research project based on an area which their school needs to develop. In the third year they undertake a longer dissertation based on a different focus. All four participants were in their second year. For these teachers motivation for involvement seemed to be a mixture of personal ambition to study for a higher degree and a desire to research ways in which to improve the learning experiences of the children in their schools.

The second group consisted of a further four primary teachers (again all women) who were undertaking action research projects of various kinds. For two of the teachers this was part of a structured programme leading to a master’s course. The other two teachers were not seeking accreditation but were motivated by personal interest and the benefits that could accrue for their schools.

The third group was made up of four primary teachers and two secondary teachers all of whom had undertaken leadership courses (NPQH and LfM, Learning from the Middle) under the general auspices of the NCSL. Two of the group were currently LfM coaches. While these teachers acknowledged the relevance of the courses they had taken for their own career development they were keen to stress that it was important to them that any CPD they undertook should have a positive impact on the children they taught and should help to move their schools forward.

The final group consisted of five secondary teachers all of whom had undertaken the Gatsby-funded Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme (TEEP). While some of these teachers had simply been told to take part by their schools, others had been enthused by the reaction of colleagues who had previously attended. All five teachers had become strong advocates of the programme and some were involved in disseminating it to other teachers in the area.

The ‘researching school’ case study (B)

Interviews were held with four teachers involved in research in a school with a strong research culture. One of these, an English teacher had been involved in research towards a BPRS (Best Practice Research Scholarship) looking at the impact of formative assessment. Another also did a BPRS, but is now undertaking a research based Masters in Education requiring a research-based thesis. The programme helps teachers become a ‘research coach’ and coordinate research within schools. Another science teacher’s interest in research grew out of his earlier career and six years’ research experience as a research biochemist. He had been involved in many networks, including in a local Schools Improvement Partnership, a joint BPRS project with other schools locally, and also became involved with his own and
others’ action-based research projects in his Masters Degree. Finally, a drama and English teacher had been involved in a BPRS project, and was now doing some research into mentoring as part of a mentoring certificate.

The Faculty focus group (C)

The Faculty focus group included nine teachers from various M.Ed. modules, including the ‘research route’ to M.Ed. They covered all age phases from Foundation stage, primary, secondary through to higher education, a teacher in a private school which took boarders, a primary mathematics education lecturer, and the head of an LA early years and child care department. Their subject specialisms were also wide ranging, from English literature, through modern languages, to mathematics and secondary science and technology.

The evidence

Benefits of CPD and research

All of the teachers interviewed at all schools were extremely positive about the benefits that accrued from their involvement in CPD and/or research, both for them personally and for their schools. Personal benefits mentioned included the acquisition of qualifications, as well as the opportunities to meet other teachers, visit other schools and make valuable contacts in addition to the positive effect on self-esteem and professional worth. A faculty group member explained:

*The M. Ed. has reinstated my personal sense of integrity in my work; I am taking hold of it. It would be so easy to forgo responsibility e.g. using the QCA [Qualification and Curriculum Authority] schemes that I need not think about my job at all ...the M. Ed. was an opportunity to counteract the frustration I felt with the lack of thinking I’m expected to do (C).*

The benefits of involvement in research more generally were stated at the researching school:

*From a professional development perspective, it’s just huge, because it forces you to evaluate how you work, and make you think about what’s going on in your classroom, and then eventually think about the wider implications and the wider issues. And that makes you a more effective practitioner, and that is what makes a good teacher at the end of the day...You feel more like a professional, because you’re analysing your own classroom, rather than just doing as you’re told (B).*

One of the Faculty focus group spoke of the effects of doing her M.Ed. research:

*...on a particular approach into children’s literature. And you know you’re even more excited about teaching the children. It’s really a dynamic thing that happened inside me (C).*
Those who had undertaken NCSL courses at Birmingham felt that they had been helped to identify areas where they could grow, to choose their own leadership style and to feel more confident as leaders. Some felt that undertaking the courses had raised their status in their schools and, even where this was not the case, participation had had an impact on personal esteem. Other teachers who had undertaken the TEEP Programme clearly felt that they had gained enormously from their involvement in terms of how they thought about teaching and learning:

*It made me feel better about myself as a teacher. It gave me a language to discuss with colleagues about how to improve teaching and learning...It made me feel more professional (A).*

*That’s right, and that process that we underwent, seeing ourselves more professionally, actually is how children change as well and they begin to take responsibility for their own learning (A).*

Those who were undertaking action research projects saw a number of personal benefits. One was the requirement placed on them to find time to go through the process of thinking analytically about their practice:

*...With your project, you’re doing it for yourself as well as for the children. It’s your own time. I can actually stop and think and just reflect (A).*

*It’s encouraging me... just to look at my teaching from a different kind of perspective, really, and be more experimental with it...I think it’s kind of made me question the kind of things which are there, the existing schemes of work, and so on, and think about actually, think about it in a more analytical way, about what, you know, what am I trying to achieve here? (B).*

This was something that they knew they should do and wanted to do, but was an aspect of their work often neglected in the day to day demands of teaching:

*It forces you to take time and reflect on your practice which we all learn during teacher training is what you should do every day. But with workload and time issues it seldom happens so I think that’s a real benefit (A).*

**Institutional benefits of CPD, and more**

Benefits were also reported for the teachers’ schools in general. Those undertaking action research projects generally felt that their work had helped to inform changes in their school policies. NCSL courses were also seen to have an impact on standards in schools, as SATs results went up, whilst a Family Learning Project undertaken by one school had improved the status of the school by enabling the local community to understand better what the school was trying to do. Those teachers at Birmingham who had attended the TEEP
Programme were also positive about the benefits for their schools and their pupils. Participants talked about ‘better relationships in the classroom, better learning in the classroom and better experience for our pupils’ (A). Several of the teachers had been involved in disseminating what they had learned to their colleagues in the schools, allowing the ideas to be incorporated into the curriculum through a team approach. As such, ‘people work[ing] together in a professional way’ (A), was seen as an important additional benefit.

Some teachers claimed that as a result of the application of their research, there had been improvements in attainment and in SATs results. They also reported that children were also enjoying their lessons more. Indeed, at the researching school, when the science teacher applied the methodology developed by a drama teacher in his science lessons the impressive impacts in pupils’ results was what had convinced him of the ultimate benefit of action based research:

> they were so engaged, and it was really, it was powerful to see the impact. And I do remember, very visually you know, just the knock on effect it had on them...immediately I saw the power of action based research in its place (B).

This was also reported in terms of the impacts of disseminating research-led resources in other schools. The science teacher at Researching school had for example applied some resources at a school in Liverpool and went back to see the results. He explained,

> And I tell you, it’s just amazing. I mean this school was a really tough school. And you know, the Head of Science actually saying what a fantastic change we’ve seen in the department: ‘for the first time, I’m hanging onto the staff; they’re not leaving after one year’ (B).

For one faculty group member, the outcomes of CPD went beyond Harland and Kinder’s (1997) institutional outcomes:

> It’s made me evaluate the CPD [opportunities] for my whole team. I identified funding so that each member has got a CPD budget that they can use for either their personal development for a masters, or for subject based training. I have also set up a bursary scheme for practitioners across the voluntary sector so that they can do a research innovations project over two years. And that has been hugely successful (C).

Despite these and other successes, some felt that the impact of their research was limited when their colleagues were too busy to take much interest in their research. This was seen as a lost opportunity by one of the Birmingham teachers:

> I think I’d like it to be used more in school what we do ...I think it would put more status to what we were doing if it was used a little bit more in school ..... that’s the next stage ...it’s got to be made a useful as possible, otherwise there’s no point doing it. It can be as useful to me but if it’s useful to me. It could be useful to other people, so they need to know about it as well (A).
Indeed, it appeared that the school context is influential in encouraging or impeding research. At the researching school, all teachers referred to the supportive ethos there is for research, and one even admitted that it was not until she came there that she realised that research-informed teaching even existed. When she moved to the school,

"it sort of opened up a whole world to me that I hadn’t really known existed before....You just sort of take it for granted what they tell you at training school is the best way to do it. But it was interesting to sort of challenge it. But I wasn’t aware that people did it in classrooms (B)."

Another teacher there confirmed,

"This is why this school environment in so important, because it’s protective, it’s nurturing, it empowers the teachers, it gives them status and a level of professionalism which instils pride (B)."

Teachers in the Faculty focus group, also endorsed the importance of the school ethos, and discussed the question of institutional versus personal benefits. One identified the headteacher’s attitude as critical to the kind of CPD that was encouraged, despite the views of other staff:

"I think [the impact of CPD on status) depends very much on the culture of the school that you are in. In the last school, I was regarded as being odd, quirky, ‘how have you got time to do that?’ Whereas I think if you work somewhere like Sally does then much more status would be concerned with it (C)."

"I think it takes a manager, the head of the school to have quite a broad view of CPD if they’re going to put funding towards people doing a course like this. ... This is about personal development. It’s also about professional development but the link is less obvious. I mean I would say our principal does have this broad view. The view of the other staff though is interesting – they have a narrower view sometimes ...It’s almost like...’well that’s not going to help you use Powerpoint in the classroom’, or, ‘that’s not going to tell you how to mark those books or about assessment for learning’...so sometimes there’s a marked level of mistrust or suspicion of CPD activities like this, like research, that don’t, completely, obviously have a link (C)."

In fact this teacher had opted to do action research with a direct pedagogical focus which had a very clear practical link to classroom practice.

Another noted that pursuing a research based masters course was distinguished on a day-to-day level from what she referred to as ‘functional CPD’:

"It’s actually interesting that the initiative has to come from you in that this kind of research could be arguably classed as personal rather than professional. Whereas I get things in my pigeon hole every day...functional CPD that will put you in a
position to do a job for your head teacher and get results. It just comes. ‘Go on this course’, and the thing’s in your pigeon hole, the form’s already filled in for you, the place is booked, the money is paid. Whereas I just thought ‘this looks interesting’ (C).

This practical distinction leads us to consider the value of different kinds of CPD.

**The value of different kinds of CPD/Research**

Several groups involved in research and CPD talked about the desirability of visiting other schools. Meeting other teachers was seen to have all kinds of hidden benefits in terms of gaining new ideas or even just endorsing existing practice. Some teachers had had opportunities to do this as part of CPD focused on the Secondary (formerly KS3) Strategy and had clearly found this valuable. Others felt that they had gained a great deal from visiting schools in other countries. Those undertaking action research projects felt that their own research would benefit from being based in more than one school while other schools could benefit from the expertise that they had gained through their research. Some teachers had already conducted INSET sessions for other schools based on their research. A faculty group member said,

> I’ve done lots of other things outside school with the county, and with the college, .. that I wouldn’t have done had I not been doing the course. Because you’ve got the confidence (C).

Being able to talk to wider audiences about what they do was reported as very positive by teachers at the researching school, ‘being part of a network of schools, with obviously good practice going on, has been really valuable as well for this school’.

The least valuable form of CPD was seen by teachers in all three locations to be one-day, one-off, externally-run courses which were seen to have little impact on individuals or their schools. For some, a strong preference was expressed for in-house provision delivered by colleagues whose expertise in an area could be relied upon:

> I think learning from colleagues from within your school impacts greater than sending individuals off to short courses and then coming back and not properly disseminating things (A).

One primary school had recently held six sessions of twilight training, all in-house led. Teachers attending had been given time off in lieu. The sessions had had a very evident impact and the school planned to repeat this approach.

For those teachers in Birmingham who had attended the TEEP Programme, however, the opportunity to experience a sustained period of professional development away from school had had a huge impact. They felt that is was important that they had been able to spend concentrated three-day periods experiencing the kind of learning that was being advocated.
for their pupils. This was particularly strong for those who had undertaken the programme in a residential setting. While the content and delivery of the training was seen as very high, staying in a good hotel and being treated as ‘professionals’ was clearly an important part of the process:

that too raised the status of the training. It was the quality of the hotel you were in, the environment, the way you were treated. All those things helped to raise the status of it (A).

At the researching school, one teacher felt particularly satisfied through the establishment of international connections as a result of his dissemination of research. He was involved in a book based resource called ‘Update, Science Update’, which has over 7000 teachers using it, and this has fed into research training courses he was delivering to other schools. He also wrote and edited internet website on managing resources in Science. He explained,

And that was very powerful. I mean they had 30,000 hits from teachers all around the world. I mean it was quite an amazing impact (B).

Links between CPD/research and the idea of teacher professionalism

Some involvement in CPD or action research was seen by most groups as essential to professionalism. Broadening one’s knowledge base and keeping up with new initiatives was seen as a vital part of being a professional:

As professionals we need to update. Good teachers are those with a thirst for knowledge (A).

One teacher who had undertaken the TEEP Programme made a strong claim in respect of its impact on him:

Well I wasn’t a professional before but I feel as if I am now (A).

He felt that previously he had been relying on intuition in his teaching, but that the programme had given him a fresh framework on which to hang his thinking about teaching and learning. Another at the researching school referred in similar terms to the impact:

It becomes very powerful for the teacher, and really improves their status, just being allied to a university is quite empowering in itself (B).

One of the Faculty group explained how different kinds of CPD were relevant to different roles. Having described the ‘very direct relationship’ of an advanced diploma course to ‘what [she] was doing week by week in the classroom…what I would class as professional expertise in a practical sense’, she continued,
This [the M.Ed.] has affected it differently. This has affected it from a kind of leadership and management role. I can stand back from the whole school picture and I feel more enabled now to do a school self-evaluation and think what are the questions I need to ask...in order to help the school go forward? I wouldn’t have anticipated that that would be an outcome in the end (C).

Those undertaking action research were anxious to stress that it was not an appropriate form of CPD for all teachers. They were clear that some form of CPD was part of what it meant to progress professionally as a teacher but doing action research should be seen as only one option. As another group put it:

*It is all a matter of how effective a particular type of CPD is for each individual, what they need, what their learning style is (C).*

**The impact of CPD/action research on teacher status**

Some teachers undertaking action research had been motivated by the opportunities it offered for personal advancement:

*It was something I just found really interesting to further my own career. It seemed like something that was quite prestigious to be part of (B).*

Having got involved these teachers were still of the view that their status amongst their colleagues would be enhanced:

*Going back to job opportunities and management opportunities...I would like to think that the fact that I’ve done these research projects is having an impact on my development as a leader (A).*

However, others at the researching school referred more to wider benefits. One stated,

*I mean, I haven’t actually done it as a conscious way of kind of moving up through the career ladder. It’s more for kind of personal satisfaction, improving my own teaching and maybe kind of feeding it into the department (B).*

Another felt it to be ‘inventive’, ‘creative’ and ‘innovative’, explaining, ‘If you develop a mindset where you...it becomes an integral part of your own professional development’. This teacher also cited the importance of the work for his own stimulation; he does not teach A levels, so, ‘from a sort of intellectual perspective, for me, it’s nice to do something else, rather than just teaching GCSE science’. This was echoed by another, who confirmed:

*I think it has improved my teaching, and it also makes it more interesting. I think if I was kind of teaching the same old schemes of work and not kind of thinking about really what I was doing, I’d get very bored, and also my teaching get very stale. So I think it kind of works against that, really (B).*
Others felt that their colleagues did not value their involvement in research, one claiming that fellow teachers did not see research as a justifiable part of a teacher’s role,

why doesn’t she stop that rubbish and just teach? (A).

The Faculty focus group considered the influence of qualifications on perceptions of status, alluding to the implementation of the workforce agenda. The early years’ team leader referred positively to the developments associated with the ten year strategy for childcare (HM Treasury, 2004):

It [child care] has never been a graduate profession. Obviously teachers that support early years settings are graduates, but now because of the strategy, leaders of day care centres are now graduates. So it’s right that people supporting them go back one step further than their CPD and go and do masters’ programmes (C).

A secondary teacher spoke next, followed by a primary teacher:

That’s really interesting because I was just thinking a few years ago they had those adverts on telly, ‘Those who can teach’. But I’ve always had the feeling that from the academic side of things, academia, and even from the pupils now you get the idea ‘Those who can’t quite teach’. You get them looking at you saying ‘Why when you have got this degree are you looking at teaching? Why not go straight on to a doctorate?’ And your kids saying, ‘What’s the catch here, Sir? You’re wasting your time working in a school when you could be out doing this, that or the other’ (C).

Primary is so different because we’re heavily into lifelong learning. My school’s got Investors in People because everybody in that building is seen as someone who can learn. We’ve got loads of people whatever their role in school there’s always somebody on courses. ... And the children know this is happening because they share it with them so therefore they see that learning is something which carries on and it has a very good impact on them. Hopefully when [those] children reach secondary, they might have a different keel, I don’t know (C).

It appears that phase may still have made a difference to perceptions here, highlighting perhaps the long-standing status differential perceived between primary and secondary teaching. When someone suggested that the secondary view might be ‘...just an age thing. It’s adolescents to be honest’, the primary teacher continued: ‘But if they’ve been exposed to a different culture from four years old, then maybe things will impact upon them differently’. Their discussion moved on to consider the general erosion of respect for professional expertise,

you get parents no longer in awe in front of you, saying ‘I think my child needs...’ and a doctor friend of ours said patients come with reams they’ve got off the internet: ‘This is what I think is wrong with me!’ The awe of expertise has shifted; you do feel ’just a teacher’ (C).
Those involved in other forms of CPD were more positive about the impact on their status. One of the participants in the TEEP Project felt that her involvement had enhanced her as a teacher and had improved her promotion prospects. Another, who had gone on to provide TEEP training for colleagues, was even more positive:

My self-esteem just rose...I felt good about myself in terms of my own status (A).

These teachers felt that the TEEP Programme had allowed them to develop as teachers in a way that required them to function differently:

Instead of us standing there demanding respect because we’re the authoritative figure at the front of the classroom, we’re not that anymore. We’re involved in helping [pupils] develop as individuals and learners and we haven’t got all the answers (A).

There was a strong feeling amongst this group that if all teachers began to adopt this approach, the status of the teaching profession would gradually be enhanced with the parents of tomorrow having more positive personal experiences of school on which to base their views.

Other forms of CPD were also seen to have potential for enhancing the self esteem of teachers and the esteem in which they are held by others. Some of the teachers interviewed had had links with the business world which they felt had allowed them to be seen as more professional and in touch with the real world. One primary school had developed a link with Land Rover that had arisen out of the Head doing an LPSH (Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers) programme. This had led to a genuine exchange of expertise in which the teachers had been recognised as good at team building, something they could pass on to their business collaborators:

Having a break from the classroom and working with others helps to make us realise that we have a huge range of skills (A).

One group of teachers interviewed talked about there being greater openness these days and the fact that this allowed the wider community to know more about teachers and what they do. This too was seen to have potential for raising the status of the teaching profession. There was a general view amongst this group that things were changing for the better:

Schools are becoming more open and this gives people a better insight into what teaching is about and this is slowly changing perceptions. More people are coming into teaching from other professions. We are moving to a feeling that we have the power to transform things, centred on the child. Things are slowly moving away from the league table mentality (A).

Other groups were conscious that there was still a long way to go. At the researching school, one teacher felt that the government was reluctant to let teachers do things, ‘unless it’s going
to improve results’. One group at Birmingham felt that the proliferation of government initiatives gave many people the impression that schools were not doing what they should be doing and that they have to be made to do it:

My school is viewed favourably by the local community but the public generally do not see teachers in the same way as other professions because the government is seen a needing to direct things (A).

There was a view at the researching school that as a teacher expressed, ‘probably a lot of the issues in education could be answered by teachers if they were asked in the right sort of way’, but these teachers felt that their tacit knowledge was not being mined. They felt however, there was much potential for professional dialogue:

I suppose if they can access, then I suppose teachers as professionals, it’s going to go through the roof because they’re being asked what they think and what they think counts, and then if what they say counts, then it means that if things get changed in a way that will make classrooms better places for children to learn and teachers to teach in. And it’ll revolutionise the whole teaching practice (B).

Some felt that the government could do more to highlight the importance of CPD nationally and to trumpet the fact that things like action research were going on, which helped to improve results. The general view however, was still one of optimism with the government seen to be beginning to play its part:

There is still a big job to be done but teaching is still the best job in the world; we are still enjoying it, still moving forward. The government is changing and giving teachers more scope and freedom (A).

Conclusions and implications

The quotations above present both positive and negative perceptions of the effects of CPD on the teachers’ personal sense of status, their status within their profession, and the wider status of the profession. The researchers’ overwhelming impression from all six groups was of enthusiasm, which was almost evangelical in some cases. Teachers maintained that CPD and research had a positive contribution to make to their status within their schools and in the profession as a whole. It has to be acknowledged, of course that the people who were invited or who volunteered to be in our focus groups were likely to be those with positive stories to tell. We did not meet people whose CPD experiences had been unprepossessing. By the same token, the teachers who did take part had clearly reflected considerably on their experiences. To be cautious, their positive reflections on the effects of their academic and research based CPD might be explained partially at least by dissonance reduction, especially where they were beneficiaries of grants and awards. Their perceptions of the existence of negative attitudes inside and outside the profession might stem from mild paranoia that others envy the funding that these people have secured for their research or CPD. That said,
their infectious enthusiasm for the research projects, their CPD experiences and desire to disseminate these benefits, suggest otherwise.

Although we have not attempted an analysis based on Harland and Kinder’s (1997) tentative hierarchy of outcomes, the examples cited here, which are a small sample of the data, can be placed among their first and second (i.e. higher) order levels. These include motivational, affective and institutional outcomes (second order) and value congruence and knowledge and skills at the first order. The examples illustrate well Harland and Kinder’s observations about the interplay of a complex array of factors, such as institutional ethos and support, to be in place for their higher level outcomes to be achieved. The data show strong support for the enhancement of teachers’ personal sense of esteem with their references to CPD giving ‘the confidence’, being ‘hugely important to my sense of status’, and ‘reinstat[ing] my personal sense of integrity in my work’. The teachers were keenly aware of different types of CPD and their different outcomes in terms of practical effects which were immediately transferable to classroom situations, and the less immediately visible qualitative effects of masters’ level study and research which increased their creativity, critical appraisal, restored their excitement in teaching, and engendered a ‘leadership’ perspective.

The value of school-based CPD was also recognised, notably when this enabled teachers to work with the school community. In general, they felt that participation in CPD had improved their status within the profession and given them confidence to criticise or defend initiatives, and to disseminate their work beyond their schools. We would suggest tentatively that in some cases the focus group members’ expected and achieved outcomes transcended Harland and Kinder’s (1997) nine outcomes. Their experiences had taken them beyond their own institutions, into other domains of work, including business and industry, as well as overseas. Such experiences made them aware of their own skills and expertise. There were perceptions of negative societal attitudes to the status of teaching, expressed through references to being over-qualified to teach. Such perceptions, whether or not justified, need to be dispelled if the status of the profession is to improve. It would seem that the impact of CPD on the status of the profession may benefit from opportunities for more extra-institutional activities, and in particular their crossing of the boundary out of the educational domain and into business and industry, to demonstrate and to value the elements of teachers’ professional expertise that they themselves do not necessarily recognise.
Chapter 20: Pupils’ views of the status of teachers

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Introduction

Many of the contributions to this study were from adults, within and outside of the teaching profession, who shared their perceptions of teachers and the profession. Whilst it was essential to secure the participation all of the contributors who share a responsibility to shaping the education system, it would be remiss to exclude the views of pupils, who are most affected by education policy developments. Indeed, during interviews with teachers, some declared that pupils’ views featured highly among those whom they felt were most important to their sense of status.

This final chapter therefore presents the results of discussions held with pupils from early years, primary and secondary schools situated in different parts of the country. Discussions were developed to establish pupils’ perceptions of the role of teachers and the comparative esteem in which they viewed the profession. The methods used to obtain the data are described below and this is followed by a discussion of the findings, which provide interesting revelations about pupils’ understandings (whether right or wrong) of the teaching profession and their perceptions of their teachers’ status within the profession. Before these sections however, we list here some of the key findings from the pupil group sessions.

The key findings of the chapter are that:

- The status of headteachers was rated by secondary and primary pupils more highly than that of teachers in general, whilst secondary teachers were rated more highly than primary. The responsibility of secondary school staff to prepare pupils for GCSEs was thought to raise their status.

- Young and older pupils alike rated the medical and emergency services most highly (from a list of 16 professions) but younger pupils emphasised that teachers were essential to each of the professions. Younger pupils felt that the teaching profession had played a major role in the lives of all professionals.

- For all phases, pupils considered teachers’ primary function was to teach. However, younger pupils felt teachers enforced learning, whilst older pupils saw teachers as facilitators of learning. A further split in teaching styles in the secondary school phase suggested that younger year groups felt teachers helped them through exams and older groups saw teachers as offering support, guidance and preparation for life ahead.
• Most pupils’ comments about the prospect of teaching as a career related to concerns for pupil behaviour. Pupils, from reception through to secondary phases, recognised the positive or negative impact that pupil behaviour can have on teachers’ lives. Older pupils, however, felt that good teaching skills required teachers to have the ability to manage behaviour.

**Methods**

Interviews with pupils formed part of case study visits to schools which were selected to provide a geographical spread, a range of school sizes, types, phases, achievement levels and local area features such as economic factors and local population make-up. The schools are sited in London, the South West, the East of England and the North East. Interviews with pupils took the form of discussion groups in which 100 early years and primary children were interviewed in 23 groups ranging from reception to Year 6 (ages 5 -11 years). A total of 33 secondary school pupils from Years 7-13 (ages 11 to 18) were also interviewed in 11 groups. These discussion groups met during the school case study visits which took place between February and July 2004. Unlike the longitudinal nature of other aspects of the case study visits, where schools were re-visited a year later to assess the extent of changing attitudes, pupil discussion groups met just once, and this provided a valuable snap-shot of pupil opinion.

**Discussion group questions**

Whilst the essence of the discussion groups was the same for all pupils, the approaches taken to obtain the information differed through the questions asked. The early years and primary school pupils were asked questions (with prompts) in three main areas:

• What does a teacher/headteacher do?
• What job would you like to do when you are older?
• Why/why not a teacher?

The interview often began with a practical, warm up activity. The children were shown a selection of cards with simple line-drawings of a footballer, fire-fighter, vet, doctor, nurse, librarian and policeman/woman on them. They were asked about the job shown in each picture and what each job involved. The children were asked to draw a teacher doing their job. Later in the interview, they were asked, as a group, to rank the pictures in order of whose job is most important and asked to place their own drawing of a teacher within this ranking. In practice, due to time constraints, this activity was often adapted to include either the drawing or the job rankings with some discussion about where a teacher would be placed.

The secondary pupils were asked:

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4 Ann Curtis was the artist providing the drawings.
• When you think about the activity of teaching, what three things come to mind first?
• Is teaching an attractive career?
• Would you like to be a teacher?
• If you had to be/were a teacher, which age/subject would you like to teach?

The secondary school pupils were also given a sheet containing a list of 16 occupations ordered alphabetically and asked to rank each occupation according to the status they have on a rating of 1-7 where 7 = high status. Group discussions then took place about the pupils’ reasons for their decisions.

Evidence

What do teachers do?

Teaching and learning

Unsurprisingly, the most frequent response from pupils of all age groups, in response to this question, was that they thought teachers were there to ‘teach’. A distinction could be made, however, in pupils’ perceptions of the approaches that teachers adopt. Younger pupils seemed to think that teachers were there to enforce learning, while older pupils spoke about teachers’ responsibilities to facilitate learning. For instance, pupils in a reception year group felt that teachers were there ‘to teach everybody to learn’, a view shared by other pupils of the same age group who thought that the job of teachers was ‘to teach you, writing and how to be quiet’. The theme was continued by some of the young primary school children who followed this with ‘making you learn/do work’, whilst the older primary pupils started to appreciate the more supportive characteristics of teachers, commenting that teachers ‘help you learn’. In particular, Year 6 pupils who mentioned their preparation for SATs and other tests were grateful for teachers who ‘help you to do it, not just tell you’. This was echoed by another group of Year 6 pupils who said that teachers ‘teach, show you what to do’.

Pupils’ understanding of the teachers role also differed in secondary schools where the younger secondary pupils (e.g. Year 8) also mentioned learning for their SATs in terms of booster classes. The older pupils (e.g. Year 9 onwards) used the terms ‘support/guidance’ which perhaps indicates a change in teaching style and teacher-pupil relationships for the 15 to 18 year olds. Examples of their comments include pupils’ feelings that teachers, ‘help you progress after school booster groups’ (Year 8 pupils). For Sixth-form pupils, teachers provide rather, ‘lessons, support, work, guidance’ and they are, ‘educating, teaching how to learn about life, moral issues as well as facts’ (Year 13 pupils).

Manage pupil behaviour

The disciplinary responsibilities held by teachers were seen by pupils as necessary to their role. Managing behaviour was recognised by all age groups as a prominent feature of teachers’ jobs. Some of the remarks made by the pupil groups included:

When you hurt somebody she tells you off (reception pupils)
They shout at people. We’re not just at school for being silly. We’re at school for learning (Year 2 pupils)
When we all shout, she tells us off (Year 4 pupils)
Being able to control the class (Year 8 pupils)
Policing - discipline and control (Year 13 pupils)

Preparation, classroom management and organisation
The youngest children were often preoccupied with what might be termed the mechanics of classroom life where teachers’ involvement in administrative tasks and system management was recognised. For instance, keeping the register was a responsibility often mentioned by pupils, as was the need to maintain order by tidying up work areas. It was also clear that many of these young children were aware of the preparation that their teachers did both in and out of the classroom. The younger reception class pupils spoke about teachers who ‘get things out’ and helped their pupils because ‘she does all the cutting out’. An older Year 1 group, contemplating the tireless efforts of their teachers, said, ‘think...about how hard they make the work. When do they think? When we're at home, in the playground’. There was also an awareness of the complexities of the teachers role due to pupil differentiation, as reception class pupils acknowledged that teachers, ‘have to put them in groups’, and primary Year 2 pupils explained that their teachers, ‘split classes into people who need help and children who are quite high’. Secondary school pupils recognised the need for preparation too, and the fact that their teachers’ work involved planning, delivery and assessment. Year 8 groups commented that teachers do ‘a lot of work, setting the work for each lesson, making sure they know what to do’ and ‘marking a lot of the time’.

Some of the younger children mentioned that teachers had some responsibility for safety issues, both inside and outside of the classroom. Reception class pupils said that they were taught that for their own safety, ‘children have to walk’ and Year 2 pupils understood that teachers’ responsibilities stretched beyond the classroom as they had to, ‘make sure children don’t go out of school at playtimes’.

Prepare pupils for the future
Some children, particularly those who were perhaps approaching critical stages of their school lives, mentioned a link between their teachers and their own futures. Year 6 pupils who were having to think about their transition to secondary school and their future potential, valued the role that teachers played in that process. They commented that teachers, ‘help children learn and understand and get a good education. Help explain, teach you what you need to know. Help you have a good career’. Another Year 6 group agreed when they said that teachers, ‘help kids, [get] jobs in the future, go to college’. Those pupils for whom the end of compulsory education was nigh were practical but also a little more philosophical. This was evident with the Year 11 group that said of teachers, ‘they play a part in shaping people’s futures so it’s quite an important job’. A Year 12 pupil prophesied, ‘Future - the children you teach will be the next generation. I’m a romantic.’
What is good/attractive about a teacher’s job? What is difficult?

Relationships, personal rewards and helping to ‘make a difference’
Secondary pupils were able to identify many more positive aspects of the job than the primary pupils but all pupils suggested many more reasons why teaching was difficult and not an attractive career. Positive suggestions which highlighted the more attractive aspects of the teaching career included qualities which were of a more pastoral nature. Some of the observations of what teachers do according to younger pupils included:

- they help you (Reception pupils)
- making children feel happy (Year 3 pupils)
- be friendly (Year 6 pupils)

Secondary school pupils said that the teaching role was good, ‘if you like children’ (Year 8 pupils) and that teachers have good ‘social skills - help children gain confidence’ (Year 8 pupils). Year 10 pupils said that teachers were good at ‘understanding children’s needs’. For Year 12 pupils, the idea that ‘you make a difference to pupils’ lives’ was seen a popular positive aspect to being a teacher. Other secondary school pupils, such as one of the Year 8 groups, spoke of the psychological satisfaction that they imagined teachers gained through their interaction with pupils and ‘the knowledge that in the future they are going to be good people because they have taught them well’. Other Year 8 pupils thought that the teachers’ job required ‘hard work but can be rewarding’. Sixth-form pupils also considered teaching a commendable profession and said ‘you leave a [positive] mark on a child’ (Year 12 pupil), and that teachers, ‘play a part in shaping people’s futures so it’s quite an important job’ (Year 13 pupil). Teaching was seen by a Year 12 pupil, as having the potential to be personally rewarding as, ‘it’s a selfless profession, you give back of yourself’.

The impact of pupil behaviour on the role of teaching
There was evidence that pupils were aware of the impact that they could have on teachers’ own feelings about their careers. Their comments revealed that they recognised that well-behaved children had had a positive influence on the job of teaching. Reception class children explained ‘we make them happy when we are good’ and, describing the picture that had been drawn during the discussion group, a Year 2 pupil said that the ‘teacher in my picture is happy because the children are being good, sitting nice on the carpet and got a sticker’. Year 8 secondary school pupils spoke about ‘the pleasure of teaching if people have got a well-behaved class’ and, perhaps introspectively, another Year 8 pupil was reassuring that, ‘you meet a range of people, not just naughty people in Year 8. There are some nice people’.

Managing behaviour however, is more often seen as a major difficulty of the job. Almost all pupils mentioned this aspect, including the many younger pupils who were concerned about the noise and shouting in their classrooms. Year 1 pupils were in no doubt when asked about the difficulties of their teachers jobs, ‘What’s difficult? Noisy talking makes them angry’ and
‘telling people off makes them sad. Lose their voices’. Year 8 pupils were reflective once again, acknowledging that they too can contribute to their teachers’ misery, commenting, ‘I wouldn’t want to teach our year. It’s a bit loud and gobby’.

The older pupils seemed to recognise that managing behaviour is complex and not easy but essential to teachers’ success. Such was the assessment of a Sixth-form student who concluded that, ‘taking control is the most difficult part, getting respect’. A Year 11 pupil offered teachers the following advice, ‘You’ve got to get the balance right between having control of the class and actually being a nice person’, whilst a Year 10 student explained, ‘you can’t just break out in a stress because students react to that’.

Subject knowledge and skills

Many pupils across the age range often recognised that teachers needed to have good subject knowledge. The younger children tended to emphasise the need for teachers not to make mistakes, pointing out that ‘writing’s hard because she needs to do everything right’ (Reception class children). Children also explained that their teachers ‘have to know their sums’, (Year 1 pupil) and ‘try to get the spelling right’ (Year 2 pupil). It was recognised that teachers sometimes had to develop new knowledge and methods and this was seen as a drawback of being a teacher. Year 2 pupils felt that teachers were required to get to grips with modern concepts and, ‘things they haven’t done, they have to learn it if they haven’t. They did it a different way when they were at school’.

Older pupils, such as those in a Year 8 group, were aware of the need for teachers to have good academic qualifications, and that they ‘need good grades’. Other pupils recognised that teachers had a ‘passion’ for a subject but were perhaps restricted from developing and exploiting their enthusiasm with pupils. A Year 12 pupil elaborated:

People teach a subject because they have a passion for it, they love what they are doing. Maybe the curriculum just doesn’t allow them to share that passion, just the facts. It should be about creativity, expanding learning. The curriculum wrecks that, it steers in another direction.

Another Year 12 pupil in the same (selective) school felt that the expression, ‘those who can, do, those who can’t, teach, is completely harsh’ and that ‘in the past, for Aristotle, it was knowledge for knowledge’s sake. It would be good to preserve that’.

Some children felt that teachers needed professional knowledge and skills not directly related to specific subject areas and explained that a range of expertise was essential in order to engage an entire classroom of pupils. A group of Year 8 pupils said, ‘you have to be able to give help to children who need support but don’t want it. You have to get round that problem’, and, ‘you have to involve all the children’.

Pay and conditions

Discussions about teachers pay and conditions roused comments about how the job of teaching was difficult, stressful and unrewarding. A number of pupils expressed that teaching was ‘hard work’ or a ‘hard job’ and one Reception class child declared, in a very
expressive tone and with a slow shake of his head that, ‘it’s bad, hard work’. Some older pupils mentioned the stressful nature of the job and others, such as a Year 8 pupil, recognised that, ‘writing reports takes ages’, and that teaching was, ‘stressful; marking, report writing to a deadline, like doing homework’.

It was mainly the older pupils who commented directly about teachers’ pay in relation to it being an attraction or drawback of the job, probably because they were closer to beginning to earn a salary themselves. All but one of their comments were negative. Year 12 pupils spoke about teaching being ‘hard work’ with ‘not much pay’ and ‘what’s good? Definitely not the salary!’ A younger, Year 8, pupil thought teachers’ pay should be differentiated according to the ages of the pupils being taught. The pupil went on to explain his policy idea, ‘I think people who teach older people should have better pay because they have to deal with not just school work but falling out and that sort of thing’. This young teenager felt that teachers should be rewarded for coping with the behavioural challenges presented by adolescent pupils. Just one pupil made a positive comment about pay, however, it was hardly an encouraging endorsement of teachers’ pay and conditions, yet this Year 8 pupil ‘wouldn’t mind [being a teacher] but only for the pay...you would be able to live better compared to working in Waitrose’. Many others were clear that teachers’ pay was not a factor which would attract them into teaching. Some of their comments included:

...because they don’t make loads of money (Reception class pupil)

don’t get much money (Year 3 pupil)

only if there was better pay (Year 8 pupil)

the wages put people off. If you’re the one wage earner in the family you have to earn enough to keep your family (Year 12 pupil, boy)

Another thoughtful Sixth-form (selective school) pupil felt that inequitable school selection policies, placed teachers at maintained schools at a disadvantage, when required to meet performance related pay targets, the pupil elaborated, ‘achievement related pay is too much pressure. How do you gauge this? Our school glorifies itself, but picks students who find it difficult to fail and then congratulate themselves’.

The conditions under which teachers were required to work was not considered, by pupils, to be an attraction to the job of teaching, a job perceived to be unbearably hectic. The pupils recognised that teachers were very busy during the day which rather put them off wanting to teach and that you ‘don’t get a break to sit down and have a cup of tea’ and ‘not much sleep because of marking books all the time’ (Year 3 pupil). Even the youngest children showed an awareness of teachers’ burden of administrative tasks. One group of five year olds was sure they did not want to become teachers, ‘because you’re sitting in the medical room and office all day writing. You have to sit there drinking cups of tea’ (Reception class). Only one pupil, a Sixth-form pupil whose mother is a teacher, mentioned the teachers’ holiday entitlement as a potential attraction to the job, feeling that the, ‘holidays are quite nice but it’s hard work’.
Becoming a teacher

Perceptions of the job

Very few of the pupils interviewed had ambitions to become teachers in the future and cited a range of reasons for their lack of interest in a teaching career, with the most common theme being concerned with the attitudes of pupils themselves. For those pupils who showed some positive interest in a teaching career, the school phase and subject area were key determinants. Year 8 pupils at a selective school were concerned that in most schools teachers’ time was often spent managing pupil behaviour. One of these pupils explained that a teaching career was not appealing ‘because of some students’ attitudes towards teachers...especially at 15, 16 [years old]...gets better at 17,18 [years old]’. Another pupil in the same group said, ‘If teachers are occupied with unruly people, they can’t help others who are working. That’s why grammar schools are good, they give children who want to learn more of a chance of doing so’. Other pupils at this selective secondary school felt that different schools gave teachers different challenges. One of the group felt that ‘it would be hard to teach in a state school, not the same as here. If the school has special needs it’s harder’ (Year 12 pupil). Whilst reflecting on whether he might become a teacher, a Year 8 pupil said ‘not in a comprehensive, somewhere with rules’.

The younger pupils who did want to become teachers focussed on the practical aspects of teaching such as, ‘writing on the whiteboards, cleaning them’ (Year 1 pupil) and how they, ‘might like marking the work, doing work on the computers’ (Year 2 pupil). An incisive Year 6 pupil however, whilst enjoying ‘writing on whiteboard’, also wanted to be, ‘filling children’s minds’.

For pupils who attempted to imagine a day in the life of a teacher, the prospect of having to interact with pupils constantly was a daunting proposition. Pupils spoke about the sheer number of people involved in teachers’ interrelationships throughout the school day, whilst for some, noise levels were a concern. A Year 1 pupil said that there would be ‘no peace and quiet in the classroom’. Placing himself in the place of his teacher, a Year 2 pupil explained, ‘I can’t handle the children all shouting at me’.

The idea of having to discipline pupils was a distinct drawback for some pupils, who were concerned that teachers and pupils needed to have positive relationships. A Year 6 pupil group spoke about not wanting to have a job in what they considered to be a potentially hostile school environment. They felt that the pastoral element of the job may cause teachers to shout at pupils and lose the confidence of pupils. They explained that they, ‘don’t want to shout, telling little children off’. Another in the group said ‘Teachers get cross if people annoy them, shout at children then children don’t like them. I like people to like me’.

Relationships, personal rewards and helping to ‘make a difference’

Pupils suggested that teaching was a valuable career which influenced pupils’ futures. Indeed, there was no shortage of adulation for the key role teachers had played in the lives of people and the anticipated impact that they would have on the future lives of the current pupil population. Teachers, according to pupils, were responsible for shaping the conscience, ambition and sense of being of many people. Pupils explained ‘Teaching is very important because if you don’t have teachers, can’t make up your mind, read, have to use other
people’s opinions, not make up own mind’ (Year 6 pupil). An older Sixth-form group said the job was ‘rewarding, [the] attraction of working with young people, shape them, help them, seeing them grow, develop’. Others, such as one of the Year 6 groups, felt they had spent enough time in school already and would not want to remain there as an adult. They seemed to recognise the positive impact that teachers can have on pupils’ lives but nevertheless, felt it was not for them. One of the group said, ‘I would care about others’ lives and what they want to do but wouldn’t want to teach them, but do something else’.

Subject knowledge

All age ranges recognised the need for good subject knowledge and, for many, this put them off becoming a teacher. Younger pupils in particular, appeared to be concerned about their ability to grasp subject knowledge sufficiently well to impart to others. Groups of Year 2 pupils described their fears: ‘It’s too hard, you’ve got to remember stuff and you have to remember it until you’re about fifteen. And you have to answer all these questions all the time’. There was also the feeling that teachers were required to deliver lessons flawlessly and that ‘if teachers make a mistake, children laugh’, also ‘they might get something wrong then children write it in their books and get it all wrong. You might be told off by the head’. Some of the older pupils spoke about their own perceived subject knowledge weaknesses being a hindrance to any idea of a teaching career, one such pupils said ‘I’m bad at spelling’ (Year 6 pupil) and another pupil explained they would be deterred, ‘because of writing essays’ (Year 6 pupil).

Pupils highlighted a need for teachers to be enthusiastic about what they were teaching but felt they, themselves, would not have the required subject enthusiasm. ‘It’s just not a job that would appeal to me because I wouldn’t like teaching the subject, it would be boring for myself, and if I was bored the children would probably be bored’ (Year 8 pupil). Two pupils were a little more positive explaining, ‘maybe if I learned something really good’ (Year 8 pupil) and felt it was important to, ‘communicate a subject you are enthusiastic about’ (Sixth-form pupil).

Gender

The under-representation of men in the teaching profession is not unnoticed by pupils, and is perhaps most acute in early years settings. The subject was broached by four groups of five year old pupils and there was a distinct impression that teachers were female even when in some cases, there were actually male teachers in their schools. Some of the exchanges between these children included:

Boy 1 - I wouldn’t want to be a teacher cos a teacher isn’t a boy, only a girl
Girl 1 - But there’s a boy teacher in Year 6
Girl 1 - No! Because he’s a boy
Interviewer - Can’t boys be teachers?
Girl 1 - Yes, there’s Mr D and Mr S.
Boy 1 - No!
Boy 2 - There is some boy teachers. There are hundreds of girl teachers
Boy 1 - I’d turn into a girl. You can’t be a boy teacher because it won’t be the same ... because there will be more boys than girls as teachers’.
One group of older pupils suggested that teaching might not be an attractive career to men due to the potential for men teachers to be accused of inappropriate behaviour. Pupils felt that this was a realistic challenge for potential men teachers which warranted due consideration. One of these Sixth-form pupils said that ‘in this climate it is difficult if you are a man and you love children’. Another in the group was concerned that men teachers, ‘are open to abuse’.

Comparative Status

Rankings by secondary phase pupils

The secondary school pupils who participated in discussion groups were also given a sheet containing a list of 16 occupations, ordered alphabetically. They were asked to rank each occupation according to the status they have on a rating of 1 to 7 where 7 equals high status. In almost all cases, doctors/surgeons were rated highest. Both primary and secondary headteachers were rated as having higher status than teachers but secondary headteachers and secondary teachers were seen as having higher status than their primary colleagues. It was interesting, however, that in one interview group two 15 year old pupils gave teachers higher status ratings than headteachers. They both rated all teachers as seven and one rated all headteachers as six and the other as five.
### Occupational rankings by secondary and primary school pupils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Total score (from 20 returns)</th>
<th>Average rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surgeon</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solicitor</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary headteacher</strong></td>
<td><strong>107</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrister</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vet</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary teacher</strong></td>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary headteacher</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management consultant</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary teacher</strong></td>
<td><strong>78</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web designer</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whilst we did not specifically ask pupils to explain the reasons for their choice of ratings, the activity generated discussion in some groups. The pupils seemed to feel that high status depended on levels of responsibility and potential risk to self. Surgeons and doctors were highly rated because ‘they are saving lives’ (Year 11 pupil) and the police put ‘their own lives in danger’ (Year 11 pupil). Levels of ‘learning’ were also an issue for some pupils with one pupil making a neat distinction between skill and learning, explaining ‘Web designers are skilled but not really well-learned’ (Year 8 pupil). The pupils offered further interesting insights into teacher status, such as the two Year 8 boys who echoed the opinions of others that teaching fell between high and low status:

**Boy 1** - *It is in the middle- it is not difficult to do but just enough to make you think, but other jobs require you to think more*

**Boy 2** - *It is middle and middle paid.*

A Year 11 pupil, in a different discussion group, was even more precise in his levelling of status, once again feeling that teachers and heads fell in the middle but that secondary school teachers’ responsibility for examination preparation raised their status. He said ‘teachers and heads in middle but secondary higher than primary – [they] prepare children for exams’. Working with secondary age pupils was seen as having higher status than primary by almost all pupils. Involvement in formal examinations was a factor but other pupils felt that working with older pupils deserved higher status than working with younger pupils because, ‘the secondary age range is when you get all the changes taking place, it’s when you get adolescence and things’ (Year 11 pupil).
The fact that almost everyone has benefited from contact with teachers which could affect the rest of their lives led to some pupils, who had rated teachers and headteachers highly, to reason that, ‘teaching is high status, you work with people, you make a difference. Doctors wouldn’t be doctors if they hadn’t been well taught’ (Year 12 pupil). Another said, ‘a teacher is at the beginning of everyone else’s career’ (Year 10 pupil). For these pupils, teachers are a crucial influence on pupils’ futures and so deserve high status. This is in contrast to a Sixth-form pupil who felt that teaching was not a high status profession because the, ‘social make up of country does not value education enough. Money is valued’.

**Rankings by primary phase pupils**

The interviews with the primary-phase children often included a practical activity where they were asked, as a group, to rank pictures of people doing various jobs in order of whose job they felt was most important, and then asked to place their own drawing of a teacher within this ranking. Not all the youngest children understood the concept of the ranking activity. When asked, in relation to the cards, ‘whose job is most important and why?’ almost all children ranked doctor and nurse pictures the highest. A range of reasons were given, which related to keeping people well and alive:

- *The hospital ‘cos he takes care if anyone hurts anybody* (Reception class pupil)

- *Nurses, they have lots of jobs to do, a hundred jobs to do. They do all the jobs to make people better* (Reception class pupil)

- *I would put nurse first because they save people’s lives. Then it would have to be an excellent person (doctor)* (Year 2 pupil).

The police were rated the next most important since they were seen as important for keeping people safe. Reception class pupils’ reasons included:

- *Take people away*

- *Stop cars*

- *If we didn’t have policemen somebody could rob you and nobody would help you.*

Year 6 pupils’ reasons included:

- *Arrests, murders. Stop crashes, violence, drugs*

- *Take charge, stop people being silly*
The risks faced by police officers were also acknowledged by a few children who felt that they were worthy of high status ranking, ‘I think the police because they can stop people and they might die’ (Year 2 pupil).

Teachers were placed in the middle or lower half of the ranking by most of the groups except for a few individual children who wanted to place them first as they felt that ‘without teachers you could not do any of these jobs’ (Year 6 pupil). Another Year 6 pupil explained, eloquently, that teachers should be ranked first because ‘They help children to have a good education, learning comes first before anything. They help children not to turn to a life of crime, clever when older, have a nice world. Tell you to avoid things that will harm you, give you education, tell you what you can do, what you need, how you can do it’. The pupils who did not rank teachers highly among the other jobs did, nevertheless, often comment that teachers were important, such as the Year 6 pupil who said of teachers that they ‘Teach the kids that become all the others [occupations]’.

Summary
This chapter has revealed the unmistakable recognition, and sense of admiration that pupils of all age groups hold for teachers and the work that they do. Teachers were considered to be hard working and caring, in conditions that are unyieldingly trying and unrewarding. Indeed, according to pupils, teachers’ main source of job satisfaction lies in the pleasure of teaching their pupils. Pupils’ comments about the ways in which teachers went about their work revealed variations according to the age of pupils taught. For instance, younger pupils felt teachers enforced learning, whereas older pupils saw teachers as facilitators of learning. A further split in teaching styles in the secondary school phase suggested that younger year groups felt teachers helped them through exams and older groups saw teachers as offering support, guidance and preparation for life ahead. With respect to the relative ranking of the teaching profession, compared to the list of 16 professions, teaching failed to reach the higher quartile, with all pupils rating the medical and emergency services most highly, feeling that life saving and life risking professions were worthy of distinction.

Throughout the age ranges, pupils identified an underpaid teaching role which required a commitment to maintain a personal knowledge base and perform many other teaching responsibilities including managing unruly pupils. It was the behaviour of pupils themselves that appeared to be the chief deterrent to a teaching career. Pupils from reception through to secondary phase schooling recognised the positive or negative impact that pupil behaviour can have on teachers’ lives.