‘Who pays the piper …’
An investigation into the effects of managerial and market based school accountability measures on independent school teachers’ practice

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‘Who pays the piper …’
An investigation into the effects of managerial and market based school accountability measures on independent school teachers’ practice

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Abstract

The past forty years have seen an intensification of managerial and market-based accountability in education. Research studies have found that state school teachers have changed their practice to adapt, often to the detriment of their capacity to realise their professional aims. However, there is a dearth of research considering how accountability processes play out in the independent school sector. Through qualitative semi-structured interviews with teachers from three case study schools in the UK, each representing a different type of independent secondary school (a traditional academically selective ‘Great School’, an academically selective former state-funded school and an under-subscribed ‘Recruiter School’), this research investigates their professional aims, and the barriers they face in their attempts to realise them. The teachers interviewed all stated they wished to achieve two main aims: to ensure pupils' academic progress and to make lessons enjoyable. Three other aims were held by many of the teachers: to promote independent learning dispositions; to ensure pupils have a deep understanding of their subject, and; to inculcate a love of life-long learning.

The teachers describe experiencing similar tensions to those experienced by state school teachers documented in the existing research literature. However, the driver of these tensions is felt to be pressure from fee-paying parents, rather than managerial target-setting. The amount of pressure exerted by parents was not felt equally across all three schools. This latter finding is considered through a Bourdieusian lens. It is suggested that upper-middle-class parents, who share a school's habitus and doxa, are less likely to exert pressure on teachers to ensure their children’s academic success. In contrast, more aspirational or newly middle-class parents rely on their economic rather than social or cultural capital to ensure their child’s future success, and therefore intervene more aggressively as clients in the marketplace to seek advantage. This kind of parental pressure has intensified as competition for university places (and graduate jobs) has increased. However, the teachers interviewed perceive that the recent changes to the A Level examination system in England may help them to achieve their professional aims, thereby to some extent counteracting some of the negative effects of parental pressure they have experienced in recent years. However, this thesis suggests that more fundamental reform – specifically the introduction of a more 'intelligent' form of accountability - is needed to support the realisation of teachers’ professional aims and raise the professional status of teaching.
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'Who pays the piper…’ An investigation into the effects of managerial and market based school accountability measures on independent school teachers’ practice

1. Introduction

Over the last forty years, the education sector has experienced a continual intensification of market based accountability measures, alongside an intensification of managerial accountability in the form of a ‘greater emphasis on regulatory arrangements and quantifiable measurements of teachers’ work’ (Levitt et al. 2008). This has occurred within the context of a wider ‘audit explosion’ (Power 1994) or ‘accountability culture’ (Siegel 2012) within the public sector more generally.

These changes have been shown to substantially affect both teachers’ and schools’ practice in the state sector in a number of ways. The school inspection regime, coupled with a substantial use of target-setting has resulted in the emergence of a culture of performativity, where, ‘as a response to targets, indicators and evaluations’ (Ball 2003a, p215), teachers are encouraged to place more emphasis on achieving measurable targets than on pedagogy or students’ education (Chua 2009; Ball 2003a). Throughout this time, the professional status of teachers has been challenged by the media and, through their policies, by successive governments. Some commentators have suggested that this has led to a lowering of public trust in teachers who are subjected to a ‘discourse of derision’ (Wallace 1993; see also Ball 2003a).

Empirical research conducted in the state sector has documented teachers narrowing their curriculum to focus purely on what will be measured, and an increased use of didactic ‘spoon-feeding’, and ‘teaching to the test’ (Kosheleva 2011; Longo 2010; Pan 2009). Some research has also suggested that teachers can be driven to cheat through the pressure felt to raise attainment to satisfy accountability measures (Popham 2001).

However, there has been a dearth of research on the nature and effects of shifting modes of
accountability in the independent sector, reflecting a dearth of research on the independent education sector more generally. Previous pilot research based on a case study of one independent school (Hyde 2015), upon which this thesis builds, suggested that, independent school teachers appear to be experiencing similar pressures to those faced by their state school counterparts which affect their ability to realise their professional aims. However, these pressures come from different drivers of accountability than those affecting state school teachers and, within this case study school at least, it was found to be the market, and more specifically pressure from fee-paying parents, rather than pressures emanating from the government and related agencies, that constituted the greatest barrier to teachers realising their aims. As Clough (2002) notes: ‘the hard commercial edge of the independent market surely cannot be set aside as fantastic’ (p.86).

Whilst independent schools may be relatively few in number, they can differ widely in terms of the demography of their student populations, and their academic selectivity, fee-cost and pupil numbers – as Walford (2011) states, ‘diversity is the essence of the private sector’ (p.401; see also Sullivan & Heath 2002). Some independent schools are ‘highly selective, expensive and likely to lead to high-status universities’ (ibid, p.401) whilst others ‘are far more modest’; yet there is very little research on the different types of independent schools in the UK and how these are affected by the market in education. Following the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, universities were subjected to a “marketised climate... [which] allowed different types of higher education providers both to recruit and to select” (Waring et al. 2003, p.4). Within the new market that was created, the traditional pre-1992 universities which were over-subscribed were termed ‘selectors’; the new, post-1992 universities (former polytechnics) where demand was below the number of places available were classed as ‘recruiters’ (Waring et al. 2003). Evidence has shown that both behaviour and policies differ between ‘selectors’ and ‘recruiters’ in the higher education sector (Waring et al. 2003). There is currently a lack of research on whether a similarly marketised climate in the private secondary school arena results in different
accountability pressures for over- and under-subscribed independent schools. This is a gap in the literature which the research reported here is intended to help fill.

Teachers enter the profession with strong perceptions of their role, usually couched in altruistic terms such as ‘making a difference’ (Phillips & Hatch 2000) and ‘help[ing] children succeed’ (Kyriacou et al. 1999). Phillips & Hatch suggest that teachers are vulnerable to being disillusioned and disengaged when these motivations are not fulfilled. Much of the literature over the past twenty years conceptualises teaching as a profession rooted in values and ideology that requires parental trust if it is to flourish (Sockett 1993; Hoyle 2001; Carr 2003; Freidson 2001; Pfadenhauer 2006). The pilot case study referred to above and upon which the present study builds found that the teachers primarily had intrinsic goals focused on the cultivation of personal attributes (such as communication skills, the capacity for critical reflection and a disposition for independent learning) and values.

Through interviews with teachers across a range of different types of independent secondary school, this research explores the teachers’ professional aims, how managerial and market modes of accountability in the sector are, or may be, affecting their ability to realise these aims, and what if any difference a school’s market position (for example as a ‘selector’ or ‘recruiter’ school) makes to whether and how teachers’ practice is affected. This is important to consider as, if teachers’ aims are altruistic and current modes of accountability are working against these, the end result will paradoxically be worse for those who are meant to benefit from the market – which is, in the case of independent schools, the pupils and their fee-paying parents. By documenting the effects of accountability measures, and reflecting on the policy implications of the research, it is hoped that the research will also contribute to thinking about the development of new, alternative modes of accountability that are better able to improve teachers’ practice and, therefore, students’ education.

This research comes at a time of great change for English secondary schools as new assessments are in the process of being introduced for all 14-19 year olds. For example, September 2015 saw
the introduction of a new A Level, returning to a pre-‘Curriculum 2000’\(^1\) structure with fewer (but longer) assessments and the withdrawal of teacher assessment in favour of external examinations. These changes may well affect teachers’ practice in substantial ways and hence this research also seeks to investigate whether teachers perceive the new assessment regime as supportive of or as a barrier to their professional aims.

Following this short introductory chapter, the remainder of this thesis will be structured as follows: Chapters two, three and four set out the background to this research. Chapter two provides an overview of the independent school sector, contextualising different types of school and the reasons why parents might choose particular schools. This is followed in Chapter three by a brief history of teacher professionalism and of how relationships between teachers, parents and the wider-society have changed in recent decades. Chapter four documents the different modes and methods of accountability that are being used in the independent and state school sectors, and how these have been shown to affect teachers’ practice.

Chapter five outlines the methodology used in collecting data for this research alongside the ethical considerations that informed the design and conduct of the study. Each of the case study schools is described and classified in relation to the types of independent school categorised in Chapter two.

Chapter six maps and analyses the teachers’ motivations for entering the profession, how they perceive the profession has changed over their careers, and what they aim to achieve as teachers. This is then used as the basis for considering the effects of managerial accountability (in Chapter seven) and market accountability (in Chapter eight) on their practice. Chapter nine analyses the differences in how accountability pressures are manifested and experienced in the three case-study schools, with a particular focus on the role that different middle-class fractions play in mediating the effects of market accountability. Before a concluding chapter summarising

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\(^1\) ‘Curriculum 2000’ was the name given to considerable changes to the A and AS Level system introduced in 2000. More detail on this is given in Chapter 10, section 10.1.
the findings and pulling together the key analytic threads of this research, Chapter ten considers whether the substantial changes made to the A Level system in England might facilitate or impede teachers’ ability to realise their professional aims.
2 Contextualising and Categorising the UK Independent School Sector

Whilst independent schools account for the education of only 7% of school children in the UK, the significance of the sector is ‘far greater than this proportion would indicate’ (Walford 2009, p.727). Not only do 14% of all teachers work in the independent sector (Green et al. 2008), but there is a wealth of evidence demonstrating that independent school alumni disproportionately dominate politically and socially powerful positions such as judges, MPs and journalists (Green et al. 2008; Cabinet Office 2011; Sullivan & Heath 2002; Ryan & Sibieza 2010).

There has been comparatively little research undertaken on this influential part of the education system, and the majority of the research that has been undertaken has been based on US schools, whilst UK studies ‘have tried to restrict their focus to the boarding schools’ (Walford 1986, p.9).

The diversity of the independent school market

The focus on the ‘elite’ sector of the market in much of the literature, along with its financial and influential advantages, may mislead us into believing the sector is homogenous. This is far from the case. As Walford (2011, p.401) notes, ‘[d]iversity is the essence of the private sector’ with the sector comprised of schools that are highly academically selective, financially selective, religiously selective, a combination of the three or not selective at all. The reasons behind this heterogeneity can be found in the history of the development of the sector, the nature of the market and, in particular, the different reasons parents have for choosing independent schooling.

2.1 The history of independent schooling in the England

The most prominent schools in the sector, both nationally and internationally are, without doubt,
‘the old-established boarding schools that have long served the economic and political elite’ (Walford 2009, p.716). These schools, all founded prior to the nineteenth-century, include Eton and Winchester (the oldest independent schools), Harrow, Westminster, Charterhouse, Rugby and Shrewsbury. All of these are boarding schools and were founded to educate boys – although a number are now co-educational. They are joined by two day schools, St. Paul’s and Merchant Taylor’s, to form a group described by the 1861 Clarendon Commission as ‘Great Schools’. These institutions focused on educating the upper-classes and by the middle of the nineteenth century were struggling to fill places as they chose ‘to risk lower numbers rather than admit children of a lower social rank’ (Walford 2009, p.718). However, during the 1800s, the rise of the middle-classes led to these schools adapting to ‘fit the requirements of those who were involved in running business enterprises’ (MacDonald 1977, p.24). They became more academically focused, although the competitive nature of team games and the ‘gentlemanly’ ethos of the schools remained as they ‘socialised their middle-class recruits’ (ibid.).

During the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, the government expanded provision for elementary education – making this compulsory for all in 1880. Secondary schooling was dominated by day and boarding independent schools and those run by the Christian Church (Griggs 1985; Walford 2009). The next big change to secondary education came with the 1944 Education Act which made secondary schooling (until 15) compulsory. A tri-partite system was created with provision for students judged to be highly academic (in grammar schools), less academic (in secondary modern schools) and technically able (in technical schools3). The government was required to create a huge number of schools as the churches and charities could not provide for the increased demand. At the same time, most Church of England and Catholic Church schools either became state schools, or the churches became partners with

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3 Despite the system officially being tri-partite, only a small number of local authorities actually created secondary technical schools. In 1958, the Crowther Report noted that, whilst 1.5 million students attended secondary modern schools, and over 680,000 were educated at a grammar school, only 95,000 attended a technical school. This led the report to conclude ‘we do not now have, and never have had, a tripartite system.’ (HMSO 1959, p.22).
the state, keeping some control of the management of the school yet receiving the majority of their funding from the state (Walford 2009). The importance of the 1944 act in the context of independent schools is that it explains why the independent school system in the UK is comparatively small compared with some other developed countries (such as the US). The relatively high number of faith schools in the state sector has meant that there is little need for faith schools in the private sector (Walford 2011; Sullivan and Heath 2002). Paradoxically, the post-war expansion of the state school sector highlights the stability of the demand for independent schools at that time. As Power et al. (2003) state, ‘that support for independent schooling survived the growth and academic success of state grammar schools suggests a clientele whose custom did not have to be earned because for them state schooling remained unthinkable’ (p.14).

The independent school market changed considerably in the 1960s and ‘70s. The Wilson Labour government was committed to putting ‘an end to the selection system and tackle[ing] “the problem of public schools”‘ (Green et al. 2011, p.660). This had a big impact on the independent sector as ‘direct-grant schools’ (schools which were private, yet received per-capita state funding for educating poorer students) were abolished, with these schools being given the option of converting to comprehensive schools or going completely independent and receiving no government money. The majority chose the latter and this greatly increased the number of independent schools4. The closure of most of the academic grammar schools gave independent schools an opportunity to attract affluent parents who feared the new comprehensive system (Green et al. 2011). However, this required the independent schools to intensify their academic focus to match that of the old grammar schools - making them, Rae argues, ‘ruthless and single minded in their pursuit of academic success’ (Rae 1981, p115). Independent schools also became more academic at this time to give them ‘political legitimacy in the face of ideological opposition’

4 The direct grant and other local schemes had been ‘so extensive that up until 1976, 70% of independent day schools were principally state funded’ (Power et al. 2013, p.3).
(Green et al. 2011, p.660), particularly as public money was still funding independent school places through the Assisted Places Scheme.

The oldest schools, the traditional ‘Great Schools’ from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, have seen an increased focus on academics, but still have a habitus which focuses on facets outside the taught curriculum and examination results. Indeed, whilst these schools are academically selective, they do not necessarily only take students who perform best in the academic tests, reserving some places for children of alumni or those who have particular extra-curricular abilities such as rugby (Maxtone Graham 2015). Independent day schools which were either founded much later, or are former direct-grant or state grammar schools are usually highly academic (Sullivan & Heath 2002) and tend to perform superlatively in examination league tables\(^5\). Towards the end of the twentieth century, independent schools in lower socio-economic areas struggled to maintain pupil numbers due to the abolition of the government’s successor to the direct-grant system, the Assisted Places scheme. This led to a number converting to (or returning to) the state sector (Garner 2014).

The abolition of the direct-grant and the Assisted Places Scheme made independent schools more financially exclusive. This market has also been affected by middle-class parents choosing to spend their money on moving house to more affluent areas which tend to have better performing state comprehensives, or to the few areas which still have state grammar schools (Power et al. 2003; Gewirtz et al. 1995; Ball 2003b; Sullivan & Heath 2002).

### 2.2 Parents’ reasons for choosing independent schools

Across the literature, it has been shown that there are three main motivations for parents choosing the independent sector: a belief that their children will attain better academic

\(^5\) League table data is not provided to the Department of Education by any of the traditional ‘Great Schools’. However, data at www.best-schools.co.uk lists the top 100 independent schools by percentage of A*/A grades achieved. Here, only two of the ‘Great Schools’ appear in the top ten, with two appearing in the bottom quintile.
outcomes and benefit from a more scholarly curriculum then would be available in the maintained sector; the co-curricular offer of independent schools in the form of a wide-range of team sports and resources for creative arts, and; a social habitus connected to the ethos and history of the schools – although it must also be acknowledged here that parental choice is usually not simply based on one factor, but combines factors in different degrees.

Whilst most studies suggest that independent schools make little difference to the academic outcomes of students, with comparatively better attainment rather a result of the higher socio-economic status of the student than any value-added effect of the school (Sullivan & Heath 2002), both quantitative and qualitative studies on parental choice show that the academic excellence of independent schools is a key ‘pull’ factor for many parents (West & Noden 2003; Power et al. 2003).

For parents choosing independent schools the perceived superiority of the education provided is reflected in the academic nature of the courses at these schools which tend to focus on classics and sciences (Walford 2009). The inclusion of international courses such as the International Baccalaureate has also been shown to attract parents seeking to qualify their children for a ‘transnational’ future (Maxwell & Aggleton 2015; Brooks & Waters 2015). Choosing an independent school can also be a form of ‘risk avoidance’ where parents consider ‘private schools as a “safe” choice and, concomitantly, the state sector as implying risk’ (West & Noden 2003, p.184; see also Ball 2003b). High placings in league tables, impressive examination statistics and the number of students progressing to Oxbridge universities support this view (Green et al. 2011; Sullivan & Heath 2002) even though these are often merely a reflection of the high academic starting point of the schools’ cohorts (Walford 2009). Indeed it has been found that parents choose schools for the academic and socio-economic status of the cohort and the assumed effect this has on their child even if they believe their child ‘would probably flourish virtually wherever they were schooled’ (Ball 2003b, p126).
Finally, academic excellence is presumed due to low student/teacher ratios, despite evidence to suggest this has little or no impact of student attainment (Alspaugh 2016; Dewhurst 1993; Borland et al. 2005).

The co-curricular offer of schools in this sector has traditionally been a distinguishing feature of independent schools, with competitive team games and highly resourced performing arts departments considered more important, educationally, than the traditional curriculum (MacDonald 1977; Neal 2008). However, it must be noted that not all independent schools are well-resourced. There is a huge variance in the facilities of independent schools, directly related to their income, endowments and fee-structure. The traditional ‘Great Schools’ are all very well resourced, whilst at the other end of the spectrum, facilities at low-income independent schools are ‘usually poor’ (Walford 2009, p.722; see also Sullivan & Heath 2002).

Beyond the academic programme and extra-curricular facilities, some parents choose certain independent schools for less tangible reasons. As Gewirtz et al. (1995) found, some parents are more attracted by ‘the expressive order of the school, that is the complex of behaviour and activities in the school which are to do with conduct, character and manner’ (p.29). Certain independent schools operate to a set of social norms or a habitus which parents (and the schools themselves) believe to produce ‘the “rounded individual”, the confident leader”, and better “soft-skills”’ (Green et al. 2011). These skills are seen as integral to creating a leadership ‘elite’ which can make this type of independent schooling a valuable investment as parents choose ‘advantage... over adequacy’ (Ball 2003, p.126). These schools, which Ball (2003) describes as ‘communities of destiny’ have been criticised as ‘a clear way of purchasing privilege’ (Gale 1981, in Griggs 1985, p.57). The social modelling of independent school pupils has been shown by educational sociologists to reproduce advantage - and therefore reproduce inequality (Walford 1986; Brooks and Waters 2015; Green et al. 2011; Griggs 1985).
As previously noted, Walford (2011) states that ‘diversity is the essence of the independent sector’ (p.401). Whilst he is referring to the many different types of school, diversity can also be found across the sector’s parent body. A variety of class factions are represented, including the traditionally wealthy upper middle-classes and lower-income families who are able to access the sector through bursaries, with the latter accounting for a third of students across the sector (White 2015; HMC 2018).

Although the majority of independent school parents define themselves as middle-class (NatCen 2010), to ‘explain contrasting parental preferences for types of school [and] patterns of student engagement with school’ (Power & Whitty 2002, p.595) it is useful to divide them into what Bernstein describes as the ‘new’ and ‘old’ middle classes. Bernstein (1975) acknowledges the differences and tensions between the two sub-classes, stating of the British ‘l know of no other middle class which has the possibility of such a differentiated form of socialization’ (p.18). Bernstein’s ‘old’ middle-class is comprised of the aristocracy and (more commonly) the upper-middle classes. In education terms, these parents are wealthy, and have most-likely been educated in one of the prestigious ‘Great Schools’ described in Chapter 2. The ‘new’ middle-class are ‘nouveau-riche’ and aspirational, and are less likely to have experienced an independent education or, indeed, higher education. Power and Whitty (2002) suggest that Bernstein’s theorisation of the ‘old’ and ‘new’ middle-classes helps to explain school choice and student and parental engagement in education.

Whilst Bernstein makes his distinction between the sub-classes primarily in economic and professional terms, Bourdieu (1984) helps us define these sub-classes further by considering their habitus, classifying them as ‘inheritors’ or ‘newcomers’. Whilst these terms could relate solely to inherited or newly-acquired wealth, Bourdieu believes that social classes are defined by the ‘differences observed in... [the distribution of different] forms of capital’ (1987, pp.3-4), not purely economic. Whilst Bourdieu acknowledges that wealth is ‘the dominant principle of domination in capitalist society’ (Blunden 2004, p.2) and economic capital is possibly the most significant determinant of an individual’s life chances, he notes that this dominant capital is
constantly under challenge by fractions of the dominant class’ (ibid. p.3) who have other forms of capital at hand.

In addition to economic capital, Bourdieu identifies ‘cultural capital’, people’s cultural resources and tastes, such as their clothing and their cultural habits including ‘theatre, concert, art-cinema and museum attendance’ (Bourdieu 2006, p. 175), as having ‘a special place in distinguishing the “bourgeois world” from that of the “populace”, or, as he also suggests, “inheritors” from “newcomers” (Vincent & Ball 2007, p1066).

Thirdly, he identifies ‘social capital’, comprising the social connections people have access to, as a key resource.

The ‘old’ middle-classes, who have inherited not just economic capital but also highly advantageous cultural and social capital are able to reproduce their advantages to a degree that the ‘newcomers’ or the ‘new’ middle-classes cannot. One reason why the ‘old’ middle-classes choose independent schools is as ‘matter of class identification’ (Vowden 2012, p.731) - they choose an environment populated with like-minded people from the same social class. Conversely, ‘newcomers’ see these environments and wish to join them to gain the valued forms of cultural and social capital they lack. This is an example of how these forms of capital are mutually reinforcing, as these middle-class parents chose independent schooling as a way of using economic capital to gain valuable forms of social and cultural capital (Vincent & Ball 2007).

As Edgerton and Roberts (2014) state, ‘economic capital affords the time and resources for investment in the development of children’s cultural capital, which is associated with future educational and occupational success and, in turn, contributes to the accumulation of economic capital’ (p.195). Therefore, because the ‘old’ middle classes possess valued forms of both cultural and social capital, they are at a significant advantage to those that don’t. The ‘old’ middle classes are able to use their cultural and social capital to reproduce their economic capital and vice versa, but the ‘new’ middle classes may also attempt to use their economic capital to accumulate cultural and social capital. Examples in education of how they do this include investing in private tuition and music classes (Vincent & Ball 2007).
These ‘differences and tensions in the middle class’ (Power & Whitty 2002) are increasingly evident. Brown et al. (2011) state that the global economic downturn since 2009 has made the competition for higher education and future employment increasingly intense. They describe a ‘middle-class at war with itself’ (ibid. p.85). This suggests that whilst the upper-middle classes choose independent schools which mirror their familial habitus, and maintain the status quo through social reproduction (Reay et al. 2001; Bourdieu 2006; Egerton and Roberts 2014), the ever-expanding lower and new middle classes, are using economic capital to choose a school that might allow them to gain for their children more social and cultural capital of the kind that gives access to higher status opportunities and occupations than they themselves have. This is a form of what Lareau (2000) refers to as ‘concerted cultivation’. In its most extreme form, the bringing up of children becomes a ‘development project’, with parents’ investments in organised cultural and social activities coming ‘to dominate family life’ (p.1). Lareau noted that the middle classes are better resourced than working class parents to assertively ‘cultivate’ their child’s cultural capital. Brown et al. (2011) and Budovski (2010), argue that this kind of assertive cultivation is becoming increasingly prevalent as competition for places at the best universities and for the best jobs intensifies (Brown 2011; Budovski 2010). The implications of such middle-class orientations for parents’ relationships with schools are explored in the empirical section of this thesis, particularly in Chapters 8 and 9.

The independent school market is as diverse as, if not more diverse than, the state sector. Just as not all independent schools transfer the privilege and habitus described above, not all are well resourced or as academically focused. Some schools have long histories as independent schools based on centuries-old endowments, whereas others, including those which were once state schools, are relative newcomers to the independent sector. In order to discuss and analyse the ways different schools work, it is helpful to create working categorisations of different parts of this diverse sector. Using the different histories and qualities of independent schools detailed above, in what follows the categories ‘Great Schools’, ‘Academically Selective Independent Schools’, and ‘Recruiter Independent Schools’ will be used.
2.3 Categorising independent schools: ‘selectors’ and ‘recruiters’; ‘great’ and ‘academic’ schools

Before a working definition is attempted of the types of schools this study will consider, it is important to identify those which it will not. As the independent school sector is so diverse, there are types of schools which it will not be possible to consider in this research. Firstly, there are a number of what Walford (2011) terms ‘low-fee’ schools which tend to be religious in character. These are often evangelical Christian or Muslim schools and they account for less than 200 of around 2,600 independent schools in the UK (Walford 2009; ISC 2016). These schools are generally characterised by low academic standards and poor facilities due to their low-fees (Walford 2009). These are not being considered in this research partly due to their small number, but also as they have a very specific parental market – indeed, ‘in most cases parents have a substantial role in the management and organisation of the schools’ (Walford 2009, p.722).

There are also a small number of independent schools which cater for students with specific and often severe special needs which will not be considered in this study. This leaves us with 1,267 independent schools which all have in common their membership of the Independent Schools Council.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, in their 2003 analysis of school qualifications and the higher education market, Waring et al. categorise higher education institutions as either ‘selectors’ or ‘recruiters’. ‘Selector’ universities are generally those traditional institutions that prior to the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act had been universities rather than polytechnics or colleges of higher education. They are heavily oversubscribed, receiving many more applications than the number of places they have to offer and therefore can be highly selective in terms of which candidates they accept. Conversely, ‘recruiter’ universities are generally those institutions that converted to university status post-1992, have far fewer applicants and need to be more
aggressive in recruiting students (see Waring et al. 2003; Hyde 2011). It is useful to use these terms when categorising secondary schools in the independent sector.

The selector schools, like those universities described above, are highly over-subscribed, often requiring not just one entrance examination but a pre-test and even a ‘pre-pre-test’ (Maxtone Graham 2015). They can be further divided into two categories, the ‘Great Schools’ and ‘Academically Selective Independent Schools’.

The term ‘Great School’ here should not be considered as any kind of qualitative subjective superlative. It is used to describe those schools (and those similar in nature) that were categorised by the 1861 Clarendon Commission as such. Traditionally, these schools might have been called ‘Public’ schools. However, this description is confusing internationally, as outside of the UK the term ‘public school’ suggests a ‘state’ or ‘maintained’ school. Furthermore, it is a contested term. In the 1980s, a headmaster’s membership of the HMC (Headmasters’ Conference) ‘entitled his school to be accorded the status and prestige of a public school’ (Walford 1986, p.6) as the HMC was ‘the very bastion of the system’ (Griggs 1985, p.1). However, the HMC now includes a diverse range of schools, some more selective than others and not all sharing the characteristics of schools such as Eton, Winchester and Westminster.

‘Great schools’ are those schools which have always been privately funded and governed. As evidenced by data discussed earlier, they are not necessarily high-performers academically compared to other independent schools. However, they are highly selective both socially and financially. Their fees are usually twenty percent higher than those of other independent schools and their student population is what Gaztambide-Fernandez (2009) classified in a discussion of US independent schools as ‘demographically elite’. Power et al. (2003) describe the

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6 Data from [www.best-schools.co.uk](http://www.best-schools.co.uk) shows that, whilst ‘Great Schools’ such as Westminster and Tonbridge Schools charge £26,322 and £27,216 per year respectively for day pupils, similarly academic schools which wouldn’t fit this category, King’s College Wimbledon and Lady Eleanor Holles, charge £19,830 and £18,234 respectively. These are not outliers. In fact, some independent schools which performed as well academically charged between £12-13,000.
types of parents attending these schools in the UK as ‘aristocrats and the wealthy... well established sections of the gentry and (especially) the professional classes’ (p.14).

‘Great School’ parents constitute a generally homogenous population in terms of their socio-economic status and, when combined with the distinctive history and traditions of these schools, ‘encourage a perception of belonging and social standing’ (Rizvi 2014, p.291). This creates what Taylor (2003) defines as a particular ‘social imaginary’ – that is, a feeling of ‘how things usually go, ... interwoven with an idea of how they ought to go’ (p.24). As stated earlier, many parents choose independent schools or elite state schools to gain access to social and cultural capital, or to reproduce the social capital they already possess. 'Great Schools' are often criticised for being highly socially reproductive (Ball 2003b) and they are rich in economic, social and cultural capital.

An interesting facet of these schools is their negotiation of two contrasting features. On the one hand, they are successful ‘transnational’ institutions: they may follow international curricula, they have strong links with American Ivy-League universities and have a high number of international students (Brooks & Waters 2015). On the other hand, they portray themselves as exuding an English identity which Brooks and Waters (2015) have shown to be important to their parents.

‘Academically Selective Independent Schools’ often also have a long history. However, the majority of these schools were at some time direct-grant schools which had places funded by the government or had been selective state grammar schools, gaining independence when these were abolished. These schools still, in common with the ‘Great Schools’, ‘emphasise an ordered and controlled environment’ (Walford 2009, p.723), but they also prioritise academic results. These schools take 19 of the top 20 places in the 2015 Independent School A Level League Tables, and they have previously been categorised by Brooks and Waters (2015) as ‘high-performing private schools’. Whilst contributing to social reproduction, they educate fewer of the ‘leading high flyers in the UK’ (Brooks & Waters 2015, p.214) compared with the ‘Great Schools’. Parents
who choose 'Academically Selective Independent Schools' rather than the 'Great Schools' are more likely to be from the aspirational middle-class. They are less likely to have been independently educated or be in possession of a university degree and, due to the highly 'competitive nature of the education system' (Bodovski 2010, p153), they may wish to engage in 'concerted cultivation' (Lareau 2000) to seek an advantage for their children.

The ‘Recruiter Independent Schools’ on the other hand are less academically prestigious. They occupy places outside the top 100 independent schools. However, they often share a similar ethos to the ‘Great Schools’ and have similar grounds and facilities.

**Conclusion**

The independent sector is diverse, even discounting small faith or special needs schools not covered by this research. This is predominantly reflected in the diverse historical contexts of the schools. Prior to the nineteenth century there existed independent schools founded to educate the aristocracy. These were described by the 1861 Clarendon report as the ‘Great Schools’ and were predominantly boarding schools. The rise of the middle classes in the nineteenth century led to the Great Schools adapting to admit the middle-classes as well as the upper-classes. Whilst they became more academically focused, their traditional habitus typified by the importance placed on competitive team games and the 'gentlemanly' ethos remained.

The massive expansion of secondary education after 1944 supported the direct-grant schools, and these, along with grammar schools faced with closure in the 1970s, became many of the country's 'Academically Selective Independent Schools'. Schools can also be defined by the parents who choose to send their children there (and equally parental choice is often guided by the nature of the school). Academically selective schools have become increasingly popular with middle-class parents as the economic and educational environment has increased the competition for high status jobs (Dronkers et al. 2010; Ward 2014; Brown et al. 2011). As a university degree is no longer sufficient in itself to ensure its holder what many middle-class
parents would consider to be good employment (Brown et al. 2011), parents are using their economic capital to ensure their children have the best possible educational starting position (Bodovski 2010; Lareau 2000).

‘Recruiter schools’ may market themselves as providing similar ethea to the ‘Great Schools’, and they often have similarly impressive facilities; however they do not have the historically secure habitus or the academic reputation demanded by parents who choose an academically selective school and nor are they seen to provide access to the kinds of social or cultural capital desired by parents of 'Great School' students. They are therefore typically under-subscribed, or looking to recruit students whose parents would be more likely to choose a 'Great' or 'Academically Selective Independent' school.

These three types of independent school informed the methodology of the research with three case-study schools chosen to represent each of the three types. This allowed the voices of teachers across each type of school to be heard, and to ultimately allow an analysis of how managerial and market-based accountability measures might affect teachers differently depending on whether they worked in a selector, recruiter, 'Great' or 'Academically Selective' school.
3 Teacher Professionalisation and the Professional Status of Teachers

This research explores the effects of different modes of accountability on teachers’ ability to achieve their professional aims. This chapter explains how the governance of teachers’ work, their working conditions and the relationship between teachers and parents have changed over a number of decades, from a period where teachers had a considerable amount of autonomy over their work, through an extensive period of professionalisation, to a contemporary context where teachers are working in a low trust, low status environment. Because of the lack of existing research focusing on independent school teachers, the review of research undertaken in this field, below, concentrates on teachers in the state sector. The extent to which these changes also affect independent school teachers will be explored further in this thesis through an analysis of the research undertaken.

Debates surrounding the teaching profession, what it means to be a teacher and, indeed, whether teachers can be classified as professionals practising a profession have a long history. Traditional definitions (Carr-Saunders & Wilson 1933; Millerson 1964) categorise professions as occupations which have a specific knowledge-base and members who are autonomous, self-regulating, legitimised through a license or other credentials and work to a shared ethical code (Hoyle and Wallace 2009). This, traditional, ‘trait’ based conceptualisation was widely accepted prior to the 1950s, in what Hargreaves (2000) describes as the ‘pre-professional’ phase of teacher professionalism.

3.1 Prior to the 1950s: The pre-professional period

In the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the term ‘profession’ was commonly applied specifically to those practising law, medicine and divinity (Gillard 2005; Cunningham 2008). The omission of teachers from this list can be explained in a number of ways. Firstly, prior to the mid-twentieth century, teachers were either university educated yet lacking in vocational preparation based on an assumption that ‘teachers were born and not made’
or trained in elementary school practices, such as teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, yet with no official qualifications. Thus, teachers had either no licence/credentials or no specific pedagogical knowledge-base. Secondly, even looked at from a contemporary perspective, it is contestable whether teaching even now could be said to be based on solid knowledge as the many decades of shifting pedagogic paradigms exemplified by, yet not limited to, paradigms influenced by the work of Vygotsky and Piaget demonstrate. Thirdly, teaching as an occupation had no regulatory body and in elementary schools at least, teachers had no autonomy over the curriculum. The Revised Code of 1862 set out a clear diktat of restrictions on teacher practice and the common view of educational officials was that ‘teachers desiring to criticise the Code were as impertinent as chickens wishing to decide the sauce in which they would be served’ (Lawton 1980, p.16).

It is notable that criteria of societal trust and respect do not feature in definitions of a profession in the pre-1950s period – even though all three of the traditional professions (lawyers, doctors and the clergy) had a good deal of public trust. In contrast, modern definitions emphasise the importance of professional-client trust, and this will be discussed in much detail later. In the period before the 1950s teachers did have the benefit of parental and public trust. For example, in an evaluation which surely could be contested now, Lester Smith (1957) quotes a contemporary commendation: ‘the standard-bearers of progress, civilisation, evolution, well-doing, the high-life, better living, true religion – call it what you like – have been without doubt teachers in our schools’ (p.89). However, teachers did not share a similar status with the aforementioned professions.

Towards the end of this period, definitions of a profession began to include service and personal integrity as key attributes – foreshadowing later definitions of Pfadenhauer (2006), Freidson (2001) and Hoyle (2001) which privilege trust and values over autonomy, self-regulation and qualifications. This ‘attribute’ model was first articulated by R.H. Tawney in 1920 who differentiated the professional from other workers by stating that ‘the measure of a
professional’s success “is the service which they perform, not the gains which they amass” (Crook 2008, p.15).

3.2 The 1950s, 60s and 70s: the ‘golden age of teacher professionalism’

Since 1950, teachers have pursued many facets of professionalisation. McCulloch et al conceptualise teacher professionalisation as ‘a political project on the part of teachers to be publicly acknowledged as ‘professionals’, and of teachers’ unions and associations to establish teaching as a recognised ‘profession’ on the same level as, for example, medicine or law’ (McCulloch et al. 2000, p.14). This is recognised in the second of Hargreaves’ (2000) phases of professionalism, the ‘autonomous professional period’, which includes concepts of service, values and trust.

The 1950s, ‘60s and ‘70s have often been described as the ‘golden age of teacher control… [where] parents were expected to trust teachers to know what was best for their children’ (Whitty 2008, p.33). The service, values and trust at the heart of the newly founded post-war welfare state allowed teachers to be seen as ‘the bedrock of the new welfare society… partners in the deliberations of policy, able to influence the direction and control of the system’ (Lawn 1999, p.22; see also Jones 2009).

However, professionalisation had not just been a teacher-led project. The seeds of top-down professionalisation enforced by government had been sown in the 1902 Education Act, but the middle of the century saw an increase in state interventions designed to raise the professional status of teachers (McCulloch et al. 2000; Gillard 2005). Supported by a rise in the influence of the National Union of Teachers, these included the development of a three-year teacher training course, the exclusion of unqualified teachers from the classroom, improved salary scales and the introduction of the teachers’ pension scheme.

This ‘golden age’, however, was not to last. Whilst the post-war welfarist agenda had
repositioned teaching as a respected profession where trust was expected rather than needing to be earned, a decline in public trust became central to the ‘breakdown of this identity and the erosion of teachers’ claims to be custodians and transmitters of educational knowledge’ (Jones 2009, p56). Teachers’ professional status since the 1970s has been fundamentally changed by managerial and market-based accountability measures implemented by policy makers. Such measures can be traced back to the 1970s. The economic situation during this period was bleak. In the context of a severe recession, questions were being raised about the nature, purpose and effectiveness of education beginning with Prime Minister Callaghan’s Ruskin Speech of 1976 (McCulloch et al.2000; Gillard 2005). At a time of economic difficulty, the government wished to focus more on skills-based vocational education. This marked a shift from the pupil-centred liberal education of the 1960s: ‘an orientation to work, even when there is little likelihood of work being available [had] to be supplied’ (Dale 1989, p138).

The media supported this change of focus, sowing the seeds of distrust of schools (and liberal teachers/teaching methods) by highlighting the case of the William Tyndale Junior School – an establishment which caused a minor scandal in 1974 and became one of the most notorious primary schools of the generation (Dale 1989; Davis 2002). The William Tyndale Primary School affair ‘raised crucial questions about responsibility and accountability’ (Gillard 2005, p.176). It also pitted unqualified ‘lay’ staff in education against ‘the professionals’. The controversy concerned the liberal teaching methods of the majority of the staff in the school, supported by the head teacher and his deputy. A teaching assistant, Annie Walker, objected to this style of teaching which, she claimed, ‘neglected educational basics and denied pupils the opportunity for academic progress’ (Davis 2002, p.275). Walker took her complaints to parents, and the resulting lack of faith in the school’s teaching and management led to a massive decline in the school roll. If the professional status of teachers increasingly became ‘a matter of public relations’ (Crook 2008, p.14), the William Tyndale Affair was a battle lost, creating a ‘culture of suspicion’ (Lunt 2008, p.85). This then became another factor to justify increasing managerial
and market-based accountability of schools, and was ‘instrumental in enabling the construction of the parent as a private consumer’ (Dale 1989, p. 119). Whilst Tyndale did not cause the huge change in education policy that was to come, it offered apparent proof of the government’s claims of declining standards and mobilised support amongst the public for change.

3.3 The 1980s and 90s: a ‘manipulative mosaic’ of responsibility without autonomy.

A clear consensus was created from the mid-70s to the late 1980s, as Thatcher continued ‘a clear direction of travel... towards a centralised power structure’ (Parker 2015, p.459), removing the autonomy of teachers and their input into the curriculum. Whilst the introduction of teacher assessment in external examinations in 1986 could be seen as a professionalising move, the prescribed National Curriculum for state schools established by the 1988 Education Reform Act has been the greatest example to date of the centralised control of teachers’ work.

Top-down accountability was increased through the passing of the Education (Schools) Act 1992, which enforced regular testing in state schools, following which league-tables were introduced, ranking schools by their results. The practical effects of these reforms may not have been realised directly at the time, but the reforms have since been discredited by ‘a significant body of education research which demonstrates the pernicious effects of league table measures on school priorities’ (Gewirtz & Cribb 2006, p.5). Because of the high stakes involved, head teachers and teachers tend to prioritise the measures upon which the league tables are constructed over what might be educationally more valuable (Biesta 2015).

Parents were also given greater powers in choosing schools through an open enrolment policy - preventing local education authorities from capping the size of school rolls to ensure all schools were full. Schools that were popular with parents – and assumed therefore to be more successful - would grow, and less popular schools would see their pupil rolls shrink. As Thatcher (1993) put it: ‘parents would vote with their children’s feet and schools actually gained resources when they gained pupils. The worse schools in these circumstances would either have to improve or close’
Within this newly configured education system, politicians and parents, rather than teachers, were able to decide what was educationally in the best interests of children. It is noteworthy that these reforms, with the exception of the National Curriculum, were made (under the guise at least) of decentralising power. However, the reality for the profession is that this power was not being distributed to teachers, and it can be argued that teachers were de-professionalised by these measures.

Through local management of schools and the creation of City Technology Colleges and Grant Maintained Schools (the predecessors of the now-ubiquitous academies programme), the government claimed to 'give more powers and responsibility to individual schools' (Thatcher 1993, p.592). As with open enrolment these policies could all be seen as decentralising the control of schools. However, it equally could be argued that the latter two initiatives were centralising moves as CTCs and grant maintained schools became directly responsible to (and funded by) the Secretary of State for Education and that all of these policies were aimed more at lessening the control of Local Authorities (the majority of these being under Labour rather than Conservative control) than in devolving control to schools. Certainly they were accompanied by political arguments about the dangers of 'propaganda... [from such] left-wing authorities, teachers and pressure groups... keen to impose [their] own ideological priorities... ' (ibid. p.590-592).

It seemed as though the Government was starting a ‘public relations’ battle with Local Education Authorities and teachers. Moreover, ‘decentralising’ policies which gave greater power to parents arguably promoted the idea that teachers could not automatically be trusted to capably fulfil their duties. Gillard, for example, argues that the Parent's Charter of 1991, which had been presented as 'an information revolution to extend parent choice.... [explaining] what parents can expect' (DFE 1995), was effectively a measure for "putting teachers in their place... [in an] era of "name and shame" (Gillard 2005, p.177).
Teachers’ position in the ‘public relations’ battle described above was further weakened by a series of strikes over pay and conditions and a boycott of national testing in 1993. This, combined with the centralisation of power over the curriculum and a diatribe of negativity about teachers from the government, created a cyclical de-professionalisation/re-professionalisation environment, whereby government would identify a problem with the teaching profession and then insist on greater managerial controls to ‘professionalise’ teachers. An example here would be the Secretary of State for Education Kenneth Baker rationalising the introduction of a prescribed National Curriculum which required compulsory teacher-training days as a response to the ‘inadequate and lazy teacher’ (McCulloch et al. 2000, p.23). As Whitty states, ‘the effect of these attacks... was to erode trust in teachers, thereby facilitating subsequent educational reform’ (2008, p.34).

3.4 Post-1997: The audit explosion and ‘re-professionalism’

The election of the New Labour government in 1997 came with a well-publicised priority: ‘education, education, education’ (Blair 1996). However, despite a large majority and a mandate for change, the new administration did not attempt to return to ‘old’ Labour educational ground. Indeed, according to David (2005, p.87) New Labour was ‘not as different from the Conservative government as the politicians might like to have us believe’ and the emphasis on top-down managerial forms of accountability and ‘re-professionalisation’ continued.

Managerial forms of accountability were driven by an ideology that public services will be more successful and better financial value if subject to targets in the same way as private businesses (Power 1994). In education and other sectors, policy was characterised by a ‘what-works’

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7 The suggestion that left-wing teachers and local authorities were following an ideological agenda was supported by the right-wing media who used a few exceptional examples to promote the government’s case. An example of this was the publication of ‘Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin’, a book bought by just one local education authority yet reported as widely available to four and five year olds (Deer, 1988). In a highly conservative era, this damaged trust in the teacher profession amongst some sections of the public. Trust was further undermined when the then Chief Inspector of Schools was widely reported in the media as claiming that 15,000 teachers were ‘incompetent’ (Bartlett 2000).
discourse (Oancea and Pring 2009). An example of this was New Labour Education Secretary David Blunkett’s (and his successors’) advocacy of systematic reviews of both national and international research to find the most effective means of achieving specific ends. However, a series of studies has shown this managerial approach to accountability, and its focus on measurable ends, led to a culture of ‘performativity’ and ‘gaming’ by schools and teachers under pressure to achieve ever-better results. This will be discussed further in Chapter 4, section 4.5. Managerial accountability, therefore, did nothing to halt the decline in trust of teachers as sections of the media questioned whether better results signalled higher standards – with some, for example, suggesting a dumbing-down of standards (Paton 2008) and arguing that ‘Britain’s classrooms [were] mired in academic mediocrity’ (Tipping 2013, p.13).

The ‘re-professionalising’ agenda sought to address the lack of trust in teachers and put in place those elements of professionalism, as defined by the trait theory described at the beginning of this chapter, deemed to be missing. Harking back to the traditional criteria of autonomy, self-regulation and an accredited knowledge-base, the New Labour government set about creating a self-regulatory body and a new Masters-level qualification in Teaching and Learning. However, whilst the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE) had the potential to give autonomy to the profession in the same way as the General Medical Council does for medics, the result was a purely regulatory body with a very narrow remit and a top-down deficit approach that involved ‘the discipline of teachers who had been accused... of misconduct or incompetence’ (Page 2013, p.232). A deficit approach would struggle to enhance the public’s perception of teachers as it uses as a starting point (and seeks to address) ‘what is wrong with teachers’. Whilst the GTCE not only had no autonomy, control or even influence over curriculum matters, the Government introduced a series of initiatives that amounted to ‘pedagogical prescription’ (Whitty 2008, p.37) as it ‘sought to control pedagogy itself’ (Gillard 2005, p.177) with strict regulations on not only what was taught, but how it was taught particularly in the primary
sector. Whilst the government professed to engage in consultation, not much had changed since the Thatcher era, with either short time-frames given for responses or in some cases no consultation with teachers at all (Parker 2015, p.461).

If professional status is to be defined in the traditional ‘trait’ manner suggested by Carr-Saunders and Millerson (a definition the New Labour government seemed to implicitly endorse), developments since 2010 cannot be judged to have improved teachers’ professional status. Both the GTCE and the Masters in Teaching and Learning have been abolished. The Teaching Agency, the regulatory replacement of the GTCE, is a non-independent body which is part of the Department for Education and answerable to the Secretary of State. The new National Curriculum has been formulated without direct involvement of teachers (the expert panel devising the curriculum containing only higher-education practitioners – no serving primary or secondary teachers) and the design of the new A Level specifications involved universities (DfE 2013, p.2) rather than schools.

Since the end of the 'age of autonomy' in the 1970s which was characterised by a belief that 'the individual teacher's professional expertise and judgement should generally prevail' (Lawton 1980, in Whitty 2008, p.29), managerial forms of accountability and 'evidence-based' policy have succeeded in 'marginalising rather than amplifying teachers' voices' (Dainton 2005, p.160). As is common with most literature on education, the outline above has focused on the maintained sector and has discussed the positioning of state, rather than independent, school teachers. One of the rationales behind this research is the dearth of literature regarding the independent sector.

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8 Examples of this include the National Literacy Strategy and National Learning Targets.
9 Four years on from the abolition of the GTCE there is still no independent regulatory and training body for teachers akin to the General Medical Council (GMC). The government combined the roles of the Teacher Training Agency and the National College of Leadership to create the National College of Teaching and Leadership. The college is a non-independent executive agency of the government, directly answerable to the Secretary of State for Education. Its role is regulatory – setting teachers’ standards and adjudicating cases of gross misconduct – and confers on teachers Qualified Teacher Status. It is also not equivalent to the GMC in the sense that it does not have a membership comprised of teaching professionals.
sector. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, it is reasonable to assume that the changing state of teacher professionalism has been felt in the private sector, as not only have many changes to inspection regimes and compliance in the state sector been mirrored in the private sector (de Waal 2006), it is possible that an overall reduction of public trust has affected the relationship between independent school teachers and their students’ parents, who in an independent school context are directly their customers. Indeed, as the independent sector has always functioned within a marketplace, changes to relationships with parents are potentially more important in this sector. Overall job satisfaction of independent school teachers has been shown to have fallen at a considerably greater rate than that of teachers in the state sector since 1997 (Green et al. 2008). Whilst it must be acknowledged that job satisfaction began at a higher level amongst independent school teachers, the rate of decline is noteworthy, and one of the questions the teachers interviewed in this study were asked was the extent to which government professionalisation initiatives have affected their practice.

3.5 Where are we now? A contemporary conceptualisation of professionalism

Outlining the history of teachers’ professional status and the changing relationships of the teaching workforce with both governments and the public is important as it facilitates a better understanding of the changing conditions in which teachers work. This then may allow us to understand why attempts at professionalisation have failed, and how teacher practice can be supported, improved or (in a more negative reading) simply be maintained in its current state.

As described earlier, since the late 1980s teachers have been working within a more marketised climate, with greater parental choice. Independent teachers have always worked within a market, but it is possible that the strengthening of the role of parents as ‘stake-holders’ in education has impacted on the private sector too.
The rise of the ‘knowledgeable client’ and the expansion of teachers’ responsibilities

As outlined above, since the mid-1970s shifts in government policy have effected a shift from a high-trust to low-trust accountability system in school education. Teachers have been cast in a negative light in the media, a situation which was not improved by the number of strikes in recent years (Gurney-Read 2016) – following many years of little strike action. As with the William Tyndale affair, such media reports are then used as fuel for government policy – seen most recently with the alleged declining standards of the examination system and subsequent transformation of GCSEs and A-Levels to ensure greater ‘academic rigour’. Furthermore, the trust relationship between teachers, students and parents has been transformed by the general rise of the ‘knowledgeable client’. The availability of information on the internet has challenged the specialist knowledge of teachers that was previously integral to the teacher/parent/pupil relationship, and a key feature of ‘trait’ theories described previously. For example, subject specifications, past and specimen examination papers, teaching resources and mark schemes are all available in public areas on examination board websites. This change is not unique to teaching. As Cribb and Gewirtz (2015) describe in relation to health and social care workers, ‘under these conditions, the traditional postures of professional authority become less viable’ (p.46).

Over the last fifteen years, the function of teaching and the responsibilities of teachers have changed considerably. Teaching no longer involves just educational/academic instruction. Even acknowledging that teachers have always been responsible for delivering a ‘hidden’ curriculum of ‘values, a particular set of rewards, of authority and of hierarchy’ (Dale 1989, p.137) and not just traditional subject material, the role of both state and independent school teachers is now considerably different. For example, following the Victoria Climbié case in 2000\(^\text{10}\), the

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\(^{10}\) Victoria Climbié was an 8-year-old child who died through neglect, in horrific circumstances, at the hands of her foster-parents. The ensuing public inquiry highlighted the systemic and systematic failures of social services and prompted a more joined-up, multi-service response to child welfare involving local authorities, police, social services, schools and teachers. See Laming (2003).
subsequent Laming Report (2003) and the Government’s ‘Every Child Matters’ policy, teachers are now legally responsible for monitoring and reporting any signs of child abuse to designated school safe-guarding leaders. More recently, the government has begun to tackle the rise in religious extremism through a school-based ‘Prevent’ agenda which has put similar safe-guarding and reporting responsibilities on teachers. Schools are also increasingly expected to adapt to changing social patterns by extending the school day to offer care for children who would otherwise be home alone in the late-afternoon/early evening. Whilst these could all be viewed as incontestably positive moves, they arguably alter the nature of the teachers’ role, from educator to educator/social worker.

The changing role of the teacher has been accompanied by a shift away from ‘trait’ theories of teacher professionalism perhaps reflecting the fact that it is hard to recognise the multi-layered work of the contemporary teacher in the ‘trait’ theories of Carr-Saunders and Wilson, Millerson and Koehn. Soder (1991) rejects the usefulness of many of the facets of ‘trait’ theories, noting, for example, that accreditation by passing exams is a feature of many traditionally non-professional occupations such as beauticians. Indeed, he disputes whether certification was a relevant factor in the professionalisation of doctors. For Soder, trying to professionalise teachers by emulating doctors and lawyers ‘is ineffective... because it shifts the focus from a consideration of what it is teachers actually are as teachers to considerations of correspondence’ (1991, p.297).

Instead, more contemporary definitions of teacher professionalism are ‘attribute based’ rooted in values and ideology (Sockett 1993; Carr 2000) and an essential trust relationship between teachers, parents, pupils and society (Hoyle 2001; Freidson 2001; Pfadenhauer 2006; Gewirtz et al. 2009). For Hoyle, the ‘regard in which an occupation is held by the general public by virtue of the personal qualities’ of members of that occupation (2001, p.147) is vital to achieving occupational esteem – a fundamental tenet of his definition of teacher professionalism. Pfadenhauer goes further, conceptualising teacher professionalism as existing when both ‘licence’ and ‘mandate’ are present. Licence refers to the authority given to teachers by an
awarding body or a professional qualification such as Qualified Teacher Status. Whilst this suggests no difference from the ‘trait’ theory of professionals being ‘licensed by the state to perform a certain act’ (Koehn 1994, p56), the shift here is that license is of no consequence without ‘mandate’. The mandate allows the professional teacher to make judgements and act in the interests of the student’s ‘own good’ – however, a mandate must be given and cannot be assumed. The client here has the power to give or remove their mandate, and this is where trust becomes vital to a teacher’s professional status and the work they undertake.

Like Pfadenhauer, Cribb and Gewirtz (2015) build on certain elements of trait theories, noting that autonomy is important (‘to be a professional is to not be told what to do and not to feel obliged to jump through hoops devised by others’ (p.50)). However, they qualify this, acknowledging the changed reality of the context in which teachers work. Professionals can use individual autonomy in terms of the judgements they make, but ‘it makes sense to ask the individual practitioner to coordinate their activities with colleagues and thereby to “pool” their autonomy so as to collectively provide a “joined-up” service’ (ibid., p.51). They give a useful analogy of musicians in an orchestra. A skilled solo violinist will work in a different manner, negotiating and co-ordinating their musical judgements, when playing with an orchestra to create the best end result.

We are left with a concept of the ‘virtuous’ teaching professional. The teaching profession is ‘ethically special’ (Cribb & Gewirtz 2015, p.2), in that it involves an ideology, values and value judgements. As Cribb & Gewirtz (2007) outline, teachers ‘need to be able to make normative judgements about the kinds of formal and informal curricula, pedagogies and forms of assessment that are worthwhile’ (p.206). Biesta (2015) concurs, illustrating a similar point by commenting that in education, what is ‘effective’ (achieves the required results) is not necessarily ‘good’. An example here would be corporal punishment, which may result in a well-behaved child, but is no longer considered ethical or ‘good’. The teaching professional is one who uses their own autonomy, yet understands this must be negotiated within a collective for the
best result. Professionals have the power to alter, define and shape their clients (Cribb & Gewirtz 2015), and whilst providing for the needs of their clients, play an integral role in defining what those needs are (Biesta 2015). The relationship with clients is therefore vital. A high level of trust from parents and students is necessary for the teacher to work most effectively. It is also important that the teacher has a feeling of professional identity, ‘a strong sense of self-worth, of importance, or self-affirmation’ (Soder 1991, p.300) which is provided through a level of professional autonomy and trust. I am not suggesting that these views are characteristic of the present period of teacher professionalism. Rather, they function as an ideal from which prevailing dominant conceptions of professional can be critiqued. The ‘virtuous’ professional is also a useful ideal considering the changing role of the professional discussed above (to include a wider social-work remit) and for research which attempts to investigate the potential for teachers to achieve their aims.

This concept of the teaching professional is central to understanding why professionalism is relevant to research on teachers’ aims and the effect both managerial and market-based accountability measures have on their work. As has been argued above, teaching is at heart a value-based, ethical profession, with teachers – for whom a sense of professional identity is important – being more than mere technicians because they have to make normative judgements which go beyond simply achieving the measures that modern forms of managerial accountability rely on. Low-trust top-down modes of accountability emanating from school managements and government, coupled with the ‘discourse of derision’ about the profession which circulates in some sections of the media and amongst some parents (see Wallace 1993) mean teachers find it increasingly difficult to resist performative behaviour to achieve the goals set for them - even if this goes against their professional judgement (Brown 2015; Craft and Jeffrey 2008; Chua 2009). Reluctantly conforming to performative behaviour has been characterised by Gilbert (2015) as ‘disaffected consent’ involving:

On the one hand, ... a profound dissatisfaction with both the consequences and the ideological
Maguire et al. (2010) suggest this acquiescence, and the sense of ‘the impossibility of dissent’ (p.167) associated with it, de-professionalises teachers. However, whilst active dissent may not be possible, a type of resistance is sometimes achievable where teachers, who are not willing to lose sight of their professional aims, still continue their preferred practice, preserving ‘a large area of autonomy and discretion whilst paying ‘lip-service’ to organisational targets and ticking the necessary bureaucratic boxes’ (Cribb & Gewirtz 2015, p.92). The result ‘is a mix of practical and performative responses’ (Maguire et al. 2010, p.167). However, the problem with such resistance is that it is often impossible to achieve one’s preferred practice and meet accountability targets simultaneously without doing the job twice. This leads to teachers working twice as hard (Cribb & Gewirtz 2015). Cribb & Gewirtz suggest that professionalism entails ‘a willingness and ability to acknowledge and manage the tensions between one’s vocational and institutional identities’ (2015, p.98). However, they note that this comes at some considerable cost to the teacher in terms of intensification of their work-load, diminished job satisfaction and their personal ‘sense of vocation’ (p.92).

It is possible that those teachers who intensify their work and achieve success according to both performative measures and their own professional aims are able do so because of their strong sense of professional identity. It is also possible that further moves to de-professionalise teachers (for example by reducing autonomy still further and threatening the trust relationship between teachers, parents and students) may lead to teachers abandoning their professional aims – the argument being ‘why seek to achieve professional aims if one is not a professional?’ Soder (1991) suggests that removing the necessity of making normative judgements from their work results in teachers being ‘lackeys’. Cribb and Gewirtz (2015) refer to this as ‘going through the motions’ (p.46) and see it as incompatible with professionalism. If it is the case that when teachers ignore the ethical, value-base of their work they become ‘lackeys’ undeserving of professional status, it
is perhaps possible that, if teachers are de-professionalised through the circumstances described earlier, they might ignore the ethical, value-base of their work.

This is particularly relevant to research in the independent school sector. As already noted, the literature reviewed above relates to, and conceptualises the problems in, the maintained sector. This thesis concentrates on differing types of independent schools in the UK and how teachers’ practice is affected by both managerial and market forms of accountability. In the public sector, Biesta (2015) warns against students being treated as customers, stating it results in ‘undermining rather than enhancing opportunities for teacher professionalism’ (p.75). In the independent sector, where market-forms of accountability are more explicit and parents are fee-payers, the possibility that a similar situation has arisen is therefore very real. However, before considering the effect different forms of accountability can have on schools and teachers’ practice, we must conceptualise the different forms of accountability in schools.
4 Accountability in Education

Accountability has been an increasingly important ‘watch-word’ in education (and across all services primarily provided by the state) over the last twenty years, particularly in its managerial form. That is not in any way to say the private sector lacks accountability. Indeed, much of the ‘audit explosion’ which began in the 1980s can find its roots in the business world, where value for money for shareholders is of great importance (Power 1994). During the 1980s, neoliberal critics of the welfare state constructed a discourse in which public services became synonymous with waste, over spending and incompetence (Palumbo 2004). Although there may have been some truth to some of the claims about public service deficiencies, it cannot be ignored that this position was convenient for a government which had a political ideology to transfer ownership of public goods to the private sector (Newman & Clarke 2009). However, value for money for taxpayers (and in the case of independent schools, fee-payers) is only one of many arguments for accountability in education: differing arguments for and against accountability; different modes of accountability, the technologies used to deliver them, and the many positive and deleterious effects they have on practice in both the state and independent sectors of education will be discussed in this chapter.

4.1 The purpose of accountability

O’Neill (2013) documents how managerial models of accountability have ‘been widely seen as a successor to trust’ (p.9) and ‘rather than solving the problem of trust, these models [of accountability] simply displace it’ (Power 1994, p.16). As I discussed earlier in the chapter on the history of teacher professionalism, between the 1960s and 1980s, teaching moved from a high- to low-trust position in society. Whilst O’Neill (2013) ultimately argues for accountability systems which enable the public to make an informed judgement on whether to trust professionals (or not), she states that once trust is lost, ‘low-trust societies can do no better than replace trust with accountability’ (p.9). If professionals, such as teachers, are not trusted, then governments
establish new forms of accountability to assuage public opinion.

Michael Barber, in ‘The Virtue of Accountability’ (2004), having already made a case for accountability on economic grounds, suggests managerial accountability professionalises and supports teachers. In the post-war, high-trust era ‘the absence of accountability, far from benefiting professionals, was deeply destructive of their work’ (Barber 2004, p.9). Barber’s views on accountability are important to consider as he was an influential education advisor to the New Labour government from 1997 (Wilby 2011), and has continued to be influential through his work with the multinational corporations PWC and Pearson and, most recently as Chair of the National Office for Students. Barber (2004) suggests accountability has ‘clarified [teachers’] mission’ focusing their work on teaching and learning rather than ‘every social and economic problem the country faces’ (p.11). This seems to miss the growing elements of safeguarding and compliance in teachers’ work seen over the last fifteen years, described in the previous chapter. Furthermore, this potentially implies that the professional aims of teachers should be dictated rather than self-determined. This has implications for teachers’ agency which will be explored further in this thesis.

It has also been suggested that increased accountability (particularly that which relies on quantitative measures of performance) supports democracy. For example, in the 1990s, Conservative Prime Minister John Major argued for greater accountability from public services to the general public through his ‘Citizens’ Charter’ (Epstein 1993; House of Commons 2008) on the grounds of ‘democratic openness’. Foley and Goldstein summarise this argument, stating ‘giving citizens good access to statistical information will lead to greater participation in decision-making, and that access to public data should be a democratic right’ (Foley & Goldstein 2012, p.8).

All of the above arguments were marshalled in support of a strong political movement starting in the 1980s and gaining increased importance following the election of the New Labour
government in 1997. Michael Barber summarises the case for greater accountability:

Accountability is the answer. It establishes goals which the public can understand and believe in; it provides feedback to the public so they can see the benefits of their investment; and because it causes the system to address its weaknesses, it creates continuous improvement which encourages the public to keep faith (2004, p.12).

Whilst it is generally acknowledged that being accountable is important, and many of the reasons given above are not without merit, there is considerable debate as to whether, through the technologies used, new modes of accountability in education have generated positive or negative results.

The above discussion documents changes in approaches to accountability within the public sector, and it was this sector that was the focus of governmental intervention; however, the effects were also felt in the independent sector. In its response to changes to the inspection system, ATL (the union with the greatest number of members from independent schools) acknowledged that

school accountability is necessary and important. However... teachers already feel that an increased emphasis on inspections has caused... further pressure on teachers, to the detriment of pupils' learning. In some independent schools, mock inspections are carried out by external consultants each year... [which have] a negative and unnecessary impact on staff well-being and morale... ATL's independent sector members echo the concerns of maintained sector colleagues. (2012, p.2)

The negative effects of accountability measures will be described in considerable detail later in this chapter, and a key aim of this research is to consider to what extent these effects can be found in the independent sector.
4.2 Modes of accountability

Teachers are held accountable in a number of ways. Freidson (2001) describes three ideal systems:

1. A system where 'each organisation... is governed by an elaborate set of rules that establish the qualifications of who can be employed... [and] executive officers or managers of organisations control those who produce goods and services, aiming primarily at predictability and efficiency' (p.1)

2. A system where 'nothing is regulated... [and] free and unregulated competition both encourages innovation, which increases the variety and quality of goods and services, and keeps prices down... Consumers are fully informed about the quality [of services]... and choose them rationally, [according] to their own best interest... consumer preference and choice determining whose services will succeed.' (p.1)

3. A system where 'workers who have the specialised knowledge... have the power to organize and control their own work... only members of the occupation have the right to supervise and correct the work of colleagues. They do not abuse those exclusive rights, however, because they are more dedicated to doing good work for their own satisfaction and for the benefit of others’ (p.2).

Whilst these are ideal types (Friedson describes each of the three as 'pipe-dreams'), this framework is useful as it maps on to the modes of accountability found (or potentially desired) in schools. The first system above can be likened to managerial accountability, the second, market-based accountability and the third, professional accountability.

**Managerial accountability**

Managerial accountability is defined by a top-down, hierarchical system of target setting at
governmental and/or institutional level. It is characterised by 'setting targets, measuring results, publicizing these results, and sanction and rewards' (O’Neill 2014, p.175). Examples of managerial accountability at government level include the collating and publishing of examination league table data and targets for measures such as 'Progress 8'\textsuperscript{11} (DfE 2018). Whilst head teachers may be held ultimately responsible for meeting school-level targets, managerial accountability can be experienced by all teachers as targets are channelled through the management structure of the school, with school managers and teachers at each level held responsible for meeting internally-set targets (Mattei 2007). In the independent sector, where government targets are not applicable, managerial accountability is seen in measures such as inspections and compliance regulations. It is also seen through schools' internal target setting.

**Market accountability**

Under market accountability practitioners are accountable to the consumer – which in an education context is usually the parent. Within an education market, parents - at least in theory - can choose the school that will educate their child: ‘in order for the market to operate effectively, information needs to be available so consumers know the full specifications of the product they are “buying”’ (Farrell & Law 1999, p.5). In England, this has been done predominately through the publication of examination results and school ‘league-tables’. Market accountability arguably takes on a greater salience in the private sector which works within an open market and, one could argue, the ‘provider/customer’ relationship is more explicit as fees are paid directly to the school.

**Professional accountability**

As described in Chapter 3, professional accountability, to an extent, was seen during the 'golden

\textsuperscript{11} Progress 8 attempts to measure the progress made by students from the end of Year 6 to Year 11. A school’s Progress 8 score is the average of all of its students’ progress scores. For more detail on Progress 8 and other governmental managerial accountability measures, see DfE 2018.
age of teacher professionalism’ in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. This period of the profession was categorised by a great deal of autonomy where teachers working within a high-trust environment were 'able to influence the direction and control of the system' (Gillard 2005, p.176). Since this time, evidence of professional accountability is scant\(^{12}\). However, the inclusion of this mode of accountability is important to this discussion. One of its central elements is the importance of ethics, and the involvement of the 'virtuous professional' described in section 3.1.6. As will be discussed below, and further explored in the empirical section of this thesis, whilst market and managerial modes of accountability often work simultaneously, they may also conflict with professional values. As this thesis is concerned with the effects of different modes of accountability on teachers’ professional aims, professional accountability, both by its presence and absence, is of interest.

4.3 Quantitative and qualitative accountability

Each of the modes of accountability described above may be served by a number of tools. The various tools of accountability present in education, such as school inspections and published league-tables, will be discussed below. These tools can be quantitative (i.e. making use of statistics and/or numerical targets) or qualitative (i.e. using narrative accounts (Etchells 2003)). Each have their benefits and drawbacks.

The main benefit of quantitative measures are that they are extremely cost-effective and easy to collate. They are also easy for lay people to understand (at least in a superficial way). However, this simplicity can decontextualise the information from the practice that is being held to account. As Vriens et al. (2016) state, 'easy and cheap measurements... do not account for the in situ specifics that professionals face'. Furthermore, 'many things that are important for education cannot be counted, or added, or ranked because there is no genuine unit of account' (O'Neill

\(^{12}\) The GTCE might have fulfilled a professional accountability role had it the autonomy to decide on curriculum and pedagogical matters.
Quantitative accountability tools may also result in instrumental behaviour, performativity (see Ball 2003a; Lyotard 1979) and even 'downright fraud' (Vriens et al. 2016, p.14).

Qualitative accountability tools, where 'an account is not given in terms of pre-fixed categories (such as targets, norms, rules or protocols) but in the form of explaining to and discussing with others reasons for conduct' (Vriens et al. 2016, p.2), can be a closer reflection of practice and give a richer narrative of what actually happens in schools (O'Neill 2013; Vriens et al. 2016). However, they are arguably less understandable to stakeholders such as parents and therefore do not create the confidence or trust associated with quantitative methods. This is a problem if, as stated above, one of the key purposes of accountability is to engender trust (or at least provide information for stakeholders to make a decision regarding trust).

Managerial and market accountability are served by a variety of tools. Each of the tools may use a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods. Below is a discussion of the different tools used to hold schools and teachers to account, and their effects on teachers' practice as observed by researchers.

4.4 Tools of accountability

4.4.1 Inspection

As discussed in the chapter on teacher professionalism, the decline in public trust of teachers in the 1970s, exemplified by the Tyndale affair, made it ‘easier for the [1980s government] to appeal... to the common-sense view that teachers are subversive, fail to do their job properly and abuse their power’ (Epstein 1993, p.248). This proved a strong argument for a significant and substantial transformation of the school inspection system to ‘introduce strong external accountability’ (Barber 2004, p.16).

The Education Reform Act (1988) sought to make schools accountable by introducing the
publication of assessment results which were used by the press to create league tables of results. This was followed by the Education (Schools) Act (1992) which took school inspection out of the hands of LEAs and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI) and created an independent body, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) to undertake this work. Every school would be regularly inspected under a published framework. The changes also instigated a shift towards market accountability. Whilst inspection was still generally a tool for accountability to government, for the first time, inspection reports would be sent to every parent at a school. This emphasis on transparency aligned with Prime Minister Major’s Parents’ Charter which on the one hand could be seen to be ‘associated with democracy’ (Epstein 1993, p.245), but on the other, an enhancement of ‘parental choice of school and competition between schools... redefining the citizen as consumer’ (Ozga 2013, p.298). The view that these policies were part of a general paradigm shift in the relationship between citizens and schools is important to any discussion regarding market accountability, school choice and the role of parents in education. This will be explored in more depth later, but it must be pointed out here that the extent to which parents in the state sector are able to make a choice in practice is widely contested (Simons 2015; Epstein 1993).

The new inspection framework removed the support and advisory focus to the inspector’s role. Inspection linked INSET was eradicated and Ofsted’s remit was clear. It must provide a regular inspection service, with published reports documenting both a school’s strengths and weaknesses yet no recommendations or advice on how these might be addressed (Davis 1996). It is worth noting that despite the changes being implemented by a government engaged in ‘discourses of derision’ (Ball 1990), many head teachers were initially optimistic about the changes (Hustler & Goodwin 2000). However, not all reaction was positive. Rather than inspectors assessing the school in a one-off visit for one week, many teachers reported that they would have rather had regular visits over a term assisting their development (Russell 1996). This highlighted the shift in the use of inspection, from a supportive role administered by HMI and
the LEA to one which was focused on ensuring schools were accountable to government.

The modes of accountability served by inspection changed considerably once again with Ofsted’s revised framework introduced in 2005. The key element of this framework was the introduction of the school Self-Evaluation Form (SEF). This lengthy document was to be completed by schools every year, ideally on an ongoing process. Every three years, a very small team of inspectors (or often just one) would then spend two days in the school, checking the school’s self-evaluation, policies and procedures. This appeared to be a more democratic form of inspection, with monitoring undertaken continually at the ‘chalk-face’ rather than by external inspectors. This system of audited self-review should in theory have provided greater accuracy in reflecting what was actually happening in schools for accountability purposes, as a ‘teacher’s expertise will often be more current and immediately applicable than [an] inspector’s’ (Davis & White 2001, p.679). However, the reality was that for the SEF to work effectively, schools needed to show that they were setting targets, enacting policies to achieve them and monitoring these achievements. Therefore whilst this change seemingly reflected a shift towards professional accountability, using qualitative methods, ultimately it constituted an intensified form of managerial accountability using quantitative methods. Elements of market accountability were also introduced as parental questionnaires were undertaken as part of the process.

The intensification of managerial accountability exemplified by the introduction of the SEF appears to have been motivated by a number of considerations. One of these was to try to reduce the amount of preparation in schools as teachers and managers would spend many months planning for the upcoming inspection. Schools were usually decorated to be in as neat a condition as possible, and lessons fine-tuned – with some critics going so far as to describe them as ‘phony’ (Leyland 2004). Effectively, the school was seen at its very best rather than how it might be day-to-day. Research suggested that such over preparation was one of the reasons why, under the original framework, student outcomes were lower in a school’s inspection year than in other years (Shaw et al. 2003; Rosenthal 2004). It is likely that another key motivation driving the shift
was that it was far cheaper, as it was ‘much less labour intensive’ (Barber 2004, p28) on the part of the inspection teams. This was consistent with government advisor Michael Barber’s advocacy of ‘system redesign’ in the interests of greater accountability at the lowest possible cost (Barber 2004).

As government became increasingly focused on such data as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s PISA league tables, similar quantitative targets were imposed on teachers by school managements. Indeed, the SEF required schools to set its own statistical targets for improvement (through measures including the percentage of students achieving 5 A*–C passes at GCSE). There is a wealth of evidence to show that this kind of statistical target setting transformed teachers’ practice in significant ways, and this will be discussed alongside other consequences of inspection below. The increased use of target setting and the promotion of managerial accountability more generally represented an extension of the ‘audit explosion’ documented by Michael Power at the end of John Major’s government – which was entirely in line with New Labour’s desire to impose a business model on education (Ball 2003; Barber 2004; Hextall & Mahony 2000).

The new framework, assuming the SEF was being used as intended13, should have created a more transparent account of the school and reduced teacher stress by removing the intensity of inspection preparation. However, it could be argued that instead, a low-trust panopticon was created, with increased and continual pressure on teachers to engage in performative and fabricated practices. Many schools increased the frequency of observations of teachers’ work, with anecdotal evidence given for one school in which each teacher was observed ten times in one year (Bubb et al. 2007).

The most recent developments to the inspection framework have been to remove the SEF, go

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13 This assumption could not be taken for granted. Research by Bubb et al. (2007) found that schools took a varied approach to the SEF, with some head teachers completing it without any consultation with colleagues and some schools outsourcing its completion to management consultants. This could hardly have been the ‘vehicle for dialogue’ (Ofsted 2005) intended.
back to a greater number of lesson observations (although often much shorter), and introduce a far greater emphasis on compliance with safeguarding regulations. The focus on compliance represents an intensification of managerial accountability as schools ensure that every policy that may be required is present – even if they are considered unnecessary14.

**Inspection in the private sector**

Whilst the section above specifically related to the inspection system in the state sector, the inspection system and the modes of accountability it embodies are very similar within the private sector. Furthermore, changes to the inspection regime in the state sector have directly influenced the system in the independent sector. As with state schools, the regime is integral to independent schools’ accountability. Indeed, a fifth of all independent schools are inspected by Ofsted under exactly the same framework as state schools. The other 80% of schools are monitored by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), which reports directly to HMI. The ISI framework is very similar to the one used by Ofsted. For example, like the Ofsted framework, ISI inspections include elements of observation, self-evaluation and monitoring, feedback from parents and compliance. However, it may be that the regimes work in different ways, and potentially affect teachers’ practice differently. This is something that will be considered in this research.

The inspection system has been a key tenet of school accountability since Victorian times. Since the 1990s it has been joined by the publication of league-tables of schools’ examination results and more recently still the requirement for schools to set whole-school and individual pupil targets for improvement. Schools are then measured on how well they meet those targets. The argument has been made that a move from purely external inspection by government to

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14 Anecdotal evidence of this is seen at the case-study school PAC in previous research undertaken on the effects of inspection in the independent sector (Hyde 2011b), which has over recent years increased its number of policies to 146, including one on ‘Mexican Swine Fever’. The head teacher there described the pressure of being compliant: ‘A bullying policy will fail if it doesn’t have the phrase ‘bullying can be so serious that it can lead to suicide’ and if you don’t have that phrase in it, your policy is non-compliant... and if it doesn’t have the phrase “transgendered bullying” it’s not complaint’ (Hyde 2011b, p.10).
inspections based on schools’ own evaluations and self-set targets, alongside the making available of inspection reports and examination results to parents, has reduced centralised control and democratised accountability (Barber 2004).

When compared with state schools, the independent sector has always had a different relationship with market-based accountability measures such as league-tables. As described in more detail above (see section 2.2), parents choose independent schools for many reasons. Some researchers have suggested that they place more emphasis on aesthetic or less tangible criteria including the ‘ethos’ of the school or the ‘atmosphere’ than league table results (West & Noden 2013; McCandless 2014). Furthermore, a number of academic independent schools have moved to qualifications such as the IGCSE which are not measured in government league tables. This has led to the professional association of some of the most selective independent schools describing league tables as ‘a nonsense’ (HMC 2015, p.1). Independent schools are not required by law to submit assessment data, and many schools now refuse, which means they no longer appear in league tables, although the government’s publication of assessment data is ‘not designed to serve independent schools. [League tables] are [rather] designed to create a benchmark for state schools’ (Richardson & Sellgren 2015, p.1). This might suggest that league tables, an important tool of market-based accountability and source of pressure on state school teachers, do not have the same effect within the independent sector. This will be considered in the empirical chapters of this thesis.

It has become axiomatic that both market-based and managerial forms of accountability improve schools whilst delivering value for money for the taxpayer: ‘accountability, it seems, is unquestionably “a good thing”’ (Perryman 2006, p.149). However, there is considerable doubt as to whether either form of accountability leads to greater transparency or better practice. It does change practice but it has been suggested this can lead to inauthenticity and less transparency. As Ball (2003a) states, ‘the requirements of such systems [as inspection] bring into being unhelpful or indeed damaging practices, which nonetheless satisfy performance requirements.
Organisations will do whatever is necessary to excel or to survive' (p.220). Furthermore, it has been suggested, even by pro-audit policymakers, that accountability has ‘been achieved at the expense of teachers and their lives’ (Barber 2004, p.10). The research literature suggests a number of ways managerial and market forms of accountability have negatively affected teachers, their professionalism and their practice.

### 4.5 The effect of managerial and market based modes of accountability on teachers’ professional status and practice: Washback, Performativity, Subject Choice and Equality

The effect of government policy on the professional status of teachers was documented in detail in Chapter 3. Michael Power, warning against the rise of quantification and target-setting in *The Audit Explosion* (1994), neatly summarises the reality of two contrasting types of accountability for organisations. One is characterised by the use of qualitative methods, a high-trust culture, autonomy for professionals and a public dialogue. The second is characterised by inspection by external agencies, the use of quantitative measures of success and a low-trust culture. Power believes audit based systems prioritise the second type of accountability and make it difficult to find alternatives... [as] quantified, simplified, ex-post forms of control by outsiders have increasingly displaced other types of control. As a result of its institutional power, and its power as an idea, proponents of alternative styles have found it hard to gain an audience. (ibid. pp7-8)

This increased use of audit based systems mirrors the decline in teachers’ professional status since the ‘golden age of teacher professionalism’ in the 1960s (See Chapter 3).

Methods of accountability such as target-setting and school league tables are grounded in examination results such as GCSEs and A Levels. Such assessments are described as ‘high-stakes’ as they are not only important to schools responding to market-based and managerial accountability pressures, but also to students who use them as certification at the end of schooling and as a method of accessing higher or further education and/or employment. The
ability of high-stakes assessments (and their results) to affect, either purposefully or otherwise, teachers’ practice is captured by the concept of ‘washback’ which is often narrowly and negatively exemplified by the practice of ‘teaching to the test’.

**Washback**

The utility of assessment research literature to this study is only in part due to high-stakes assessment being a key element of contemporary school accountability systems. It is also of interest due to the body of research which discusses whether, when testing systems change, assessments have the potential to alter teachers’ practice both intentionally and unintentionally. This idea is captured by the concept of ‘washback’, and is an important consideration at this time as all high-stakes assessments are currently undergoing a period of considerable change in the England. At a time of significant change, the potential for assessment structures to alter teachers’ practice is an important factor to consider in research which investigates teachers’ experiences of managerial and market based accountability regimes in which high stakes testing plays an important role.

Washback theory is based on the idea that ‘public examinations influence the attitudes, behaviours and motivation of teachers [and] learners’ (Alderson & Wall 1993, p.115). The understanding of this phenomenon has grown alongside a paradigm shift in assessment. The ‘traditional psychometric paradigm’ (Gipps 1994, p.2) of assessment was based on an understanding of pedagogy where knowledge is an object which is able to be directly transmitted from a teacher to their student – this is a concept which Serafini (2000) defines as ‘curriculum as fact’ (p.385). Under this paradigm, assessments are characterised by summative, norm-referenced standardised tests which allow students to be easily compared. Such an

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15 GCSE examinations for those aged 16 are being made linear (removing modules), coursework has been abolished in most subjects, and the grading system has been fundamentally changed for the first time since the introduction of the GCSE in 1988 - from A*-G to a numerical system, 9-1. A Level examinations are seeing their biggest change since the introduction of Curriculum 2000, also becoming linear over two years (rather than in two, separate, yearly sections, AS and A2).
understanding of pedagogy promotes didactic teaching (Speck 2002). As teachers’ use of testing has broadened, from a tool solely used for accountability, monitoring and gate-keeping, to one that also encompasses learning through formative assessment (Black & Wiliam 1998), there developed an ‘awareness of the constraining character of the [traditional assessment] paradigm’ (Newton-Smith 1981, p.108). This led to a shift to a new paradigm (Gipps 1994), at least in the UK16 (Gipps 1994) which is grounded in collaborative and student-centred learning and encompasses both formative and summative assessment. A key component of the new paradigm is the use of ‘authentic assessment’, which simulates naturalistic tasks to test students’ competence and ‘deep’ rather than ‘surface’ learning – i.e. ‘what learners have achieved, what they can do, what they know’ (Lum 2012, p.589). Assessment washback has been considered an important agent for the change towards teaching methods that are based on this new understanding.

Assessments as ‘critical agents of reform’ (Cheng 1999, p.254), supporting changes to teaching which lead to educational improvements, are termed ‘positive washback’. Positive washback has been observed and documented extensively in literature on language learning (Ryumon 2007; Cheng 1999; Bailey 1996). This literature suggests that teachers are more likely to stick to their traditional methods unless there is a change in the system, supported by new materials and training (Cheng 1999; Volante 2004). Such change is occurring in the UK high-stakes assessment system at present.

Washback has not only been observed positively. ‘Negative washback’ has been recognised across a range of subjects, beyond language teaching. It has been documented in terms of ‘teaching to the test’, where teachers focus primarily on actual test items (specific topics that will be examined, common questions that are given) rather than any other elements of the curriculum - however important to the general study of the subject or for learning to be ‘deep’

16 The different uses of assessment in countries such as the US mean that this understanding is not necessarily internationally accepted (Speck 2002; Duncan et al. 2011)
Such behaviour raises questions about the validity of the tests, and has led to a narrowing of the taught curriculum (Longo 2010; Koshelva 2011). Perhaps more concerning is the suggestion that such behaviour can slide into malpractice as teachers cheat by providing real examination questions as test preparation (Popham 2001; Stobart 2008).

Whilst the research on positive washback contends that tests cannot alone achieve a positive change in practice (Ryumon 2007; Cheng 1999; Bailey 1996), there is evidence to show that they can promote negative washback. A number of commentators have suggested that current accountability measures, which focus so heavily on the results of high-stakes assessments, may lead to teachers narrowing their curriculum (Popham 2001; O’Neill 2014). More alarmingly, it may pose a direct risk to their integrity as they become anxious not to miss accountability targets. The ‘pressures that [teachers] experience lead them toward practices that, absent of such pressure, they would regard as repugnant’ (Popham 2001, p.20).

**Performativity**

It can be argued that washback is a form of performativity - a concept used by Lyotard (1979) to describe processes which aim to optimise output through a technocratic approach. It is a by-product of the ‘audit society’ (Power 1997) characterised by the proliferation of targets and focus on quantifiable measures, resulting in a ‘society obsessed with efficiency and effectiveness’ (Perryman 2006, p.150). Ball (2001) defines performativity as ‘a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation or a system of “terror”... that employs judgements, control, attrition and change’ (p.210). Performativity is seen in education (and other sectors) when managers and their staff (in this case teachers) adapt their practice purely to meet the norms of the accountability measures to which they are subject. Whilst positivist readings of performativity suggest it ideally could promote improvement, in educational literature it is invariably presented negatively as practice that is inauthentic, dishonest and associated with practices of fabrication.
An example of this was given above, where inspectors might observe ‘phoney lessons’ but performativity does not just occur when people are literally being observed. The shift to quantitative accountability under the 2005 inspection framework has seen an increased amount of paper-based performativity. As schools have to document improvement and compliance, there has been an increase in ‘gaming’ (Ball 2001; 2003a; Foley & Goldstein 2012). Management ensure that staff (and often pupils) are briefed to answer inspectors’ questions precisely to meet specific criteria (Plowright 2007; Perryman 2009). In terms of other methods of accountability, such as league-table results, it has been seen that schools ‘improve their ranking, by manipulating exam entry policy to the detriment of student choice, or even by excluding low achievers’ (Foley & Goldstein 2012, p.8). As Plowright (2007) states ‘schools ignore playing the game at their peril’ (in Perryman 2009, p.627).

Performativity is also manifested in ‘ventriloquism’, where teachers alter their language (in documentation such as handbooks and policies) to meet the expectations of inspectors. This leads to a lack of authenticity and transparency, and it increases teachers’ workload as they spend time ‘ticking boxes’, which Chua (2009) condemns as a ‘policy of foolishness’ (p.164). It is also argued that it reduces teachers’ sense of agency and their sense of professionalism, and leads them to feel frustrated at being complicit in a ‘deliverology’ culture (Chua 2009; Perryman 2006; Ball 2001).

As teachers move towards meeting measurable targets rather than concentrating on processes, fabrication has become increasingly prevalent. Ball (2001) defines fabrication as a presentation of ‘versions of an organisation (or person) which do not exist... purposefully in order “to be accountable”. Truthfulness is not the point’ (p.216). It can be seen in the documentation that inspectors use to make judgements on a schools’ effectiveness - particularly in later inspection

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17 In a case study by Perryman (2006), one participant described the effect of inspection observation: ‘people would start behaving, teachers would teach... pretend that they are nice and teach properly for once’ (p.158).
frameworks where the focus is on documentary evidence such as departmental handbooks and work audits (Ball 1997; Perryman 2009).

One may raise the question as to why performative effects of accountability such as ventriloquism and fabrication, are important, why do these things matter when considering teachers’ practice? Barber (2004), promotes managerial accountability because of what he believes to be its capacity for ‘measuring the important outcomes that can be measured perfectly well’ (p.9). However, critics claim it substitutes “what is important with what is measurable” (Nikel & Lowe 2010, p.596) and, as Strathern (1997) warns in a variation on Goodhart’s law, ‘when a measure becomes a target it ceases to be a good measure’ (p.308).

The literature suggests a number of ways in which seeking to meet externally imposed accountability measures has a deleterious effect on teachers’ practice. Firstly, it ‘diverts a lot of time that would once have been available for teaching’ (O’Neill 2013, p.12). This is a clear case of Lyotard’s ‘law of contradiction’, an irony where accountability targets designed to ensure quality of practice (such as marking, teaching, planning) result in a reduction of such practices because time is diverted to account for it (Ball 2003a; Foley & Goldstein 2012). Secondly, as described above, it can lead to dishonest practice, in particular the manipulation or fabrication of data. Finally, performative practice has also been shown to reduce creativity and, in turn, the standard of teaching as ‘the terrors of performativity imprison the designer’s mind and soul’ (Chua 2009, p.160; see also de Waal 2006).

**Subject Choice and Equality**

Managerial accountability measures have also been shown to have a significant impact on pupils’ subject choices. Following the introduction of league tables, it has been suggested that many schools became involved in ‘gaming’ by influencing (and in many cases, directing) subject choices purely to ensure the highest attainment for league table purposes. This led to a situation where students were, it has been alleged, denied the opportunity to take more academically rigorous
(and potentially more worthwhile) courses (O’Neill 2013). The coalition government’s reaction, to introduce a new ‘EBacc’ measure (which would rank schools not on their overall Level 2 qualification success rate, but on the number of A*-C GCSE grades in English, Mathematics, History or Geography, Science and a Modern Foreign Language) sought to address this. However, the omission of creative subjects from the EBacc has led to a significant drop in pupil numbers in subjects such as Music, Drama and Art (Robertson 2016).

The previous chapter on teachers’ professional status in the maintained sector described a lowering of morale and professional esteem as government policy established new forms of top-down managerial accountability and weakened teachers’ autonomy. In the majority of independent schools, the working conditions of teachers are better than those of teachers in the maintained sector (Green et al. 2008) Independent schools, as described in Chapter 2, are by and large better resourced. Salary scales are often higher and discipline and behaviour issues less common. However, Green et al. (2008) suggest that job satisfaction amongst independent school teachers, which was always remarkably high during the 1980s and 1990s, has seen a considerable drop in recent years, resulting in a greater ‘convergence between the two sectors’ (ibid, p. 20). It is not clear why job satisfaction in the private sector has fallen. However, as accountability measures such as those described earlier in the chapter have been shown to negatively affect both teachers’ practice and morale in state schools, these must be considered as a possible explanation for the reduced teacher satisfaction within the private sector noted by Green.

**Market accountability in the private sector**

School fees in the private sector have increased by 553% over the last 25 years (Chu 2016). Even when inflation is considered (200%), fees have almost doubled and have also considerably outstripped average earnings. Between 2010 and 2015, independent school fees have increased by a fifth (Chu 2016). Since the economic crash and resulting recession in 2009, research shows that value for money has become a key concern for independent school parents (Ward 2014).
Research suggests that middle-class professionals (who comprise 75% of the independent school market) approach ‘education, more and more, as a private good’ (Van Zanten 2003, p.121).

Independent schools, particularly those which do not fall under the ‘Great School’ category described in Chapter 2 (which often have valuable endowments), have become more susceptible to financial pressures since 2009. As parents’ disposable income has decreased, school rolls have fallen. In 2015 alone, 46 independent schools closed (Scott 2016).

Given the greater percentage of parental income that goes into ever-more expensive school fees, and that parents view education as a good that confers advantage that can be purchased, it is possible that post-financial crisis parents are more likely to exert pressure through market accountability.

As stated earlier, whilst marketisation of the state sector was introduced with the 1988 Education Reform Act, the market has always functioned as a strong accountability lever in the independent sector due to parents being able (subject to financial capability and the ability of their children to pass the entrance examination) to choose whichever school they wished. Market accountability is not as strong in the state sector as parents’ choice is at best constrained or parents ‘choose not to be choosers’ (Foskett & Hemsley-Brown 2003, p.195).

The changing nature of the economy, the importance for parents of ‘value for money’ and the increasingly competitive nature of the independent market as pupil rolls fall implies that markets are more important, and that therefore the pressures of market accountability on schools may be more keenly felt, in the independent sector.
5 Methodology

This research aims to investigate the effects of managerial and market-based accountability on independent school teachers’ practice and their capacity to realise their professional aims as teachers. It will explore the professional aims teachers subscribe to, and how compatible these aims are with different modes of accountability. This research is an extension of a pilot study undertaken in 2015. Then, one independent school was used as an instrumental case study18, in which teachers were asked to describe their professional aims, and how they felt the accountability measures they were subject to supported or obstructed these. This was undertaken within a context of academic literature which (based on maintained schools) suggested that teachers’ professional aims were compromised by the pressures of achieving managerial targets such as high target grades for students, and meeting the demands of Ofsted inspections. The research literature described a culture of teachers putting in a considerable amount of extra work to satisfy ‘tick-box’ accountability paperwork, whilst also undertaking further work to achieve their own professional aims. This literature also found that teachers often experienced the two as incompatible.

Based on the analysis (which used a combination of grounded theory and thematic coding19) of ten semi-structured interviews, the pilot research suggested that, whilst teaching conditions were described as better in the private than in the state sector, feelings of pressure and a ‘box-ticking’ approach similar to that reported in the maintained sector were experienced. However, the teachers felt that these came from a different driver. Rather than feeling pressured by managerial forms of accountability, they felt it was market-based accountability, in the form of fee-paying parents, that constituted the greatest barrier to achieving their professional aims.

18 An instrumental case study is where one case (in this instance a case of an independent school) is used to provide an insight into a particular matter and to build theory (see Silverman 2013).
19 As a similar process was used for the larger case studies, a description of the process is described in some detail later in this chapter.
This research aims to build on this suggestion, by expanding the data set to include teachers from a diverse sample of independent schools and by including questions in my interviews with teachers relating to their and their schools’ relationship with parents and how this might affect their work. By using a range of independent schools, the research has been designed to enable an exploration of how the tensions between the demands of managerial and market-based accountability and teachers’ professional aims were felt differently in different types of independent school. The choice of schools was influenced by Waring et al’s (2003) typology of higher education establishments which classifies universities as either ‘selectors’ or ‘recruiters’. This is a market-based differential, and therefore it is entirely possible that teachers’ experiences may be different depending on the market in which the school operates. The original school used in 2015 (Princess Alexandra College) could be described as a ‘recruiter’ school. Two more independent schools were selected, both selectors. One is a very traditional public school, whilst the other is a former direct-grant school. Detailed descriptions of the schools, and why they were chosen as cases, follow.

### 5.1 Contextualising the case study schools

#### 5.1.1 Princess Alexandra College

Princess Alexandra College (PAC) is an independent school for girls aged 2-18. The school is situated in Greater London. One of the oldest girls’ schools in the UK, PAC is positioned in over 200 acres of parkland. Its redbrick buildings include a large chapel and many ornate stained glass windows. The imposing Great Hall is at the heart of the school and is used for assemblies. Not only do the buildings and grounds share much in common with the ‘Great’ schools of the Clarendon days, but the school is similarly ethos driven. The school’s website leads on its values.

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20 School data on demographic makeup, intake, staffing and history is taken from a variety of sources, including: Independent School Inspectorate reports; school websites, and; promotional material such as prospectuses. Specific references to these sources have not been included, as they would directly identify the schools.
rather than its academics, stating that its education ‘centres on core moral principles which focus on tolerance and kindness and encourage students to achieve to the best of their abilities’. Indeed, a number of core values (which correlate with the traditional character traits of Great School students documented earlier) dominate the literature on the walls of the school corridor and on flat-screen presentations around the school.

On entering the school, one is presented with a spacious reception. Here, students’ art work is displayed alongside photographs of alumni - hung presumably to serve as aspirational models to pupils (as well as marketing the school to recruit potential parents). Rather than being esteemed academics of international renown often seen in the halls of Great Schools, the alumni are, in the main, recent leavers now working in the traditional professions especially Law and Medicine, but also as procurement directors, media managers and actors. These pictures give the impression of a school that cannot rely on an academic reputation, but that is rather striving to convey a traditional public school ethos, with its extensive grounds (the majority of which is green land) promoting wellbeing and pastoral values; it is a school that is ultimately market driven, requiring glossy prospectuses to actively recruit students in a very competitive local school market.

The school has a preparatory and a senior school, the total teaching staff numbering around 130. The staff body is predominately made up of female teachers, although there are 12 male teachers in the senior teaching staff of around 100. The attached preparatory school has an exclusively female staff. The staff are predominantly non-Russell Group educated, with around 60 percent of staff attending non-Russell Group universities. 5% of the staff attended Oxford or Cambridge. The senior school educates around 650 students. Whilst the demographic intake of the school is broad, with over 40 nationalities and ethnicities represented and over one tenth of students having English as a second language, the majority of students define (in terms of their response to the school’s ethnic monitoring form) as ‘White British’. The socio-economic background of the parents reflects the middle-class, high-SES area in which the school is located,
with most paying the full fees of £16,000 per year for day pupils and £29,000 for boarding. There are some academic and skills-based scholarships which give a percentage deduction of fees, and a few students are placed into boarding education through charitable trusts. There are no students with a statement of Special Educational Needs, although around 250 students are registered with the school as having been diagnosed with a learning difficulty. 150 of these receive additional support. The average academic attainment of the students is above that in the maintained sector, but below that of selective maintained schools (of which there are a few close by). The school does not publish its examination results for inclusion in league tables, but their A Level results would place them around 120 in the rankings of independent schools. The Preparatory School allows automatic entrance into the Senior School and there are additional places for students at 11+, through entrance examination and interview. The school has a fully comprehensive sixth-form, with no academic entry requirement. The school is located in a highly competitive area, with 15 other all-female independent schools in a 10 mile radius. There are also local grammar schools (both single-sex and mixed) close by. Despite entrance being through examination and interview, the school is not oversubscribed – the most recent Year 7 entry having over 20% fewer students than the previous two intakes. The school’s extensive grounds and ethos-led education have much in common with the ‘Great Schools’ yet its lower academic achievement, intake and staffing make it representative for the purposes of this research of the Independent Recruiter School category.

5.1.2 Clarendon School

Clarendon is an independent school for boys aged 10-18. It is situated in London and educates around 900 students. The school has a very long history – dating back over 500 years.

As with PAC, the majority of the buildings are redbrick. However, unlike PAC, the walls are not decorated with pictures of former-alumni - of which there are many notable examples from the fields of Politics (including Prime Ministers and Members of Parliament), Science, History and the Arts. Instead, there are modestly framed examples of students' artwork. Indications of the
school’s 'Great School' heritage can be seen in occasional panels of stained glass, worked into the modern design of the central staircase.

The demographic intake of the school is, in independent school terms, fairly broad, with around 50% of students belonging to ethnic minorities and students coming from 40 different nationalities. The socio-economic background of the students’ parents is, however, relatively homogeneous, with 80% of students paying fees of over £15,000 per year. Over 10% of students are on full bursaries, paying no fees to the school and further 10% pay discounted fees. No students have a statement of Special Educational Needs, however, 120 students receive learning support of some kind. Whilst the students at the lower end of the school are highly academically attaining (the school being placed within the top 25 independent schools nationally for GCSE results), the sixth form is more comprehensive – however it is still above the national average in terms of A Level results. Just over a third of the teaching staff are Oxbridge graduates – concentrated in traditionally academic subjects such as the Sciences, Philosophy, Classics and Mathematics. Whilst the school acknowledges the academic nature, and focus, of its students, its website stresses the importance of ‘a breadth of skills and activities outside of the curriculum [including being] sympathetic to the needs of others’. The school’s intake, staffing and ethos reflect some of the characteristics of a ‘Great School’, although Clarendon does not belong to this group and its fees are lower than those charged by these schools. Places are highly competitive and the school is vastly over-subscribed, with around twenty times more applicants than places available. Clarendon was selected for this research because it is a highly selective school with many ‘Great School’ characteristics.

5.1.3 Maybank School

Maybank School is an independent co-educational school located to the North East of London. The school educates around 850 students aged 11 to 18 in its senior school, and also has an attached Preparatory School (serving ages 7-11). The school is set within a campus of around
five acres, so has more space than Clarendon (with some green spaces such as sports pitches) but considerably less than PAC.

The school has a mix of both historic redbrick buildings dating back over 100 years, and a number of modern additions. Traditional elements can be seen in the school’s layout, with cloisters and quads. The school has a modest chapel and a large assembly hall. The main entrance to the school is through one of its oldest buildings. As with both Clarendon and PAC, the corridors have many examples of students’ work on display; however, the environment seems less ‘glossy’ and more 'industrious' than both of these schools, with narrow corridors and many classrooms in close proximity. The majority of these classrooms are modern, with an extensive building programme completed within the last 30 years.

The school educates a mix of ethnic backgrounds and takes students predominantly from the surrounding area. Most parents pay fees of just over £16,000 per year; however, there are a number of academic and means-tested scholarships available. The means-tested scholarships replaced the support the school received from the government, firstly through the Direct Grant and subsequently through the Assisted Places Scheme. No student has a statement of Special Educational Needs, yet around 130 from the senior department are documented as having a Special Educational Need or disability for which they receive additional support. Approximately 250 students study in the Sixth Form. Entry to the school is by an examination followed by an interview. Successful entry into the Preparatory Department at 7+ gives automatic entry to the Senior School. Only around 25 students join the school at 16+ and the Sixth Form is highly academically selective. The school is placed in the top thirty independent schools for its GCSE results and is similarly placed for its A Level results. Data is not available regarding the university backgrounds of the academic staff, however 34% of staff have postgraduate level degrees. Following the abolition of the grammar schools in the 1960s and 1970s, Maybank became fully independent. Competition for a school place is not as high as at Clarendon; however, the school is still significantly over-subscribed with around seven times as many students applying for
places than are available. The school’s high academic standing, its location, the demographic make-up of its student body and its Direct Grant background mean that for the purposes of this study this school represents the ‘Academically Selective Independent school’.

5.2 The participants, data collection and analysis

During the pilot study in 2015, I invited ten teachers from PAC to take part in interviews which lasted approximately one hour. The interviews were semi-structured, and purposive sampling (Matthews & Ross 2010) was used to ensure that there was a wide-range of professional experiences represented. Thus this initial cohort included Recently Qualified Teachers (RQTs), teachers of considerable experience (15 years plus), teachers who had taught in both state and private sectors and those who had come into the profession after having careers in other domains. A range of different subjects were also represented, although, as I am a middle-manager at PAC, line-managing a number of subject teachers, I only invited participants from outside the areas for which I am responsible to try to ensure that participants would feel open and honest in their answers. Furthermore, as described in more detail in the ethics section below, all participants were guaranteed anonymity throughout the process.

When extending the instrumental case study research for this thesis, I re-interviewed seven of the original PAC teachers. As I was now more explicitly exploring the effect of the market on teachers’ practice (and not just the effect of managerial accountability), I wanted to get the perspective of school senior managers in addition to subject teachers. Therefore, I added an hour-long interview with the head teacher. As described above, the two other case study schools were added to provide examples of different independent school types. This theoretical sampling of cases was undertaken to facilitate some cautious extrapolation or generalisation of the results (Silverman 2013). At Maybank, I interviewed six teachers, across a range of subject areas, and the sample included an NQT (a Newly Qualified Teacher, who has passed a PGCE and is now in their first year of teaching), subject teachers with between five and twenty-seven years’ experience, two Heads of Department and a member of the Senior Management Team.
At Clarendon, I interviewed six teachers, and these, again, included teachers of a range of subjects from five to twenty-three years’ experience, heads of department, and members of the senior management team. The table below shows a breakdown of each schools’ participants.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Subject/Role</th>
<th>Length of teaching service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>PAC</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Head teacher</td>
<td>35 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>PAC</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>HoD Sociology</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
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<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>PAC</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>PAC</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil</td>
<td>PAC</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>PAC</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Creative Arts</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>PAC</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>10 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>PAC</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
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<td>PAC</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>HoD Science</td>
<td>14 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>PAC</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>MFL</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>PAC</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>HoD Business</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachael</td>
<td>Maybank</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Classics</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
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<td>Maybank</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Mathematics/SLT</td>
<td>27 years</td>
</tr>
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<td>Maybank</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>HoD Creative Arts</td>
<td>19 years</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>5 years</td>
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<td>George</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<tr>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Classics</td>
<td>18 years</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Gaining access to schools was not easy. A number of schools I approached were not comfortable with taking part in the research and declined to participate. The gatekeepers I contacted at these schools gave reasons that included the time pressure on staff, and the anxiety that the findings could be critical. Also, a number of schools I contacted by email did not respond. I gained access to both Maybank and Clarendon through former colleagues. In each case, my contact put me in touch with a member of the Senior Leadership Team who gave permission on behalf of the head teacher. In each school an invitation email was sent to all the teaching staff asking for volunteers.

I then chose participants from those who responded with the aim of trying to include teachers from as wide a range of subjects as possible.

Qualitative interviews of between forty minutes to an hour were chosen as the data collection method to enable a detailed exploration of the experiences and views of the participants. This qualitative method is appropriate for a case study approach, which by its nature ‘can produce not only detailed descriptions of situations and events, but also an in-depth understanding of the actors involved, their feelings and the interactions among them’ (Gagnon 2010, p.1). The 21 new interviews, plus the 10 originally conducted in 2014-15, provided a fairly substantial and rich data set for analysis. Semi-structured interviews with an interview guide were used as, whilst I was wishing to ensure that interviews were comparable with the same key areas covered in each, I was also keen for each interviewee to be able to ‘add something new in terms of concepts or that will further develop an already-defined concept’ (Corbin & Strauss 2015, p.373). Semi-structured interviews allow for ‘unanticipated explanations to emerge and be explored’ (Matthews & Ross 2010, p.222) and I was able to introduce follow-up questions to probe potentially significant experiences and insights (Kvale 1996). The interview questions began with an ‘ice-breaker’ question (Chu 1993) asking the participant to describe their career history. This also gave a context to their subsequent answers. They were then asked about their motivation for joining the teaching profession; how they felt the profession and their work had changed over their career; what their aims were as a teacher; what they felt the characteristics of good
teaching were, and; the factors that they felt enabled and prevented them from being able to achieve their aims and teach in a way that was aligned with their conception of good teaching. They were also asked whether they felt their aims were at all different to those of school managers, outside agencies such as the Schools Inspectorate, and parents. A copy of the full interview guide is included in Appendix 2.

The interviews were then transcribed and analysed using a combination of thematic analysis and grounded theory (see Glaser and Strauss 1967). Rather than using the pure form of grounded theory advocated by Glaser, where researchers ‘enter the field of inquiry with as few predetermined thoughts as possible’ (Mills et al. 2006, p.4), my process followed a detailed literature review of research on teacher practice, professionalism and the independent school sector which had provided sensitising concepts (Bulmer 1979). These sensitising concepts included *performativity* and *wash-back*, and these influenced the process of open-coding through which I generated concepts which were then categorised. This method has more in common with Corbin and Strauss’s later form of grounded theory which, whilst using sensitising concepts to support categorisation, still allows the theory to be grounded in the data, generated by a cyclical analysis process that continues until data saturation has been reached (see Corbin & Strauss 2008; Hughes & Sharrock 2007; Matthews & Ross 2010). Concepts such as *agency*, *back-covering* and *spoon-feeding* were identified through this process, which were subsequently grouped into categories including *barriers, support* and *teachers’ practice*. Axial coding (Wicks 2010) was then used to unpack, and explore the relationships between, the concepts generated. Appendix 3 includes examples of some of these categories and concepts.

Having been a teacher in the independent sector for over 17 years brings both advantages and disadvantages when undertaking research in this field. It helped me to gain access to the case study institutions and also helped me to understand the context in which teachers work - the policies to which they refer, the inspection regimes they experience, for example – especially in PAC which is the school I work in. However, this understanding can lead to prior assumptions
based on my own personal experience and perspectives being imposed on the data, and I was careful to include follow-up questions to check these assumptions and to encourage a fuller response. An example of this can be seen in one of the interviews with Maggie, a teacher at PAC, when she discussed the pedagogical tool of ‘flipped learning’:

Maggie: The flip learning has been a bit of an issue. Because although we explain in the past, not this year, but although we explain to all parents at Sixth Form preview, so a whole year before they come to us that that’s the way we teach.

Me: And flip learning is?

Maggie: Flip learning is when we ask the students to find something out, generally using the textbooks usually, find something out about a particular theory or something, make notes, bring the notes to the lesson and then we discuss it in lesson so they’re coming to lesson with some background knowledge... etc.

Furthermore, I have my own professional aims as a teacher, and experiences of how both managerial and market-based modes of accountability have acted as a barrier to me achieving these aims. Therefore, I was mindful of Corbin and Strauss’s distinction between objectivity and sensitivity. Corbin and Strauss state that objectivity in its literal sense can’t be applied to qualitative research... [as] researchers interface with participants and the data. They bring with them their perspectives, training, knowledge, assumptions, and biases, which in turn influence how they interact with participants and interpret data (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). Instead of objectivity, qualitative researchers aim for sensitivity, or the ability to carefully listen and respect both participants and the data they provide. (2015, p.77)

In order to achieve this greater sensitivity, I included ‘devil’s advocate’ questions in the interviews (which was another benefit of using a semi-structured approach). Not only did this provide richer data, but when discussing any phenomena which were particularly familiar to me, and about which I shared similar views, this allowed me to gain more context to the answer and avoid making assumptions that were based on my own personal experience rather than that of my participants. An example of this was in the interview with Aiden, in which he stated that he
believed there had been an increased professionalisation of teaching in recent years and this had led to a greater sense of accountability. Whilst I believe there is a link between accountability and professionalisation, I was interested in finding out why and how he linked the two, and whether he felt this was inevitable:

Me: And have you noticed any changes to the profession over your career?

Aiden: I think it would be remarkable if you didn’t find somebody who said they hadn’t seen an increasing professionalization and therefore a greater sense of accountability...

Probably one of the things would be having a look at things within institutional cultural change and how that comes about. It’s not always quick in some schools. So things do change don’t they?

Me: Do you think it’s been inevitable that professionalization and accountability are coupled, that they’re attached? Do you think that’s the way it is or it has to be? Is it not possible to achieve professionalization without increased accountability?

Aiden: I wonder if you might nominally pick something like Blair coming to power in ’97?...

This stance was used to try to limit my own prior assumptions influencing the analysis. I purposely sought out data for inclusion which did not correlate with my own opinions and experience. An example of this can be seen with the teachers’ responses regarding managerial accountability, specifically target setting. In both the instrumental case study in 2015, and this research, I had expected teachers to feel a considerable amount of pressure with regard to target setting, as the literature discussed in Chapter 4 had provided a wealth of evidence of state school teachers’ practice changing due to managerial accountability. However, in the interviews conducted for both projects, this was not reported. Indeed, teachers stated that they felt little pressure from target-setting.

As I was not a line-manager to any of the PAC participants, and had no professional relationship beyond this research with the teachers from the other schools, I hoped for an open and honest discussion with each participant. The teachers were all very keen to talk about their experiences
and they seemed reassured by the promised confidentiality of the interviews (see the discussion of ethical considerations below). On two occasions, participants double-checked whether their answers would be used anonymously (or through pseudonyms). During the first round of interviews at PAC, one of the interviewees questioned the confidentiality of the research a number of times throughout the interview, and he chose his responses very carefully - particularly when referencing his current employer. He was more relaxed about giving negative responses about his previous jobs. When we had concluded the interview, he proceeded to articulate a number of frustrations he felt with the management at PAC on the understanding that it wouldn't be used verbatim in the analysis. Whilst I might have expected that the PAC participants (who all knew me relatively well) would be more likely than the teachers at Clarendon and Maybank to speak openly, this did not seem to be the case. The opportunity to talk about their professional lives (within a confidential context) seemed to be relished by the teachers, who did not shy away from discussing topics they thought might be controversial, as shown in this excerpt from the interview with Barbara (Maybank):

Me: In what way has it changed?

Barbara: It's the people who live in the local areas. When I first started here, this depends on how PC this is, this is anonymous?

Me: Absolutely.

Barbara: When I first moved here in our various houses we had a north, east, west school and people were put in the house depending on where they lived geographically. And east was there was a lot of Jewish people lived in Chipford and so on and so that tended to have an awful lot... They have moved now further over north London and Chipford has become much more Asian. And Woolton has and so on. So our percentage of Asian pupils or Asian background has changed and they pressurise children more. They're questioning at a very young age 'Should they have a tutor? Should they do this? Should they do that?' They have very high expectations of their children.
There are a number of limitations to this research. Firstly, the sample size was small compared to the overall numbers of teachers working in the schools (around 10% of the staff at PAC and considerably less in the other two schools). Secondly, each of these schools can only be considered as only one case of a very large number of independent schools (however homogeneous the literature review might suggest the sector to be). This research can therefore only generate secure conclusions regarding the participants in this study. However, the careful choice of case study schools to represent each of the types outlined in Chapter 2 hopefully allows for some cautious extrapolation. It is also hoped that these findings might encourage more work in this field, which would be a valuable outcome given that research into the independent sector is sparse generally, and that research focused specifically on the impact of managerial and market-based accountability up to this point is insubstantial.

5.3 Ethical considerations

This research followed the British Sociological Association’s guidelines on ethical practice. An information sheet was issued to all participants prior to their involvement in the research. This clearly detailed: the aims and objectives of the study; that participation was voluntary; who was involved in the research and what their participation would involve; that participants could ask for clarifications or more detail on the research if necessary, and also that they may seek counsel from others if they wished. Furthermore, each participant was given a consent form to complete, all of which ensured informed consent was gained. The form once again stated that participation was voluntary and also that participants would be free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

The teachers were assured that confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained throughout the process and, through the use of pseudonyms for the teachers and also the case study schools, it would not be possible to identify them. To this end, some genders and subject-
specialisms and details about the school have been altered in the reporting of the research in this thesis where this did not affect any specific issues arising from the research.

It is possible that there could have been ethical dilemmas/issues relating to researching my own school and interviewing my own head teacher, such as a pressure not to use data that was critical of the school. However, I felt comfortable in my position - as a teacher there for over ten years – and I knew that the school was supportive of my research work. The use of pseudonyms and the careful presentation of descriptions of each of the schools meant that they could not be identified.

The study was accepted by the King’s College Research Ethics Committees as a minimal risk study as it involved non-vulnerable adults who were fully able to give informed consent to their participation. During the research, the study was randomly selected for a research ethics audit by the Research Ethics Office. The findings of the auditor were that no major issues of concern were raised and that the researcher had provided evidence of exemplary ethical research conduct.
6 The Professional Aims of the Teacher

This chapter discusses the responses the teachers gave to my questions about why they entered the profession, how they felt the profession had changed over their career, what they felt ‘good teaching’ was, and what their professional aims were as teachers. To investigate how different modes of accountability affect their teaching practice and their ability to achieve their professional aims, it is important to find out how they see the teaching profession and what their professional aims are.

The very first question posed to each participant asked them to provide an account of their career history to date. This was not only a useful ‘ice-breaking’ question (Chu 1993), but also helped to give a context to, and inform, the rest of the interview. The subsequent question concerned the reasons these teachers entered the profession. This question was asked to gain an understanding of the motivation behind their choice of occupation and to open up a discussion on their perceptions of the profession, the changes they have noticed, and their professional aims as teachers. These questions were designed to elicit data that would enable me to gain a comprehensive and deep understanding of their aims and the elements which they experience as supporting or creating barriers to their capacity to realise their professional aims.

Without exception, the teachers were at their most passionate and positive when talking about why they chose to be teachers, and responses showed little difference whichever school the teachers worked in.

6.1 Teachers’ motivations for entering the profession

A quarter of the teachers questioned immediately referred to the influence of their parents on their choice of profession. In each of these cases either one or both of their parents had been teachers. As James (Clarendon) explained: ‘It was in my blood. I questioned whether or not I should because it was easy to be open to the accusation of being in a comfort zone but ultimately I knew it’s something I wanted to do’. For all but one of these teachers, having a parent or parents who were teachers was a positive influence in their choice. Aiden (also of Clarendon),
whose mother and father had been teachers, saw it as a ‘family business’. The exception was Maggie (PAC), who on being asked what attracted her to teaching replied:

> If I’m being honest, nothing. My mum was a primary school teacher and then went into supply teaching and all my life said ‘don’t go into teaching... It’s too difficult, it’s too emotionally draining’, and I used to think ‘you’re joking, I’m never going to go into that’.

Most of the teachers had clear extrinsic motivations for becoming teachers. A few who were mothers mentioned that being able to forge a career in teaching whilst raising children was something that attracted them to teaching. The length and number of school holidays were a contributing factor to this. However, these responses were in the minority, and the number of responses that mentioned the draw of long and frequent holidays is similar to the findings of a much bigger quantitative survey by the education union ATL (2015b) - 20% of 858 participants. This seems to suggest that a commonly-held belief that holidays are a key motivator is inaccurate. The qualitative data in this study suggests that, for the few for whom the longer holidays were a consideration, this was due to the convenience of working alongside raising a family that the longer holidays enabled.

In my previous research (Hyde 2015), two of the participants told me they had entered the profession because they considered it to be a very ‘accessible’ job – needing no further training after an undergraduate degree21:

> Teaching was the option that had the least extra study at the time, because to become an accountant, I would have had to do another three or four years and I had had enough at that stage... that’s really what it was! (Diane, PAC, in Hyde 2015, p.18).

This accessibility of teaching was found to be a key motivator for many of the participants in the current research. Teachers from all case study schools talked about the ease with which they

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21 Whilst it is true that in local authority maintained schools, teachers must hold a postgraduate teaching qualification (QTS), teachers in independent schools and state-funded academies do not – even though many prefer teachers to have them. Teachers in many schools, both state and independent also are able to complete QTS training whilst working there.
could join the profession. Those who had entered teaching following careers in other vocations acknowledged the short training time which would allow them to move into a totally new occupation. Others felt that it was an easy way of using a subject-based university degree. Rachael (Maybank) stated that ‘there’s only so much you can do that keeps you in touch with your subject’. Howard (also from Maybank), whilst acknowledging that as a scientist he had many career options, thought teaching would be ‘something a little bit more creative’. One very experienced mathematics teacher had entered the profession because, whilst she had always wanted to be a pilot, only one company would employ a woman, so teaching was a far more accessible profession.

Other extrinsic motivators included the reasonable pay provided, the perception of job security and the possibilities for promotion and career development. Whilst each teacher mentioned one of the above extrinsic motivators when discussing their motivations behind becoming a teacher, the only teacher to only give extrinsic motivators covered them all - although for him, these reasons extended mainly to independent schools. His perception was that state schools would not offer such benefits and because of this he had only sought a career in the independent sector:

Let’s talk about the pros… the holiday, there’s a lot of holiday, you’re not going to get another profession with the number of holidays teachers do… Another reason … it’s a steady job. The holiday is very attractive and I think the pay is reasonable and it’s very good particularly at independent schools... And there’s the prospect of promotion whereas in industry there may not be the opportunity... it makes it a very attractive proposition (Victor, Maybank).

Despite there being a number of different extrinsic motivations given for teaching, the answers to this question were dominated by lengthy and very positive responses by all interviewees (bar Victor) giving intrinsic motivations for entering the profession. Although, as seen above, teaching was acknowledged by some to have a reasonably attractive salary package, pay was not presented as a prime motivator by most. Indeed, it was acknowledged that whilst pay can be an extrinsic motivator for other professions, teaching was primarily attractive for reasons of
satisfaction, pleasure and even fun. As Rachael (Maybank), who is a young teacher in her second year stated, ‘I thought I’d want to go into something else first, the money-making thing, and then go into teaching because I would enjoy it... it kind of happened sooner than maybe I’d expected but I don’t have any regrets, it feels like the right thing, I do enjoy it’. Discussions of the intrinsic benefits of teaching were consistently couched in a sensory language of feelings and emotions.

The primary intrinsic motivator for half of the interviewees was the love of their subject and the enjoyment they got from not only spending all of their working life engaged in their subject, but the satisfaction they got from inspiring the same passion for their subject in other people. This was articulated particularly strongly by a science teacher at PAC, Beverley, who changed her proposed career path through gaining a drive to engender a passion for science in other people:

I was intending to go into marketing or consulting... and I met so many people travelling who hated chemistry that I changed my mind completely, and I wanted to be a chemistry teacher... the attraction for me was that [people would think] science isn’t rubbish.

The love of their subject was a common theme in the interviews across all case study schools:

I think the subject, because I love physics. I mean I love science generally, but when I was going through education you know, I really enjoyed that, so the opportunity to go back into something I enjoyed and spend my working professional days in and around physics was a huge attraction. (John, PAC).

It’s just the love of the subject. Loving doing the work at university, loving the idea that you can just carry on with that. (Janet, Clarendon).

Aspects of professionalism, as discussed in Chapter 3, were raised in relation to the attraction to teaching as a career. The increased prevalence of managerial accountability measures and the decreasing professional status of teachers, both discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, were referred to when teachers reflected on the changing nature of the profession. This will be considered in detail below; however one element of professionalism was identified as a particular motivation
for Janet (Clarendon) for entering the profession. She considered the amount of autonomy and agency – even taking into account a declining amount of trust within teaching – given to teachers right from the start of their careers to compare positively with other occupations: ‘I think that’s kept me in the job and it keeps you young’.

Half of all of the interviewees described the societal contribution, the social nature of teaching and the intrinsic rewards from helping young people. This was couched in terms of ‘making a difference’, the pleasure coming from solving others’ problems and the sense of service given when in teaching. In these answers, teachers used the most passionate language. For example, John replied, ‘I always thought the chance of becoming a teacher at some point would be a good idea... I love the classroom... the humour... everything basically’.

The intrinsic motivation of the social side of teaching provided one of the bigger differences in responses when comparing across case study schools. The teachers at PAC were firstly far more likely to mention this side (all bar one doing so), and they were more likely to discuss the value-added benefit of helping struggling pupils to improve. Secondly, they used emotive language more frequently. Both of these points can be illustrated through Rebecca’s response:

> I suppose it’s a cliché, but you feel you’re making a difference... when they’ve done something really gruelling, really difficult, but they’ve managed to do it well... it’s that satisfaction... they’ve really enjoyed it, I think that’s one of those kind of satisfying moments... it’s worth doing.

This may be a reflection of the fact that the academic attainment of students at PAC is, on average, considerably below that of the students at Maybank and Clarendon. However the question did relate to their motivations for entering the profession and not what they liked about their current role. It could possibly suggest that teachers who work in less academic schools identify themselves with the contemporary view of teacher professionalism discussed in Chapter 3, conceptualised by Hoyle (2001), Sockett (1993) and Carr (2000). This ‘virtuous professional’ is motivated by, and displays characteristics rooted in, social values and ideology.
Whilst fewer interviewees from the other schools cited the motivation of helping students, it was still a considerable factor, being mentioned by half of the teachers. These teachers referred to the ‘fun of the kids’, and the pleasure taken in ‘looking after’ students and ‘getting them through’. George (Clarendon) ‘wanted to do something socially useful, something that might have some sort of social utility to it’.

Janet (Clarendon) had entered the profession because she loved the subject and wanted to instil a love of lifelong learning in her students. Having now taught for twenty-three years, she saw the importance of having a legacy as a teacher - in both inspiring a love of her subject, but also in a love of teaching itself. This is perhaps no surprise considering the number of teachers who cited positive influences of parents who had been teachers, as discussed at the start of this chapter, or the experience of having had excellent teachers at their own schools:

> It’s lovely that I think now I’ve probably taught about one hundred-plus boys who have gone to read history at university. And I think even more I like the fact that I know now a good dozen have become teachers. I think that’s a massive thing (Janet, Clarendon).

### 6.2 Perceived changes to the profession

Following the discussion on why they became teachers, all bar two participants (a Newly Qualified and a Recently Qualified Teacher)\(^\text{22}\), were asked about the changes they felt they had seen during their teaching career. The teachers interviewed within each school covered a wide spectrum of experience, ranging from some younger teachers who had entered the profession after the previous major curriculum change (Curriculum 2000) to those who had experience in teaching A Levels prior to 2000.

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\(^{22}\text{Newly Qualify Teachers (NQTs) are in their first year of teaching following their teacher training. Recently Qualified Teachers (RQTs) are in their second year of teaching.}\)
Some teachers from each of the three schools felt there had been a significant decline in trust of teachers, on the part of both parents and school managements. This corresponds with the shift from the high to low trust regime of successive governments and the introduction and progressive intensification of managerial modes of accountability documented in the literature - discussed in Chapter 4. One of the ways teachers have experienced this decline in trust is through an increase in the prevalence of classroom observations in their schools. Diane (PAC), a teacher in the profession for over twenty years, recollects that when she started her career she was subjected to very few observations and little scrutiny: ‘you were very much left to do the job. Once they knew you were capable to be doing it, they left you to get on with it. You were trusted to do it’. Whilst teachers (and Heads of Departments) recounted a lack of trust on the part of parents and senior management teams, those participants who were members of senior management felt decreasing levels of trust and increasing levels of managerial accountability also affected the relationship between school management and governmental inspection agencies. For example, Ruth, the Head Teacher at PAC, described the impact of the change in inspection compliance regulations on the work of senior leadership teams. These have led to her spending more time on policy writing and experiencing more stress over the fear of being non-compliant. Ironically, she describes her frustration in very similar terms to those teachers interviewed who are not members of school management, when they described the low levels of trust they felt managements had of them:

Oh, it’s got so much worse. Over the past ten years, it’s got so much worse...it’s the trust thing that’s gone... clearly some school has manifestly failed to do stuff properly and that needs dealing with, but the focus on the minutiae of it, if you haven’t got these two words in your policy then it’s not compliant, it’s ludicrous. (Ruth, PAC)

Over half of all those asked stated that a key change to the profession was the impact of political interventions, including pedagogical initiatives, curriculum reforms – such as the changes to both GCSE and A Level examinations - and new administrative compliance regulations. These were generally described in negative terms as ‘interference’, driven by political agendas rather
than sound pedagogical evidence. Sophie, a British/European dual citizen, expressed the frustration she felt over governmental changes and her feeling compelled to comply:

The government initiatives have not helped at all. I’m not a particularly political person but I could quite easily turn political… I’ve got colleagues who live on the continent and they just go ‘They do what? Why? How?’ and that makes me question it a bit more myself. In your daily grind you’re just doing it because you have to and of course I would. I’m not a rebel. (Sophie, Maybank)

Another key change described by a number of teachers from all schools was the changing role of the teacher, from a focus primarily on academic matters to engaging to a greater extent in pastoral and social work. This resonates with the discussion of the expanded role of the teacher in Chapter 3. Whilst this had significant impact on their working practices (which will be discussed later), this pastoral shift was considered a positive change which was a source of considerable satisfaction:

It’s changed for the good in many ways… I think pastoral care within schools is exceptional in [that] the amount of support that pupils get is incredible… I think our awareness of the problems that young people experience is much greater and our willingness to engage with [them] and [provide] help and support with [them] has been quite markedly changed… It can be the most rewarding thing (James, Clarendon).

Sophie (Maybank), however, felt that this change, whilst potentially satisfying, was compromised by what she saw as a decline in the professional status of teachers:

I think in a society where family life is sometimes not perfect and we need these children to have role models, it’s a shame we can’t provide that. Teaching is just not an attractive profession anymore which I think is a shame because I think it’s one of the best jobs in the world, if not the best. But clearly how we are perceived in society doesn’t really somehow fit in with that. (Sophie, Maybank)

There was also a feeling expressed that a decline in the status of the profession, combined with decreasing trust, have led to a ‘parents know better’ dynamic, as described by Rebecca (PAC):
‘there’s the attitude “the only reason you’re teaching is because you failed at something else… I know my daughter, I know better”’. Every teacher who had been teaching for at least ten years
described how the role of parents in education had changed over their career. For most, this was not a welcome development.

Parents were seen as having a greater involvement in their children’s education and to have become more demanding of teachers and schools. This was seen by a number of participants as a result of the economy – that whilst school fees have increased and money is more scarce across most socio-economic groups, parents were more concerned about whether they were getting ‘value for money’. Teachers reported that this drive for value for money has led to parents having a higher expectation of their children’s attainment. This has resulted in a high degree of pressure for both students and staff, leading to teachers putting in extra hours to ‘cover their backs’ (Rebecca, PAC). Whilst teachers also described positive relationships with parents (detailed further, below), when discussing parents’ raised expectations of their children’s attainment, the tone was strikingly negative:

Expectations have increased over time... what parents think they're paying for. It should be facilities, teaching, smaller class sizes, good careers advice and so on, and really that should be it. I sense now with parents they're parting with hard-earned money, they're expecting it to be that and much more. And the sort of guarantee of success. (James, Clarendon)

There's so much more pressure now... parents are very keen. Year 9 [age 14] options... they're no longer talking about what GCSEs do they enjoy... I have parents say 'Am I missing a trick here? Which one is the easiest for them to get the A*'s in?' so that they can get into university... they want the results to show the money was well spent. (Rebecca, PAC)

It was generally felt that there was an expectation from school managers that teachers should acquiesce to parental demands. Teachers at Clarendon felt they were in a reasonably strong position to resist pressure from parents (to a point) due to the school’s academic reputation. Teachers at PAC and Maybank expressed in the strongest terms the pressure placed on them by parents, with teachers at PAC feeling the least supported by management and the most exposed, leading to them working harder to ensure they were beyond reproach. This is interesting when considered alongside the narrative given by Ruth, the Head Teacher at PAC,
who feels the pressures exerted by parents impact on management but not on staff, indeed seeing the extra time the staff put in as compensated for by the better working conditions of an independent school:

The amount of hours people spend here with the girls, I mean it’s just extraordinary. I think it’s the culture of the school, and I do think it’s a beneficial cycle in that because a lot of people here have come in from the state sector and they so appreciate what they’ve got here, they so appreciate it.

The differences in responses between the case study schools is analysed in detail in Chapter 9.

The increased parental interaction with schools was seen to have positive effects by two teachers, both from PAC. Jessica felt that the parents’ expectations and the pressure to succeed they exerted on their children was a useful tool for sanctioning students. The threat of telling their parents was ‘another bit of ammunition to use to get them back on track’. Maggie (PAC) was mindful that her opinion on how positive increased parental interaction was varied depending on the cohort, stating ‘it’s a snapshot thing’, suggesting that her response might change year-on-year. Whilst lamenting that she believed parents were supporting a surface learning approach and making their children less independent, she felt that often parents are supportive of teachers’ aims. Maggie suggested that ‘self-made’ parents (belonging to the ‘new’ middle classes described in Chapter 2) might be more likely to actively and forcefully intervene (‘She was always there, nagging us, but for all the right reasons’), and that those who had not had experience of further or higher education ‘are just so grateful because they didn’t have this opportunity and they appreciate it so much more’. The behaviour of parents in relation to their socio-economic status was discussed in Chapter 2 and the data captured during this research is further explored through a Bourdieusian lens in Chapter 9.

Teachers felt that these modes of parental engagement with schools, the lowering of teachers’ professional status and of society’s trust in teachers, and what they experienced as a continuous stream of new government initiatives and increasing accountability-related demands had
changed their practice considerably. They reported an increased incidence of conduct associated with negative washback such as teaching to the test, ‘spoon-feeding’ and narrowing the curriculum, and spending more time on examination preparation rather than teaching subject matter. All of this has also had a considerable impact on their free time (that is their time pre- and post-school and lunchtimes) as they add catch-up sessions and revision time to their classroom teaching responsibilities. This was more prevalent at PAC and Maybank than Clarendon. The motivation for these extra-time sessions was not a belief that this constituted ‘good practice’; rather teachers presented these sessions as a means of ‘covering their backs’ against parental complaints, which they could not be sure would be absorbed by the school management. This will be discussed further, with the differences between the case study schools explored in some detail, in Chapter 9.

6.3 ‘Good teaching' and teachers' professional aims

Having been asked about their motivations for entering the profession, and the changes they had seen over their careers, the teachers were then asked to describe what they felt the purpose of education is or should be. The purpose of this question was to focus the discussion on broader philosophical aims - rather than the actuality of their daily professional experience (which may be affected by specific barriers or support systems). Questions relating to their actual experience and practice would follow.

As documented in Chapter 6.1 above, a primary intrinsic motivator for many of the teachers was their enthusiasm and enjoyment of the subject they teach, with, for example, Janet (an experienced teacher at Clarendon) stating that her choice was made because of ‘the love of the subject’, and John (PAC) saying ‘I love physics... I love science’. However, imparting subject knowledge was not given as an answer as to what they believed was the overall purpose of education. Ruth (the head teacher at PAC) did state that the aims of a teacher primarily ‘should be to communicate a love of knowledge and a body of knowledge to young people’; however, she did not relate this to her (or any) particular subject. This may be due to the holistic nature
of her role in the school; however, she continued to articulate the point in vocational terms, saying that education should ‘equip them for life in the world beyond school’.

All of the teachers asked linked the purpose of education with the students’ life after school, with specific reference to their job prospects and life chances. This idea was articulated in detail by Charlotte, a Recently Qualified Teacher at PAC:

> It’s... about getting you ready for the rest of your life, it’s about really getting you to be a responsible part of the country, responsible citizen... it is about getting ready for work, because that ultimately is what is waiting at the end of your education, and it’s what gives you a huge amount of your identity and your life happiness, and your ability to make a number of other life choices, you know... if you’ve got a job, you’ve got options, really.

Diane (PAC), when asked, firmly stated that ‘my first answer to that would be preparing people for the world of work... and that means preparing people for every range of job’. Furthermore, teachers across all three schools discussed education as a grounding ‘for the adult world’ (Rachel, Maybank). This was articulated in terms of securing employment, as described above, but also in broader terms of equipping them with skills ‘preparing them for the next phase of their life’ (James, Clarendon).

A number of teachers felt that the purpose of education had shifted, and this was discussed in less than positive terms. Particularly at PAC, teachers described the pressure on students to go to university. When interviewed as part of the earlier (2015) research, Maggie had expressed her frustration that this was prioritised over other aims of education, stating:

> All of this school stuff, it’s just a stepping stone.... We’re so geared up to focusing on ‘you’ve got to have good A Levels to get to university’ and that’s all the parents focus on here. I don’t think the parents are interested in what they’ve learnt. (Maggie, in Hyde (2015), p22).

Teachers at Clarendon and Maybank may not find this to be a frustration because the highly academically selective nature of their cohort means their students have always aspired to (particularly selector) university entrance. Further to her comment regarding education serving
to ‘prepare people for every range of job’, Diane (PAC) felt that the widening participation in higher education agenda resulted in students feeling pressured to go to university so they could get a job:

I find [it] very frustrating... that it's gone to everyone going to university and feeling that they're a failure if they don't go to university, because if I look back on my own school days, there was 90 girls in my year and five of us went to university. And if you took the same 90 girls now, it would be 5 not going and... I think all that's happened with education in that sense is they've moved the goalposts that, you know you now need a degree to do jobs that years ago you'd have left school at 15 or 16 to do.

The difference in responses between case study schools is explored in Chapter 9, with a particular focus on pressures on teachers’ practice as a result of pressure from fee-paying parents. Section 9.1 analyses the results through a Bourdiesian lens, considering how different types of middle-class parents might behave depending on what types of capital they have at their disposal. As discussed in Chapter 2, research suggests that, following the financial downturn, middle-class parents are caught in a competitive war, striving to give their children the best advantage. Brown et al. (2011) describe an environment where 'being good is no longer good enough' (p.85) and therefore parents wish their children to go to the very best universities. A Bourdiesian analysis would suggest this would be more the case for new middle-class parents who have economic capital but not the right kinds of social or cultural capital to ensure their child’s success.

The teachers were also asked about ideal teaching practice, firstly in respect of what they felt ‘good’ teaching was (and in what ways it might be achieved, observed and measured), and secondly with regard to what their professional aims were as teachers – what they wished to achieve through their work. These questions were included to bring to light any tensions between their conceptions of ideal practice and specific pressures of accountability in the private sector; in particular, the demands of being accountable both to fee-paying parents and to school managers and how this might affect their practice. Follow-up questions, where
necessary, probed in what ways the specific accountability measures in play might support or be a barrier to their professional aims.

The response of a small number of the teachers began by focusing on ‘technical’ elements of teaching, for example having a sound subject knowledge and organised and well-prepared lessons. Beverly (PAC) articulated this clearly in her response, stating: “Obviously good subject knowledge helps... good subject knowledge... good time management, to be able to not just finish your lesson but finish the curriculum”. These comments to some extent echo the views of researchers who suggest that a teacher’s subject knowledge is the most important requirement for ‘good’ teaching (Coe et al. 2014). However, these answers were, in each case, limited to a very short response and then followed by more detailed accounts of the attributes and dispositions they valued in teachers. For example, Beverly stated that having empathy and patience and understanding why students might find a subject difficult were more important to her than subject knowledge. She stated that this was the reason why she particularly enjoys teaching outside of her subject specialism.

The amount of time teachers (across all case study schools) spent discussing such attributes highlighted the relative importance of these to their practice. This resonates with the concept of teachers being ‘virtuous professionals’ discussed in Chapter 3. These attributes included the capacity to inspire students, to ensure their happiness, and to foster good pastoral relationships with students:

I take a great interest in the wellbeing of my pupils... unofficially my job is to protect my tutees... generally my view is I’m here to look after them and get them through the school...
I’ve always felt my position was to protect them from ... trouble and try to guide them away from it rather than apply strict discipline and things. (Dean, Maybank)

It’s part of your responsibility to make them into a better person... all of the kind of obvious safeguarding procedures, make sure they’re happy. (Rachael, Maybank)
James (Assistant Head, Clarendon) took a more holistic approach, believing that the ‘caring’ side of teaching could either be shown by attributes such as those described above or through a strong subject knowledge and well-prepared lessons, depending on a teacher’s personality. His opinion had changed through his career, as he had seen teachers be successful through displaying different strengths. Ultimately, however, whether it be through showing ‘technical’ skills such as good planning or effective marking, or through establishing good relationships with students, the most important attribute was that a teacher cared – which further resonates with an understanding of teaching as a ‘virtuous profession’:

I think probably my perceptions of what constitutes good teaching have changed and broadened... [some teachers] just through their personality don't necessarily naturally want to or are able to make the human connections with people; they achieve good things because they're extraordinarily knowledgeable, their lessons are well prepared. I think there are many ways in which to be a good teacher and to achieve great things. If you work hard for kids and they sense that, and they sense you care, then I would suggest that's always been pretty fundamental actually. You can care in different ways... One teacher can care by asking how they are, if they indicate that something is not great, engaging with conversation about that, that's one way of caring. Another way of caring is incredibly methodical marking of a book or incredibly thorough feedback or being willing to give up a lunchtime to go over a topic, so there are different ways in a sense to express that and those I think have probably largely remained the same.

It is unsurprising that all of the teachers interviewed expressed a direct link between what they believed the characteristics of good teaching to be and their professional aims. All of the teachers interviewed at PAC and Maybank believed that students’ progress, in terms of their academic knowledge and development of new competencies, was an important goal for them as teachers. Often, it was their first response to this question and for some of the teachers their response was quite personal, linking the academic success of their students with their own feelings of achievement or satisfaction. Howard (Maybank) stated that he ‘would not be happy if [his] classes did not have good exam results’ but that this had to be accompanied by them
developing ‘their skills and thinking like a scientist’. John (PAC) was more emphatic about the importance he placed on his students’ exam results, stating ‘my number one aim is that my classes do better academically than equivalent classes. That’s what I... that’s how I measure success... the added value’.

Teachers at Clarendon did not directly refer to students’ examination results when discussing their aims as teachers. Whilst they did discuss academic areas, such as students gaining new skills and being critical and interested in research (which will be covered in more detail below), they did not specifically reference academic attainment. This may be due to academic success being assumed as, out of all of the case study schools, Clarendon has the highest attainment levels. Whilst attainment was seen as very important to the teachers at PAC and Maybank, it was less important to them than achievement. Attainment here refers to the grades a student gains; achievement is the ‘distance travelled’ or ‘value added’ taking into consideration the students’ context. Teachers at PAC and Maybank described academic success as relative to the abilities of the students, showing a personalised approach. As Victor (Mathematics teacher, Maybank) described, his aim is that ‘the children know more [at the end] than at the beginning of the year’. He is keen to ensure his students reach their ‘full potential’, concluding ‘it’s always my aim, my goal is to do the best I can for every single one of them’. This aim is shared by most of the teachers interviewed:

I think my aim is make sure that every student can achieve their very best within the given parameters... to make sure that every child achieves as best as they can individually, and I think that’s always been that way whether I’ve been in the state sector or the private sector.

(Sophie, Maybank)

As far as I’m concerned, I get the students I’m given and I do my very best, our department does absolutely everything we can for them... I can see that leadership will always have an eye on the grades and this is important. I love it when we get good grades, but if a girl gets a C when I thought ‘Wow I thought you were only going to get a D’ I’m really happy with that.

(Maggie, PAC)
Academic progress, attainment and achievement was therefore a common first response when teachers were asked what their professional aims were. For many, progress was considered easier to achieve if lessons are enjoyable and students engaged. As Natalie (PAC) stated, ‘my aim is to ensure that my students make progress...’. Yet, as she saw it, this was not solely down to students understanding the academic curriculum; they also must ‘enjoy their lessons... they’re the two things to make progress on, to enjoy and understand as much as they possibly can... If they enjoy it, they will progress’.

To ensure that students enjoyed their lessons was another common response from teachers across all three of the schools. As stated above, this was often considered to be directly linked to ensuring students achieved in the subject, but for some it was also significant in its own right. For Anne (PAC), it is important that ‘students are taking [Art] because it is something they enjoy, not just because it is something they want to do in the future’. Howard also considered it an important aim to ensure that students enjoyed his subject:

> I want pupils to enjoy Chemistry... it’s about enjoying the subject... I’m not bothered whether the minutia of Chemistry and little facts and so on... I want them to have a sort of positive experience.

For Phil (Mathematics, PAC), it was personally important for him to enjoy the lessons and this was achieved if the students themselves were ‘having fun’:

> I hope they’d enjoy my lessons. Hearing that back almost, it sounds as though, you know, I’m a performing clown at the front and my prime purpose is to give them a great laugh. It’s not that, but... I get bored quite easily, so I’m mindful of the fact that I don’t want them to be bored.

Barbara, an experienced teacher and member of the Senior Management Team at Maybank, declared that she couldn’t imagine doing the job if the lessons weren’t enjoyable, stating her aim is:
To do the best you can for the kids and hope that they enjoy it. And so I think teenagers are
great fun, the minute they stop making me laugh, that’s the time to retire. Seriously... if they
don’t enjoy what they’re studying, that’s a big shame.

As stated above, most of the teachers felt that if students enjoyed their lessons, they would
achieve more. For Jessica (MFL, PAC), the relationship also worked the other way around, as she
believes that students enjoy her classes most when they are acquiring new skills. Achieving
progress boosts students’ self-esteem and this results in a positive experience for them. Jessica
believes this is ‘absolutely vital’ to her practice and supports the development of independent
learning skills in her students:

I think that their curiosity can be increased if the sense of independent ability is really
encouraged... when they have the chance to do something for themselves, that gives them a
real boost of confidence, they feel complimented, they feel that you’re putting your trust in
them, they feel you’re giving them responsibility, they’re made to feel a little more grown up
in their academic studies.

Jessica believed that inculcating a disposition for independent learning was necessary to enable
students to be truly fluent in the languages she teaches. Independent learning, and the teaching
of ‘key skills’ or dispositions which are important to students outside of the classroom once they
leave school, was a very common aim for teachers across all three schools. Most of the teachers
discussed the importance of teaching skills and dispositions which did not relate solely to their
subject. These included academic skills and dispositions – for example, fostering evaluative skills
and critical thinking – and more practical ‘life-skills’. James (Clarendon) succinctly captured both:

The importance of a well-written thank you letter... things like body language... to turn out
nice young men who are well-balanced. Beyond my subject, thinking critically of questioning
the assumptions of being able to interpret information, read between the lines, those
academic skills... alongside the broader ones. So I suppose that would encapsulate my aims.

In the case study I conducted in 2015, two of the teachers discussed at length the importance
of ensuring that students had a ‘deeper’ understanding of their subjects and, therefore, ‘deep’
learning was a key professional aim for them. Deep learning is achieved when students are able to contextualise facts they have been taught and then understand how they are applicable in different circumstances. This approach requires concepts to be analysed and understood, rather than a surface learning approach where, ‘in contrast, the intention is just to cope with the task, which sees the course as unrelated bits of information which leads to routine memorisation’ (Entwhistle 2000, p.2; see also Atherton 2009). Across the other two case study schools, a further four teachers also stated that one of their main goals was to ensure that students did not just purely learn by rote but thoroughly understood concepts and could apply them:

It’s easy to get into, this idea of we’re just here to get this particular grade and ‘when this exam question says this, you say that’ and spoon-feeding them the mark scheme. And it’s a trap that’s easy to fall into as a teacher… I want them to understand how the subject relates. *(Howard, Maybank).*

Janet (Clarendon) feels that deep learning is particularly important in the light of the relative ease with which students can access digital information:

You’re slightly pushing back against some of the digital distractions… knowledge and understanding is so crucial. I think a bit of a push against the idea that knowledge is free, it’s not. Information is free, knowledge is very different to that, it’s got nuanced. We mustn’t believe all that Apple and Google advertising; information is different to knowledge and I think embedding an awareness of that [is] one of the roles you play.

The same teachers, along with one more at Clarendon, one more at Maybank and the head teacher at PAC talked in very positive terms about the importance of life-long learning and ensuring that students gained a love of education which would inspire them to continue learning throughout their lives. This tended to be a more common response from participants who had been teaching for over ten years. It was often couched in subject specific terms, for example by English teacher Alex (Clarendon) who wants to ensure that students believe ‘literature is important’, going on to say ‘it’s very important to inspire amongst, it’s only ever going to be a
few, but if you’ve got a love of literature, of life-long reading’. It was also discussed in general
terms, as described by Rebecca (PAC):

I find it very strange when you come across people who are very cut off, and think “oh no I
don’t wanna know about that, it’s only you know, science, or whatever it would be”, you know
you just think “why wouldn’t you wanna know?!” So I think… in terms of whether education,
you know... I’m very much the case of learning for learning’s sake.

Conclusion

Throughout all of the interviews across the three case study schools, there emerged five
professional aims that were important to teachers. These comprised two main professional aims
which were shared by nearly all of the teachers:

1. To ensure that students make good academic progress and achieve to the best of their
ability – i.e. that they ‘know more [at the end] than at the beginning of the year’ (Victor).

2. To ensure that lessons are engaging and ‘fun’ – that the students find lessons enjoyable.

And three other professional aims which were shared by a majority of the teachers interviewed:

3. To provide students with dispositions and transferable skills which will support them in
their future life out of school, primarily a disposition for independent learning.

4. To ensure students have a ‘deep’ rather than surface learning approach, meaning they
can apply their knowledge across a variety of contexts.

5. To inspire a love of learning which will encourage them to be life-long learners.

Each of these five aims reflected a belief on the part of the teachers interviewed in the value of
the attributes displayed by the virtuous professional. This linked directly with what teachers
identified as good teaching – practice that focuses on pastoral concerns, such as building positive
relationships with students and having empathy with their students. Teachers either felt this
was a priority in their teaching, or they felt that these pastoral facets are a vital contributor to ensuring academic progress.
Pressures on teachers emanating from the demands of managerial accountability to
government and other external agencies

Section 4.2 outlined the different modes of accountability that may affect school teachers' practice, using academic literature that focuses mainly on the state sector. The teachers involved in this research were asked what barriers or support systems they felt affected their ability to realise their professional aims. The analysis below considers the effect of managerial pressures from government or other external agencies, specifically: The pressure of league tables; school inspections; improvement initiatives, and; changes to assessments such as GCSEs and A Levels.

7.1 The Pressure of League Tables

In my pilot study, based on one case study school, I argued that, as none of the participants felt that league tables created pressure, these teachers ‘therefore feel less pressure [from league tables] as a result of what Stobart (2008) describes as “test-based accountability”’ (Hyde 2015, p30).

This was unsurprising, as the case study school in question, PAC, does not submit its results to be reported in national league tables. Despite league tables being a key component of the government’s drive to promote parental choice (discussed in Chapter 3), it is not uncommon for independent schools to remove themselves from these tables by not submitting results. This is for two main reasons. Firstly, many independent schools have small teaching sets in examination years (this being an aspect of private education that is particularly popular with parents (Gurney-Read 2015)). Small teaching sets can result in outlying grades which might distort results data. Secondly, independent schools are more likely than state schools to enter students for IGCSE examinations (International GCSE, which is a Level 2 qualification, similar to the standard GCSE, yet considered more academically challenging as the focus is more on traditional summative written examinations rather than coursework) (Gill 2016). IGCSEs have now been excluded from
league table results, which therefore can also distort a school’s ranking. Indeed, prestigious independent schools entering their students for IGCSEs have ranked below state schools that are deemed by conventional methods such as Ofsted Inspections to be academically poor. A clear illustration of this can be found in the 2015 tables where Eton College appears 400 places lower than a school placed by Ofsted into special measures (Malnick 2015).

In this research, it is not surprising that the teachers from PAC still do not feel pressure from league table results. However, both Maybank and Clarendon do appear on league tables and their teachers’ responses highlight the differences between the schools, and between the different characteristics of the teachers interviewed.

Members of Senior Management at both Maybank and Clarendon were more likely to report feeling pressured by league table results. This pressure can lead to more teaching to the test and more lesson time focused on examination technique. James (Clarendon) suggests that the drive to perfect examination technique pressures teachers to become examiners in their spare time so they have a better understanding of what the examination boards require. Janet, a member of management at Clarendon directly responsible for academic matters acknowledged that, despite the school being highly selective, for her, getting good results was ‘crucial’:

> You are aware that our A* to B target, these are in the papers, in league tables, you’re keen each year for it to be good and well done... there is a pressure to deliver. I mean it would be naïve to say not.

However, colleagues who were on senior management teams (but not directly responsible for academic results), whilst being aware of the general importance of league table performance, did not feel pressured by either league tables or in-school target setting. Aidan, who has responsibility at Clarendon for monitoring and improving teaching and learning, recognised the growth in the culture of managerial accountability initiated by the policies of the New Labour governments from 1997 onwards. However, he suggests that rather than increasing pressure, this had led to an increasing professionalisation of teachers, with ‘even classroom practitioners
[being] quite fluent in educational legalese'. Both Alex and James, the former a Head of Department at Clarendon, the latter a member of Senior Management at Clarendon, both felt there was a need for results-based managerial accountability, but felt no pressure on their own practice. James had felt the effects of such pressure far more keenly in the state sector, describing a ‘bureaucratic culture... [with] systems that are designed to catch [teachers] out, that cause misery for everyone else’. At Clarendon, he felt that positive performance management based on ‘praising... that doesn’t somehow irritate the good people’ meant that this type of pressure did not exist and this was because there was a culture of trust, stating ‘I’ve never felt that’s been a barrier to the things I want to achieve... you recruit good people and then you trust them to get on with it’. Alex also understood how such pressures might exist, and believed there was a value in observations, target-setting and analysis of examination results, yet felt the school had the balance of managerial accountability and trust right, using similar language to James:

Some of it [managerial accountability] is necessary, but I also think there is a lot of bullshit that gets imported with that, the kind of nonsense and jargon of management and I think this school has resisted that traditionally... the school is definitely the best one I’ve worked in, and I think that’s largely because of a management who resist some of the kind of less palatable aspects of management culture... the mantra is ‘we get good people and we let them do their own thing’ (Alex, Clarendon)

Whilst it can be seen that very little pressure is felt by staff at Clarendon regarding getting good results for the school’s league table placing, and what pressure is felt is concentrated on those who have management responsibility for academic results, at Maybank, all teachers mentioned the pressure from management to ensure that students get good results. This was seen, as Rachael described, as ‘a school thing’. Staff at Clarendon felt that the better the results were, the more trust management had in staff and the less pressure they placed on them. Howard, a Head of Department at Maybank, felt the same, stating ‘if the results are all right, we’re left alone to get on with it’. He equally acknowledged that it would ‘be different if their results
weren’t all right’. Perhaps the difference between Maybank and Clarendon stems from the difference in their placement in the league tables and their overall academic results. Maybank is placed below Clarendon and, operating in the same market place, Maybank is considered less academically prestigious than Clarendon.

Although discussion of league tables was more prevalent at Maybank than either of the two other case study schools, there were differences within the school in the degree to which this pressure was felt. Dean, a teacher of Design and Technology, has taught at Maybank for a number of years following a previous career outside education. In recruiting examination students, his subject competes unsuccessfully with subjects that are considered more academic. He feels that management do not take this into account when setting targets based on league table results and the result is that students are discouraged from choosing his subject:

On the 22nd of August, or whenever they come to get their GCSE results, there’s all the stats, including the average stats for all the pupils of all the subjects. And they are compared... They’re just all expected, we don’t count Bs, and they don’t expect Cs. We virtually just count A and A*s. And our demographic in this department, you’re unlikely to get more than a couple of people... it’s quite sad.

Victor, a teacher for five years who had previously worked outside education, felt very self-motivated, with a strong connection to the school. He described not feeling accountable to the school or the management, but due to his sense of belonging to ‘a very good school’ that he ‘must do his bit’:

I don’t feel I’m accountable to anyone but myself... I have a duty to do the best... I know what is expected of me, and if my results are completely out of the norm I would resign.

For Rachael, a Newly Qualified Teacher, her sense of place and identity as a neophyte within the organisation increased the pressure she placed on herself. She understood that the school had ‘an expectation’ for high results, and, as a young teacher, she felt a sense of responsibility not to let down her more experienced colleagues, stating ‘you don’t want to be the weak link’. It
may be that she more keenly felt the pressures of results-based accountability as, out of all of the teachers interviewed at Maybank, she described these pressures in the most direct terms:

I think there’s so much pressure. We are told on a weekly basis ‘if we want to maintain our place in the league tables the results of that one individual matters’ or ‘we have to all get this or your department has to get this’ and there’s so much pressure and I think it trickles down. Obviously, I suppose the governors put pressure on the Head, the Head puts it on the academic deputy, Heads of Departments, because everyone is answering to somebody else. (Rachael, PAC)

Here, she describes a ‘trickle down’ effect of accountability described in earlier research (Hutchings 2015). In Hutchings’ research, the trickle-down effect runs through governance and school managements to teachers and then the concern is that it will reach students and impact on their learning and well-being. Rachael feels there is nobody to absorb the pressure of results-based accountability, and being at the bottom of the chain, professionally, it is intensified for her.

Sophie, a teacher for eleven years, two at Maybank, also feels the pressure coming from management. She feels it is a key professional aim to ensure the emotional well-being of the students, and feels that the focus on measuring results forces her to absorb these pressures. She feels her role is in ‘softening the blow in the middle’ which intensifies her workload:

[I am] the negotiator, educator, not just educating the kids but also the parents. And trying to make sure I don’t lose sight of the bigger picture... by trying to negotiate between the two sides... [you do the same job] three times with a different slant on it. You just do it in a way that should you have to become accountable... you just make sure that you cover all sides.

The pressure felt to achieve good results at Maybank seems to be generated by the school’s place in the market, and the perceived need to attract more academically able students in the future. A parallel can thus be drawn between how state schools and independent schools can be affected by league table results, depending on how academically successful the school intake is. PAC, whilst gaining more of a reputation for academic success in recent years, and being one
of the top achieving schools for value added results, attracts parents through a focus on a broad curriculum, comprehensive sixth form and a values-based ethos. Maybank and Clarendon operate in a different market, which is intensively competitive. Victor (Maybank) is acutely aware of the competition and described how this intensifies the business/customer relationship independent schools have with parents:

It’s a business. We want to attract the best students because we want to attract even better students in the future... There are other schools in this area but we are the best school [in] the area. There are better schools in London, for example... Clarendon, and trust me, a lot of parents would rather their children go there if they could. If they are given the choice to go to Clarendon or here, it’s a no brainer, they will take them there... the fact is, they’re a better school academically... we want the best students.

Janet, the member of Clarendon school management who described the pressure of league table placings most acutely (see above), clearly outlined why highly selective schools are not immune from this type of accountability, which is a hybrid of both managerial accountability in the sense that it involves internal target setting based on results, and also market accountability as league table rankings matter to the school because they are believed to influence the school choice of parents:

We have a very strong input but our output is crucial as well in the London day school system, even as a selective school. [The market is] highly competitive and very buoyant, but we are in unsettled times again... you are really aware that every year our results are in the papers, they go to the governor that I meet with every Head of Department and we look at the results, yeah, there is an accountability through them.

7.2 The effects of Inspection

As detailed in Chapter 4, inspection of British schools has a long history. Since its inception in Victorian times through its delivery by local education authorities and HMI, to the creation of two main bodies – Ofsted for the maintained sector, ISI for independent schools – it can be argued that the culture of inspection has changed, from one geared to supporting, developing
and improving teaching to one characterised by low-trust of teachers, intensive observation and an expectation of compliance.

Ofsted inspections have been documented as being a significant source of pressure in the state school system (Jeffrey & Woods 1996; Fiddler et al 1998) As the methodology of ISI and Ofsted inspections are very similar (with ISI basing its system on the Ofsted model), one might expect that teachers in the independent sector feel similar pressure from ‘a mechanistic and, it appears, hostile inspection regime’ (Davis 2015, p.1). However, the data collected for this research suggests that the impact of school inspections is felt differently in the independent sector. The only participants to describe pressure from inspections were those with management responsibilities. Ruth, the head teacher of PAC, described the increased focus on compliance rather than teaching and learning. Barbara (Director of Studies at Maybank) detailed the pressure of needing to provide evidence for the inspection team. She considered this evidence unnecessarily time consuming, saying it ‘detracts from the time you can put into preparing lessons’:

    Having to document everything... it’s like our last inspection, that they were sort of querying about do we do departmental reviews? Do we do individual reviews? What evidence have you got? And yes, we did. But we couldn’t necessarily prove on the piece of paper it was done at this time and on this date... so now all the paperwork trail now has to be in place for that so we have the evidence. We were doing it! But we have the evidence that we were doing it and the time that does into doing that as far as I’m concerned could be better spent on other things.

Janet, a member of senior management at Clarendon, felt some anxiety as the inspection system was changing and this had caused apprehension through not knowing what exactly would be expected.

None of the teachers interviewed described inspection as a major cause of pressure or barrier to them achieving their professional aims. Indeed, the majority of teachers questioned did not
mention inspection as a cause of pressure at all and those that did spent very little time discussing it. This was common across all three case study schools.

In the case of Howard (Maybank), the reason for this was that he was fully supportive of the system. He believes ‘on the whole the goals and aims are pretty much... we’re aiming for the same thing’. However, the majority of teachers who did discuss inspection were cynical about the process, believing that inspection agencies do not share their values, whether that be pastorally, or academically focused:

Oh, god... I believe that [ISI] are not particularly bothered about the welfare of the children, so long as the numbers on a piece of paper are correct and I can’t blame them for it because you can’t measure children’s well-being, but you can measure numbers. *(Sophie, Maybank)*

*My opinion on lessons is not necessarily the same as the person observing the lesson.* *(John, PAC)*

As mentioned above, as a head teacher Ruth is cynical about inspections because, she believes, they do not focus on what she thinks is most important in education – the teaching and learning. Charlotte, a recently qualified teacher at PAC, shares this view. However, whilst she does not believe that the goals of inspection are in line with her aims as a teacher, she feels that she has ‘got to go through it, you’ve got to comply with that system’. Even Dean, an experienced teacher at Maybank, having tried to resist, refusing to change his teaching style to match the requirements of inspection, eventually found it easier to comply:

*I think some of the current expectations are wrong... it was a single period and it was teaching something the kids had to learn... it wasn’t all singing and dancing and using the whiteboard and this whole list of things they want us to do... and she didn’t like it very much... So she observed another lesson so I did another lesson where I used the whiteboard and all these different things and she loved it! So I eventually gave her a lesson in what she wanted.*

The responses here suggest that it is compliance that reduces the pressure of inspection. The teachers reported the ease with which they can perform during observed lessons. Rather than
being a barrier to any of their professional aims, inspections were a brief diversion which could easily be managed through performance and fabrication:

My partner, he says whenever he’s being observed, he teaches what he calls a ‘malarkey lesson’, where they wave whiteboards around and they do this, that and the other, and then the following lesson when he’s not being observed, he goes back and he teaches it properly. (George, Clarendon).

I think that when you know they’re going to be inspected I think people change. Like in any study if you know people are watching you, you change your behaviour. (Maggie, PAC)

This might suggest that teachers feel a lack of agency as their aims are not supported by the method of school inspection, and they are compelled to change their practice, even if only temporarily. However, it might also be argued that the teachers gain a sense of agency from this process. The kind of performance described above is arguably a form of resistance. Resistance is enacted by not changing their teaching style for the vast majority of teaching time. They are secure in what they believe makes good teaching and an effective lesson. As John (PAC) states adamantly, ‘I know that the way I teach is more effective... I’m absolutely convinced that what I do in my classroom and the way that I do it is better’. They are not convinced that what Maggie describes as ‘tick box observations’ can accurately assess effective teaching. The teachers do not feel pressured by inspections because they find it easy to temporarily fulfil the requirements of inspection observations and they do not, on the whole, value the process as they do not believe it supports their educational aims.

7.3 Improvement initiatives

Whilst teachers felt limited pressure from being inspected, they did feel that that subsidiary elements of the inspection regime indirectly affected their work. As detailed in Chapter 4, inspection regimes require schools to complete detailed self-evaluation forms. These include a School Improvement Plan (SIP) in which they document short, mid and long term goals for the school. This includes information on what provision there is for the professional development
of teaching staff. This pressure on Senior Management to give detailed evidence, discussed by Barbara above, is channelled down to teachers who are expected to continually reflect on their work and implement a growing number of techniques to change and improve their practice.

Teachers from all schools expressed frustration with such school-based initiatives and government directives, which they saw as forming part of a ‘bureaucratic culture’ whereby ‘it seems that lots of things are added and nothing is ever really taken away’ (Alex, Clarendon). However, there seems to be some difference in how these frustrations manifested themselves. PAC has seen myriad improvement initiatives implemented by the management team over previous years, including but not limited to: online management systems for extra-curricular activities; teaching strategies for compulsory whole-school use of Ipads; De Bono’s ‘Six-Hats Thinking’, and; the use of Neuro-Linguistic Programming. Teachers at PAC generally felt frustrated at the amount of time these new ideas took to learn and implement, especially when they would very quickly be replaced by other initiatives and subsequently forgotten. This was described by a teacher in previous research conducted at PAC:

> We have a lot of new initiatives on a regular basis. And the past is littered with new initiatives that didn’t really fully meet the designed intention let’s say, and created far more work, to the point where people are pulled away from what they are really trying to do and trying to deliver, to embrace the initiatives rather than get on with the task on hand... it’s the pupils that lose out in the end. (Geoffrey, PAC, quoted in Hyde 2015, p.34).

At both Maybank and Clarendon, the frustration was less a response to a feeling that these initiatives were a waste of their time, but more a response to the impact they felt this had on their sense of professionalism and agency. The range of government initiatives implemented in the name of teacher professionalisation, discussed in detail in Chapter 2, is seen by James to have started in the state sector – but also felt in the independent sector. These initiatives restrict not only on the time available to improve his teaching, but also teachers’ ability to make their own professional judgements:
For quite a long time [there’s been] a bureaucratic culture, that’s born out of people just not trusting the teachers... so everyone spends a lot of time justifying what it is they’re doing rather than actually getting on and doing it. And for me, having the time and energy to plan good lessons and to give people time to make decisions is so important and that has probably been eroded over the years. *(James, Clarendon)*.

Across all schools there was seen to be a disconnect between improvement priorities set by the government and what was felt important by professionals working in schools. None of the teachers interviewed felt that agencies outside of the school (neither ISI nor government departments) understood what was needed in schools:

> They keep changing it, so that they’re changing what the targets are. We’re going to do AS, we’re not going to do AS. We’re going to change from this method of assessing pupils to a different method. It often seems that the people who are making these decisions actually have never worked in a school. They’ve been to school and that, they think, is good enough. *(Barbara, Maybank)*

> We’re all mired in our own school experiences aren’t we? I’m still convinced that when the EBacc [new GCSE league table measure] was decided, it was some posh girl down at the D of E [Department of Education] saying ‘I hated RS, it was so boring doing the gospels, but I loved classics. Put that in as a subject!’ I’m convinced that’s how that policy was made. *(Janet, Clarendon)*

The government’s lack of understanding of how schools operate (as the teachers I interviewed saw it) and teachers’ lack of input into government policy was felt to be inconsistent with politicians’ focus on the professionalisation of teachers described in Chapter 3. George (Clarendon) feels that teachers are the very last people trusted with input into education policy:

> If you’re in education you’re not allowed to contribute to the debate... Lots of people who talk about education in the news say ‘it should be like this’ and you kind of think ‘are you sure everybody agrees with you?’... oh, don’t ask me. I’m only a teacher!

Not only do teachers feel a lack of involvement; their sense of agency and professional status is diminished because they subsequently have to enact the policies for fear of being non-compliant
or even breaking the law. Victor (Maybank) describes how he has to find ways of protecting the ethos of the school, and realising his professional aim of students enjoying their education, when implementing policies he feels have little value:

We have to conform to what the government regulations are. Even if we disagree with them, we just have to go with it because that is the law. We don’t break the law... [but] we have our own ethos on how the school should be run... these children here are really happy.

Teachers’ time is not just taken up by the kind of teaching and learning improvement initiatives that Barbara describes as ‘educational claptrap’. In Chapter 3 it was detailed how teachers’ work had become more involved in the regulatory aspects of social care through compliance and safeguarding legislation following high-profile cases of child neglect and abuse such as those of Victoria Climbie and Peter Donnelly. Ruth, the head teacher at PAC, feels such policies are the biggest barrier to her achieving her aims, describing the ‘emphasis on compliance’ as ‘excruciating’. Members of senior and middle management at both Maybank and Clarendon also felt compliance regulations were an added burden. Barbara (Maybank), whilst understanding the importance of regulations on safeguarding, was frustrated at the time required to undertake the same training ‘again and again to meet these standards when actually, probably, INSET time could be possibly put to better use’. Alex, a Head of Department at Clarendon, noted the tension between management and teachers when a compulsory regulation regarding extra supervision before and after school was addressed by management with a rota and ‘there was a bit of back and forth... staff were starting to wave their contracts around... saying “I don’t have to do it”’.

The impact of such policies was not only felt in terms of wasted time. Dean (Maybank), like many of the teachers interviewed, felt that an important part of his role was to provide pastoral support to students to ensure they had a positive and happy experience at school. He feels that safeguarding policies outlined in *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (DfE 2016) prevent him from providing the pastoral support he would have traditionally provided. He feels his practice, as a result, is less authentic:
I’m a very tactile person. I touch people. Members of staff used to touch students, I’d put my arm around them if a kid is upset. I’d talk to them and put my arms around them and that is frowned upon a lot more than it used to be. You just get used to it after a while that you mustn’t do that... that’s just my natural instincts and I think that’s the most important part of teaching is being natural.

However, whilst many teachers were cynical about government policies and school improvement initiatives prompted by SIPS, some ideas (particularly those relating to teaching and learning practice) were considered both beneficial and interesting by some staff. A number of teachers place pressure on themselves to continually improve. For them, being a ‘good teacher’ is synonymous with being a ‘reflective practitioner’ (Dewey 1910; Stenhouse et al. 1970; Schön 1983) where teachers continually contemplate and question their work, engaging in the ‘active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it’ (Dewey 1910, p.6). For example, Anne (PAC) believes this process has improved her practice throughout her career and is integral to her work:

I think really good teachers are those people that really do refine what they do in the classroom, and that you’re not necessarily just doing, going in and doing the same thing every year... I think I’ve grown as a teacher, I think that automatically refines as you mature and you reflect on what you’re doing.

Similarly, Beverley (PAC) shares the opinion that rather than just didactically teaching the same content, the same way, each year, she wants to improve her lessons to support her aims of students enjoying lessons and becoming more independent learners. However, she feels that she struggles to have the time to achieve this due to the increased bureaucracy detailed at the start of this chapter. This points to the irony of a situation where teachers are fully supportive of the idea of professionalisation and continual professional development, but feel frustrated in their attempts to develop their professional practice by policies and initiatives coming from government or prompted by the inspection regime. Aidan, the Senior Teacher responsible for Teaching and Learning at Clarendon, is committed to using evidence-based policy to promote
improvements in teaching. He believes in promoting reflection and professional development by encouraging staff to attend courses at the University of London’s Institute of Education, and to share their findings with colleagues. However, he, like Beverley, feels that teachers are not given the time to achieve this, stating ‘I think teachers are bright people, but often they have insufficient time or are not afforded the opportunity to reflect on their pedagogical choices or their methods’.

One of the main pressures on teachers’ time, which also brings frustration and anxiety in their work, is the introduction of new A Level and GCSE examination systems. The perceived impact of these changes, and whether they might support or be a barrier to teachers realising their professional aims, will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6. However, as seen through the lens of being politically driven decisions, these examination reforms were not popular with two of the teachers, who felt they were not being introduced for pedagogical reasons:

There’s been all sorts of changes [in my career]. Political changes - I’ve lost count of how many specs [syllabi] I’ve actually, a lot of those are political, different governments come in and changing for instance teaching AS rather than A level and now we won’t be teaching it, and going back to AS... (Dean, Maybank)

Furthermore, such changes were believed to destabilise the profession, disrupting the work teachers are trying to do, being ill-conceived, and rushed:

They never think these things through properly. It’s always rushed... it’s never really thought through properly. Gove said ‘I want this’... it’s just another change. What we need is a sustained period of 10 to 15 years of leaving well enough alone... it’s going to make everybody’s life worse. (George, Clarendon)

7.4 The effects of changing assessments: Washback

The New Labour governments of 1997-2010 and the coalition government from 2010-2015 placed significant reforms to high-stakes assessments at the heart of their education policies.
Washback theory (described in detail in Chapter 4) suggests that, by changing the format of examinations (including both what is tested and how it is tested), teachers’ practice will change – the presumption being that this will be for the better. However, many teachers interviewed in this study reported feeling a considerable amount of pressure emanating from examination washback. The washback process has resulted in teachers changing their teaching practice, with these changes working against, rather than supporting, their capacity to realise their professional aims.

The positive concept of washback has been applied mainly in language teaching, and there is a considerable amount of research literature showing that by changing testing methods, teachers have become less didactic in their approach, and have introduced more ‘authentic’ practices in the classroom (Hughes 1988; Bailey 1996). A specific example of this is exploring vocabulary through the reading and group discussion of foreign-language newspapers rather than being given sections of text to translate from a textbook (Cheng 1999). Cheng’s observations followed the introduction of newspaper extracts in examination questions. However, the capacity for washback to be negative – where changes to examination models lead to teachers adopting practices which work against their professional aims and can be harmful to students’ learning – are more commonly found in education literature (Popham 2001; Pan 2009; Longo 2010). This ‘negative washback’ often takes the form of ‘teaching to the test’, a phenomenon that was reported both by experienced teachers who took part in this research – who described how their practice has changed over their careers – and younger teachers, who acknowledged that their classroom practice was directly influenced by the nature of the examinations, geared towards teaching to these examinations, and always had been.

‘Teaching to the test’ was a concern for teachers who felt that this functioned as a barrier to them providing a broad curriculum to their students. Diane, an economics teacher at PAC, discussed this when considering what hinders her most in her teaching:
I think that the exam boards limit what you can expose the students to, because you know, I know personally with coursework I don’t go off the beaten track at all, in terms of getting them to do anything extra, and I think that’s a shame... they’ve got so much to do for what’s on the syllabus that you haven’t got time to veer off it... we just have a blinkered view.

Beverly, a faculty head at PAC, described an interesting paradox in the testing system. Whilst examination boards set broad syllabi, examination papers focus only on ‘a tiny part of the specification’, which means that teachers concentrate their teaching away from the broad syllabus onto the specific topics covered in previous years’ papers. A large part of the year is also taken up working on past papers:

The nuances of the [examination] boards... the questions you wouldn’t expect to be asked... year on year that you have to make sure you cover in detail because it’s a tiny part of the specification... We tend to finish teaching the curriculum really early, so, you know, I’ve finished now with my Year 10 and my Year 11 classes and their exams’ll be in June. Because the next few months are going to be just looking at the nuances of the exams. (Beverley, PAC)

Teachers talked about the pressures of an examination system that focused on specific ‘check-list’ mark schemes. The availability on the internet of past papers and mark schemes to both teachers and students has increased the pressure to concentrate on very specific terms:

The worst thing for me is that they have a check list and whilst we give the specification and I say you could be tested on anything that’s on that sheet of paper, so obviously they’ve got to know that, if that’s all they know then I don’t think I’ve done my job properly. Even though they might get an A star. ‘Cause if that’s it... then I don’t think that’s what I intended to do. (Maggie, PAC)

As an experienced teacher, Maggie felt that she was confident enough to teach beyond the test, but the pressure on her to restrict her teaching to the syllabus she experiences as intense. Rebecca, a history teacher at PAC with less experience than Maggie described, with some anxiety, how she feels:
There is the pressure of... gotta get to that exam, gotta, gotta know, gotta make sure that have all the content that they're going to need but also the [examination] skills, gotta do that practice essay, gotta go over the peer assessment part, gotta, you know, all those different things, all those boxes that you have to tick... the end game is those exams.

Not only is this negative washback a potential barrier to their aims of providing a broad curriculum; it was also seen to promote shallow, rather than deep, learning in students, and make the promotion of dispositions such as independent learning and analytical thinking much harder:

The exam system... is terrible, it’s anti-intellectual and anti-education, and it kind of affects everything you do [and] not just in exam years... GCSE, the extremely restrictive nature of it, the banality of the tasks, the lack of challenge. [Students] seem to have lost a lot of the intellectual curiosity that they had when they were younger, just like ‘just tell us what’s in the exam, we’re not really interested in much else...’: Teaching to the test makes people forget that there’s anything outside of it. (Alex, Clarendon)

In my generation... you couldn’t access mark schemes... Whereas now AO1 [Assessment Objective in the mark scheme] is this and AO2 is that. I really don’t think that is what it should be about... (Ruth, PAC)

A propensity to practise ‘mark-orientated’ teaching concerned Rebecca (PAC) as she considers it to have an impact on the differentiation of students, and this, for her, makes the validity of the assessments questionable. Teaching to the test is focused most on those students who are deemed to be academically weaker, the end result being that students deemed to be more able can learn, demonstrate and understand concepts (which is the stated aim of the examination specification), but those deemed to be less able are only able to learn and demonstrate, suggesting that teaching to the test promotes shallow learning in students categorised as less academically able:

It depends on ability... because of the pressures on them... they need to get, try and crank up the numbers, you know the marks, as much as possible, you will teach them a formula, to give them that leg up. (Rebecca, PAC)
Negative washback was perceived to have affected the teaching of both experienced and early career teachers who participated in this research. Jessica, a recently-qualified teacher remembers experiencing ‘teaching to the test’ as a student herself and, acknowledging the limiting nature of this practice, tries to take a broader approach in her own teaching (even though she feels that teaching beyond the syllabus is ‘naughty’).

Janet, who has taught for over twenty years, has experienced the pressure to narrow her teaching and proactively fights against ‘that culture of “it’s not in the textbook, I can’t read that for the exam. Is it in the test miss?” kind of idea’. She feels it is important to go off-topic even if it is perhaps considered ‘wasting time’:

> Occasionally having a lesson where we veer off into ‘when you're at university or in your 20s’,
> you’re ‘wasting’ twenty minutes talking about that, it’s no bad thing either. Every now and again that moment... one of the boys will bring in some baking they've done and you think ‘yeah, that’s great you’ve done that’.

This ability to go off-topic highlights some of the contrasting ways in which tensions are experienced in the different case study schools. It also shows that teachers at each school respond differently when negotiating the barriers to achieving their professional aims. Teachers from all of the case study schools described the pressure to ‘teach to the test’, understanding it to be a necessary practice. However, the teachers did not lose sight of their professional aims of promoting deeper learning, a broader curriculum, independent learning and the development of general life-skills. The difference between case study schools seems to centre on the average attainment level of the students. Teachers at PAC, which as an Independent Recruiter has the lowest attaining intake of students, found it most difficult to go beyond teaching to the test, but achieved this to some extent by giving more time outside of lessons in examination ‘clinics’. If there was time to spend on topics outside of the syllabus content (and examination preparation), Charlotte (English teacher at PAC) ‘felt that something was wrong’.
George, at Clarendon, is aware that achieving his aims would be more difficult at a school with a 'less able' cohort:

I’ve got a room full of very bright boys and, because I haven’t got kids who are less able who are disrupting the lesson, we can actually go deeper into things that I possibly could in some of the schools that I’ve been in.

Victor, at Maybank School, gave a similar response:

They talk of high level learning. More thinking over problem solving etcetera, etcetera. But you see... we are a very academic school. The first thing that came to (my) mind is it’s going to be impossible for the state schools... we just need to do something what we’re good at anyway which is we train them to think outside the box.

The reaction of each school to the new examination regimes at GCSE and A Level has also differed depending on the ability level of the students. Whilst PAC has gradually introduced a linear assessment system (as the subjects themselves become linear with the decoupling of AS and A Level), both Maybank and Clarendon have changed to a linear style at the same time, for both new and legacy subjects. This results in students taking both AS and A2 exams at the same time (a considerable workload and not the practice envisioned when the AS exams were created under the Curriculum 2000 reforms). Whilst higher attaining students can cope with this, PAC students have always benefited from a modular system. Similarly, both Maybank and Clarendon have moved many subjects away from GCSE qualifications to IGCSE. These are considered to be more challenging for students whilst providing more certainty as the examinations are fully established, unlike the new GCSE.

The effect on teaching practice of the new examination regime, and the latter’s impact on teachers’ ability to achieve their professional aims, will be discussed in detail in Chapter 10. In terms of washback, the impact on teachers’ practice was considered to be positive. Teachers from all schools believed that the new examinations would provide fewer possibilities for teaching to the test:
The nature has changed so much, there is almost an infinite variety of questions that could be asked now which is different. In the past, model answers worked... after the [new] AS paper, the Students Room [internet forum] was buzzing with teachers and students, everyone was saying 'the exam wasn’t fair, it was absolutely ridiculous’... When we got the paper and looked at it, there was only one thing that question could have been asking, it’s on the syllabus, it was perfectly legitimate. All students who had been practising a standard question were thrown.

(Maggie, PAC)

To me [the new] linear [system] is great... You get more time to get off-piste and do things [that] are interesting. (Alex, Clarendon)

Conclusion

The independent school teachers interviewed described a number of ways in which they were affected by pressures emanating from the demands of managerial accountability to government and the ISI inspection agency. Members of Senior Leadership Teams felt that the inspection regime took up a considerable amount of their time as they felt a need to ensure that they had an audit trail of regulatory paperwork proving the schools were compliant. These pressures did not affect subject teachers, and neither did subject teachers feel pressured by inspection lesson observations as they felt they could easily behave performatively and teach in the way the inspectors wanted just whilst they were being observed.

Improvement initiatives, prompted by schools’ SIPs (School Improvement Plans which are a requirement of the inspection process) also negatively affected teachers’ practice. At PAC, teachers described the amount of time that was taken adopting new initiatives which were then soon discarded. At Maybank and Clarendon, teachers felt that improvement initiatives, under the guise of professionalisation, lessened their sense of agency and showed a lack of trust in them by managements and the government. One teacher also described how safeguarding compliance regulations
have hampered his ability to give pastoral care as he feels he can no longer put his arm around a student. He feels this makes his practice less authentic.

Teachers, particularly less experienced ones, described how the significant changes to the examination system in recent years have led to more ‘teaching to the test’. ‘Teaching to the test’ has narrowed the curriculum as teachers solely focus on what will be included in the examinations. Whilst some of the teachers at Maybank and Clarendon still felt they could teach a broad curriculum, they felt able to do this because the students were particularly academically able.

Examination league tables, which put a considerable amount of pressure on teachers in the state system, did not cause considerable anxiety to the teachers interviewed in this research. None of the teachers at PAC felt pressure related to league tables, and this is not surprising as the school does not submit its data. At Clarendon, only the two teachers who have a particularly management responsibility for their schools’ results felt any pressure. The lack of pressure for the other teachers may be due to the high results Clarendon gains each year. At Maybank, which does not perform quite so well, the NQT interviewed felt very anxious about ‘letting the side down’ and a teacher of a less-academic subject felt that he was being pressured to get high results even though he was continually given academically weak cohorts.

For teachers in both Clarendon and Maybank, who operate in the highly competitive London day school market, league table placings and examination results were considered important as a marketing tool for the school. The next chapter considers how pressures emanating from parents, the customers in the independent market, affect teachers’ practice and their ability to achieve their professional aims.
8  Pressures emanating from Parents

In this chapter, the analysis considers the market-based accountability pressures on teachers in the form of pressure from fee-paying parents. As with the pressures emanating from government policies and other forms of managerial accountability, teachers’ responses were analysed to find out to what extent market accountability supported or obstructed their capacity to achieve their aims, and how they negotiated any tensions they encountered between accountability demands and their professional aims.

Teachers interviewed for this research who had also taught in the maintained sector claimed that working conditions were superior in independent schools. This was described in terms of better facilities; smaller class sizes which allow teachers to more easily differentiate and give more focused support to pupils; and the overall better behaviour of students:

I kind of felt disillusioned at that [state] school... I felt in the classroom I was a policeman basically, and I was trying to manage the behaviour rather than actually getting on with teaching... it was destroying me as a person... I had a GCSE class of 31 students in it and there wasn't enough tables and chairs for them. (Anne, PAC)

It was like firefighting... I just felt awful. And I thought I can't do this and you know it used to make me miserable, and I'm not a miserable person, and you know it was really awful. (Phil, PAC)

I mean, in the state sector everybody is considerably more depressed and considerably more got at, and considerably more harried and considerably feel less valued by pretty much everybody... When they get handouts it's one between two... Of course, here we've got the money to give them textbooks and have spare textbooks in the classroom. (George, Clarendon)

This negative portrayal of maintained schools could be as much a reflection of the teachers as the school; however it is included here to give a context to these teachers’ perception of their experience. The teachers appreciated that what they saw as the superior conditions they experienced in the independent sector supported them in their ability to realise their teaching
aims. However, they also felt that the pressure to be responsible and accountable directly to parents was considerably greater in the independent sector. This was considered to be as a result of parents paying fees. Rachael, a Newly Qualified Teacher, felt that the parents at Maybank ‘view themselves as our customer’, adding ‘they [parents] treat you as a service that they’re paying for’. James (Clarendon) believed that what ‘parents think they’re paying for’ has expanded in recent years, going beyond ‘facilities, teaching [and] smaller class sizes’ to ‘a guarantee of success’. This change is reflected in the more demanding expectations and greater involvement of parents. Teachers reported feeling that the pressure emanating from being accountable to parents, coupled with an enhanced sense of a ‘client/provider’ relationship, has had a negative effect on their practice and their sense of professional agency.

In section 6.3, the professional aims of teachers were condensed into two main aims, which were common to all of the teachers interviewed (ensuring pupils’ achievement and ensuring students enjoyed their lessons), and three aims which were common to many of the teachers across all three case study schools. These were to ensure deep, rather than shallow, learning; to inculcate a love of life-long learning; and to provide students with competencies and dispositions for life in the world of work, such as independent learning skills. When asked whether they believed the parents’ aims and expectations differed from theirs, the teachers reported that they felt that parents primarily focused on attainment, in the form of academic grades. When asked about her professional aims, Rachael (a Newly Qualified Teacher at Maybank) immediately referred to the tensions between her own aims and the expectations of parents and how this caused a tension in her work:

I think that it’s about enriching the lives [of] your pupils, it sounds really cheesy, doesn’t it? But it’s more than about just getting them to pass the exam... it’s hard to get their parents to see it sometimes, but I think it’s preparing them for the adult world. Yes, you want them to get good exam results that enable them to go to good universities and get good degrees, but I think... much more valuable than that, how do you have a proper conversation with someone? How do you write a letter? How do you conduct yourself in an interview?... It’s part of your
responsible to make them into a better person... but I think there's a danger that the focus is always put upon just the academics.

In my pilot study (Hyde 2015), one specific example of how a change in professional practice impacted on teachers’ sense of agency was shown through the process of predicting A Level grades for students’ university applications. Maggie (PAC), felt compelled to change her predicted grades due to parental pressure, and this left her feeling professionally compromised:

[Teachers] feel helpless, we’re being ridden roughshod over... our professional judgement is doubted... We’re inflating all these grades... if [universities] start thinking ‘well these people, this school, predicts A* and A, and these kids are getting As and Bs’, you know I think we have professional integrity. We try [to] be as honest as we can in references and the more we have to inflate them worries me. I think it has got much worse. (Maggie, PAC, in Hyde 2015, p.40)

During interviews for this (current) research, teachers from all three schools commented on the impact of high predicted grades given as a result of parental pressure. This correlates with research which reported that 73% of all students were overpredicted in 2016 (Coughlan 2018). Teachers from PAC, Maybank and Clarendon acknowledged that these grades might not be realistic, they still felt under pressure to ensure that the students achieved them - or that they had, at least, ‘covered their backs’ by providing extra support so they couldn’t be blamed in the event the student didn’t make the grade. They perceive that this affects their ability to achieve their professional aims in a number of ways.

Alex (Clarendon) feels that the pressure placed on both teachers and students by parents to achieve unrealistic predicted grades leads to more ‘teaching to the test’, whilst Barbara (Maybank) described how the number of extra lessons being held outside of the timetable in the form of ‘clinics’ had increased as pupils were expected to achieve higher grades and teachers felt the responsibility to effect this:

Parents are very focussed on grades... they expect [the students] to achieve and they expect to go into Russell Group universities... and it’s to try to make sure they reach those goals that they need... We run clinics here for those who need it... If a pupil picks a subject here and we
Maggie (PAC), similarly, is not content with just saying ‘I told you so’ when she inflates predicted grades at the behest of parents. This has a deleterious effect on students’ ability to learn independently (one of the key professional aims she is trying to achieve) and has led to her engaging in a greater amount of ‘spoon-feeding’, a practice she dislikes. A number of the teachers described resorting to ‘spoon-feeding’ and described a feeling of hypocrisy because they did not consider this to be ‘good teaching’, and felt it frustrated the realisation of their aim of creating independent learners with a deep understanding of their subjects. The potential of parentally-dictated predicted grades to affect teachers’ practice, encouraging them to employ behaviours which negatively impact on the promotion of dispositions teachers felt were important, corresponds with a similar observation in the maintained sector made by Bailey and Colley (2014). Bailey and Colley found that externally-set target grades affected state school teachers’ ability to teach vocational skills as teachers are ‘locked into a cyclical mode of assessment which results in spiralling time pressures... [suppressing] the use of time for teaching and learning about the related labour market [students] will be entering’ (p.165).

Furthermore, some of the teachers felt that this kind of pressure made it less likely that students would enjoy their studies and gain a love of learning. Rachael acknowledged that parents send their children to Maybank to ‘ensure they get the grades’ and that they feel high achievement is ‘automatic’. She went on to describe the frustration that measurable targets (such as grades) then dominate her work, stating ‘I just feel it’s a shame sometimes other things you know, take a back seat’. Jessica (PAC) went further, questioning the effect of inflated predictions on students’ wellbeing, believing the practice was both ‘unfair’ and ‘cruel’:

I feel that the school rather unfairly puts girls through the pressure of A Levels in subjects that they are not capable of achieving a good grade in, and this means that either teachers are running around pretty much taking the A Level for them, or the girl flounders and drops out at the last minute. To give an example, I have an A Level pupil at the moment who was given
permission to continue to A2 even though she scored an E at A5. She just got a U in her A2 mock. She is now very anxious and is panicking. I think that it’s slightly cruel that she was ever allowed in to that position, and it was all just because the parents requested it. The teachers never wanted her to continue because they knew that would happen.

Many of those interviewed spoke in detail about the need to ‘cover their backs’, which involved engaging in extra teaching sessions as described above and also an increasing amount of paperwork documenting the extra interventions they had taken. This is considered necessary as parents are paying and teachers are afraid of being seen to be failing. Often these parental demands were considered to be inappropriate; yet the fear of failing still made teachers change their practice. An illuminating example was given by Charlotte, a young English teacher at PAC, who was interviewed originally as part of the pilot research. Charlotte described ‘a very strange complaint from a parent who insisted that I was withholding curriculum information for her daughter, in that I wasn’t letting her know what books she would be studying in 3 years’ time’ (Hyde 2015, p43). Charlotte felt it was an inappropriate request, but did not feel confident to challenge it. Subsequently she changed her practice, adding ‘I make sure I’ve written down any extra that I’ve given... I now email her everything as soon as I know it’ (ibid. p43). Anne, an Art teacher at PAC, described at length how she was spending a considerable amount of her free time on giving extra sessions to students who do not finish their work at home, even though she considered this to be the result of a lack of time management on their (and their parents’) part. She feels that this is ‘part of the job’.

Ruth, the Head Teacher at PAC, feels that the job has changed considerably in this respect over her career, and puts much of this down to the increasing financial cost of independent schooling to parents. She describes the result in terms of teachers spending more time ‘covering their backs’ and becoming ‘very defensive’, acknowledging that teachers are ‘killing themselves... there’s no question that that leads to greater pressure on the teachers’. Ironically, it was the teachers at PAC, who discussed ‘back-covering’ in the most detail, and who felt that the need to cover their backs was encouraged by the Senior Management Team:
The leadership wants the parents to be very happy. I’d love the parents to be happy but at the end of the day I want the girls to come out learning. The girls come first... [but] if the parents aren’t happy and complain to the Head, the Head is going to question me why the parents aren’t happy. Maggie, PAC

Another way in which some of the teachers from all three case study schools perceive the high level of accountability to parents as working against their professional aims is in the increased use of regular assessment purely to provide information to parents, rather than for formative assessment to support students' progress. This was felt by some teachers to take time away from the work they wished to do. Like many of the teachers interviewed, Phil (a mathematics teacher at PAC), wishes to make learning enjoyable, and believes that some time 'off-topic' helps to foster excellent relationships with his students. He is frustrated by being made to set tests that serve no formative purpose, giving one example of a test which was added to his scheme of work purely because a parents' evening was approaching and he was told he needed extra data. Not only did he feel that this was not the best use of his lesson time, but also that it created a negative learning atmosphere where 'you're testing every week'. Furthermore, in prioritising the use of test data for parents' evenings, he felt his professional experience and knowledge were being devalued.

Test data is also being used as a 'back-covering' technique in the two more academic case study schools. Here, parents are characterised as highly-aspirational, expecting their children to be achieving the very best results and being in the top sets. Barbara (Maybank) describes how, for parents, it is often a child’s position in a set or a cohort that is more important than their actual attainment or progress, because – she believes - parents use this as a status symbol:

We get issues... 'Why isn't so and so in the top set'... and I think sometimes you get the impression that the parents are wanting to say 'my child is in the top set' to their friends and that they're being accelerated when actually it's not necessarily the best place for the child. And what they sometimes forget here is that our bottom set even get A*'s!
Both Barbara and Janet (Clarendon) feel pressured to increase the number of tests students take to be able to justify their professional decisions to parents. Janet describes how test data is necessary to 'manage' parental expectations and ensure decisions are supported by quantitative evidence, saying 'there is a parental pressure or expectation... there is quite a lot of scrutiny of those results. And there is some element of “is there a paper trail about that?”'.

Teachers from all three schools also discussed accountability in terms of having to write regular progress reports to parents. Whilst reports are designed to be a part of the formative assessment process (as they include clear targets with measures given to aid improvement), they are also a means of schools and teachers being accountable to parents. PAC requires teachers to write either short or full reports to parents at least six times in a year. A number of teachers at PAC reported feeling overwhelmed by both the number of reports they are expected to write and how often they must write them. They are concerned that the reports are unlikely to be helpful to parents, time consuming and possibly positively harmful. Diane (Head of Economics, PAC) remembers that when she started teaching, each student's report was only one sentence long rather than a whole page (as it is now). She unequivocally feels that the current system is no more effective, yet takes more of her time. Charlotte (a recently qualified English teacher at PAC) gave a very nuanced account of her experience of reporting in the pilot case study. She suggested that the amount of reporting she was expected to undertake actually made the reports less effective as she has no time to ensure reports are differentiated:

I think that the overall volume of reports in particular can make it very difficult, ironically, to be individual with them, because that's the point... when you've got two whole sets of them due, you know, two year groups in a week, and maybe multiple classes, this is very difficult, and so sometimes things like that which are meant for a good purpose... they're also to keep you accountable in terms of you know where they're at, you know where they should be going, it's very individualised, it can almost detract from that because you're just trying to get it done. (Charlotte, PAC, in Hyde 2015 p.45).
Three other teachers from PAC also felt that the efficacy of reports was compromised, and directly laid the blame on the pressure on them to 'sell the school' to parents. The teachers feel that they must ensure that parents and students are happy even if it results in dishonest practice on their part, potentially impeding students' progress and leading to them providing inaccurate data for parents. Whilst John (science teacher, PAC) believes that 'twenty per cent of the girls are underperforming', the underperformance of students is not communicated to parents for fear of them believing the school 'isn't working' for their daughters and removing them from the school. This results in teachers making over-inflated claims about students' progress in their reports.

Whilst Diane feels she is still able to give effective feedback, she has to take more time to be mindful of potential offence:

> In the past you could have told a student off and the parents would have probably supported you whereas I think now I'm very conscious of that you have to treat the students in general with kid gloves... I think you have to couch your language in a positive way whereas in the past you would have been able to be much more direct. Not rude, but you would have just been able to be more direct.

Rebecca (History, PAC) describes the same problem, very aware that the school is focused on recruiting and retaining high-achieving students, and is frustrated that the children come to be 'used as a bargaining tool':

> As soon as a student who is of the kind of ilk where we want to be attracting more of, there is an immediate panic if there is the hint that they're not 100 per cent happy or satisfied... and that is the fear that they will go somewhere else because they may have the pick of the schools. And I think sometimes too much power is given to parents with that thought... 'So and so teacher or subject isn't doing enough for them' or immediate feedback.

Teachers at PAC and Maybank were more likely to describe specific ways in which the pressures emanating from parents had led to them engaging in practice which goes against their professional aims as teachers. As seen above, this includes: giving more and more time to extra
lessons or 'clinics'; 'teaching to the test' or spoon-feeding to attempt to achieve inflated exam predictions; taking time away from developing pedagogic aids or lesson content to complete extra paperwork as a 'back-covering' exercise, and; giving dishonest feedback. The teachers all spoke about these things as phenomena directly linked to the school being fee-paying, in a marketplace, and bound by customer/provider relationships. Teachers who had taught in state schools had previously experienced little of this in the maintained sector:

I remember there being very little [parental interaction] in the state grammar school and it may well be I've forgotten. But in the independent sector they are more likely to complain if they're paying, if they don't get what they see is right. (Howard, Maybank)

I think you need a strong management. It is quite difficult for a private school, because they're paying – 'who pays the piper' and all that business. (Phil, PAC)

Phil feels that management can make a difference, if it is sufficiently 'strong'. Many of the teachers, particularly at PAC, felt that their Senior Management Team did nothing to absorb the pressure parents placed on teachers. Indeed, there was a feeling that the practices described above were encouraged. This reflected what teachers felt to be the management’s lack of trust in teaching staff and the need to ‘keep the customer happy’:

I think parents’ complaints are tolerated more than they should be... they’re given more of a forum than I would personally think that they should have. I think my perception is that if a parent phoned in and complained that ‘Mrs X hadn’t marked homework for six weeks’ that would be believed before it would be checked. I think the parent would be led to believe that it would be investigated rather than the chances are that they’re wrong. (Diane, PAC)

Rebecca (PAC) believed the management’s reaction to parental complaints or enquiries has become like a ‘panic button’ which has led to so much ‘back covering’ and ‘pandering’ to parents that she has little time to improve her resources. The management’s position, she feels, reflects an inherent lack of trust in her professional ability, and the fact that the school’s relationship with parents is primarily guided by a customer/provider dynamic:
It is a business at the end of the day... we need the numbers. Professionally, time is so precious and if you are wanting to make a research project or do something with a class you need to prepare for... and then you have to deal with this paper trail... it’s always this covering your back... you just think ‘have faith’... I’m on it and I’ve done it and it’s all reported. It’s all done. It’s in hand. Or do you want me to send out those ten emails to ten different people to gather the data that’s already been done?

Alex (Head of English, Clarendon) described how, in the last school he taught at (also independent) ‘the attitude of the management was that the parents are customers... therefore they should be given what they want’. However, he feels Clarendon is ‘a bit more pleasant’, with the senior management being ‘better at keeping parents at arm’s length’. He suggests that this is enabled by two linked factors – reputation and institutional confidence. Whilst Clarendon has similar league table results to those of his previous school, Clarendon has always had a reputation for academic excellence. His former school doesn't have a solid reputation to build on and therefore is judged more cynically by parents, with management less in a position of strength:

I think the difference is... [the former school] wasn't a very good school, and they're trying extremely hard to bring it up and I think that in the background is always that thing of having to persuade parents that it is now a good school... that that school wasn't always a top school... whereas this one has been so I think there's more [confidence at Clarendon].

This suggests that institutional confidence can influence the behaviour of management teams in terms of how far they pander to or absorb parental pressures which may in turn affect teachers’ practice. Working in a confident and successful organisation may give people a stronger sense of professional status and agency. Alex feels this is true of Clarendon, and he believes this greater sense of professional status also explains why the management team there are more supportive of teachers when responding to parents:

I think quite literally they will say ‘you are paying for our expertise, and it is our opinion that this is what should happen. If you don’t like it, you need to consider that we’re the professionals and you’re not’.
Whilst he admits that this 'can be a bit variable' (in that this supportive approach from management is not displayed all of the time), his description of a management ethos based on professional trust of the teaching staff is shared by every one of the Clarendon teachers interviewed, who all (independently) used similar words to Alex when describing the management 'mantra' of getting 'good people and [letting] them do their own thing':

There has always been the principle here that you get good people and then trust them. (Paul, Clarendon)

I know that [the former Headmaster] his attitude was 'find the right people, employ them and leave them to get on with it' (George, Clarendon)

The previous Head here, he would operate on the principle you recruit good people and then you trust them to get on with it. I always think in institutions if you feel valued and the institution is happy then good things happen if people feel confident. (James, Clarendon)

Janet, a member of the Senior Management Team at Clarendon describes it as an intentional policy, stating 'SMT have discussed it... if you can inspire that confidence in parents, you can say to them “thank you for your input, we won't be doing what you suggested... run along”'.

Conclusion

The teachers interviewed, particularly at PAC and Maybank, experienced a considerable amount of pressure emanating from parents. They felt this had a direct impact on their ability to achieve their professional goals of ensuring academic achievement, students’ enjoyment of lessons, the promotion of independent learning dispositions and the depth and breadth of students’ understanding.

The teachers believe that this pressure stems from a conflict in goals, as Rachael (Maybank) described, ‘[for teachers] it’s more than about just getting them to pass the exam... [for parents] the focus is always put upon just the academics’. Parents’ focus on examination results and university entrance has led to teachers being compelled to inflate A Level predictions. This has not only impacted on teachers’ sense of autonomy and professional agency, it has also led to
teachers’ engaging in practices which go against their professional aims, namely ‘spoon-feeding’ and ‘teaching to the test’ which negatively impacts on students’ independent learning and the breadth and depth of their understanding. The focus on examination preparation also meant that teachers felt unable to go ‘off-topic’ in lessons, which some felt was integral to delivering enjoyable lessons. Teachers also feel the need to ‘cover their backs’ by providing extra support in the form of subject clinics and an increasing amount of paperwork documenting additional interventions.

Teachers from PAC and Maybank felt under more pressure than those at Clarendon and this could be due to greater support for staff from the Clarendon Senior Management Team. Whilst PAC and Maybank teachers feel ‘parents’ complaints are tolerated more than they should be’ (Diane, PAC), teachers at Clarendon believe the school is more confident in telling parents to ‘run along’ (Janet, Clarendon).

The differences in institutional confidence, and how this (and the relationship between schools and parents) is affected by different habituses will be discussed in the following chapter where suggestions are made as to why there are differences between the three case study schools.
In the analysis of data from the three case study schools, clear themes emerged detailing types of parental involvement and their effects on teachers’ practice and teachers’ ability to achieve their stated aims. In many respects, the findings were the same across all three schools, albeit to differing degrees. This chapter considers what differences and similarities there are in the responses of teachers from the different case study schools and attempts to explain these using a Bourdieusian lens.

The teachers interviewed described how parents appear to have become increasingly attainment orientated, specifically focused on the final grades their children will achieve. This has led to practices which have reduced teachers’ sense of professional agency. At PAC, this decreasing agency stems from teachers being pressured into predicting A Level grades based on parents’ wishes rather than teachers’ own professional judgements. At both PAC and Maybank, teachers’ time is increasingly taken up with providing extra ‘clinics’. In part this is to help the students achieve these ambitious predictions, but primarily it is viewed as a form of ‘back covering’ – to provide evidence that the teachers had done all they could to support the student in the event of the child not achieving the grades the parents had expected and complaints ensuing. Teachers at both schools were more likely to resort to didactic teaching methods, ‘spoon-feeding’ students, which resulted in feelings of frustration as the teachers stated that one of their key professional aims was to encourage independent learning in students.

Teachers at Clarendon, despite being more likely to dismiss parents’ requests, documented the amount of time taken to justify their professional decisions to parents, clearly expressed by James who described how ‘everyone spends a lot of time justifying what it is they’re doing rather than actually getting on and doing it’. This had engendered a feeling of low trust between parents and teachers.
The issue of decreasing trust was a common theme across all three schools. At PAC, teachers described how this had led to increased reporting to parents in the form of additional school reports and increased testing for data reporting purposes. Not only does report writing make considerable demands on their non-contact time but in administering tests to provide evidence for reports, teachers also have reduced class time. This makes it more difficult to introduce broader study, going beyond the curriculum. Teaching a broad curriculum and facilitating deep learning were key aims identified by most teachers interviewed, as was inculcating a love of learning. Whilst teachers considered assessment for formative purposes to be useful and effective, additional testing purely for the purposes of generating data to give to parents was considered unnecessary and counter-productive to promoting breadth of study and a love of learning. Furthermore, as described in detail by a number of teachers at PAC, the number of reports teachers had to write has led to a 'cut-and-paste' approach, reducing the individuality of the reports and therefore, paradoxically, the efficacy of the reporting process.

Whilst these effects were described by some teachers at all of the schools, they were experienced more often at PAC and Maybank. Teachers at Clarendon were more likely to talk about parents' involvement in discipline and behavioural matters. Whilst Aidan (Clarendon) believed the negative effects of parental involvement were experienced 'much less' at Clarendon than other places, he still felt frustrated:

Why don't [parents] roll over, get on side and say 'what [the child] did was judged to be unacceptable, we support the school...'. I shouldn't check what I am doing in a professional sense because of an interaction with a difficult set of individuals. Because it's potentially detrimental to the broader numbers, so there's that kind of shift in landscape stuff, isn't there.

James (Clarendon) similarly believed that it was parents’ involvement in disciplinary matters, rather than attainment and academic matters, that affected his work most:

Increasingly... it's quite difficult to punish children... you punish and the default action of an increasing number of parents is not to accept it but to challenge it and to immediately see it as unfair.
This had led to his work being 'more complex', taking 'a hell of a lot more energy'. Following the analysis of the data from the three case study schools, and having seen that the research suggested that Clarendon parents were more likely to intervene on pastoral rather than academic matters, I interviewed one teacher from one of the traditional 'Great Schools'. Whilst this would not give me the breadth of data to suggest this participant’s response to be fully representative of the school at which he worked, it gave another perspective. This teacher’s perceptions of the effect of parental pressure on his ability to achieve his aims concurred with the teachers at Clarendon. He reported:

The head here has said that we must think of ourselves as a five-star hotel. We need to give a five-star service. Parents do not involve themselves in academic matters... we are expected to be the boys’ social secretary or personal assistant.

Like a number of teachers at Clarendon, he stated parents had a lack of trust in how the school dealt with disciplinary issues.

As discussed earlier, the differences in the way the schools respond to parents could to some extent be a function of their institutional confidence. Clarendon has a long history and a strong reputation for academic excellence. However, this fails to explain the difference in parental behaviour. One explanation for differing parental behaviour and a school’s response could be the strength of a school’s position in the market. Chapter 2.3 described, using a model more usually applied to the higher education sector, how schools can be characterised as 'selectors' or 'recruiters'. It might seem axiomatic that schools which have to actively recruit pupils would be more likely to succumb to parents' demands, and more keenly feel the client/provider relationship. This was an assumption that Diane (PAC) felt had some credibility, conjecturing:

if the school is oversubscribed... then the head teacher wouldn’t have to put up with bolshie parents, whereas if a school is under-subscribed you would tolerate it for the sake of keeping the school running and keeping jobs available.
However, this would then suggest that the school/parent relationship would be similar at Clarendon and Maybank as both can be categorised as 'selector' schools. Both are highly oversubscribed and academically highly-achieving. Whilst it is true that the market position of the two schools is not equal (for example, one of the teachers at Maybank suggested that parents who had the choice between Maybank and Clarendon would invariably choose Clarendon), their position in the market is considerably more alike than either is to the position of PAC. Hence the results of the analysis do not appear to support the theory that the school/parent relationship can simply be explained by a school's position as either a 'selector' or a 'recruiter' as the situation in Maybank was more similar to PAC than Clarendon. Therefore, it is necessary to consider further what these two schools have in common, and what sets them apart from Clarendon.

During the interviews, teachers from all three schools discussed the demographic make-up and in particular the social class composition of their parent bodies which was similar for PAC and Maybank, and different for Clarendon. Parents at Clarendon, in the main, are professionals from the upper-middle classes who often have attended an independent school themselves. They are likely to have been university educated and be working in traditional professions such as medicine and law. Janet (Assistant Head, academic, Clarendon) describes the school's demographic make-up as similar to many of the 'Great Schools' listed in Chapter 2.3. She believes the parents are picking the school 'on some status'. In his interview, Paul (History, Clarendon), described the school’s parents as ‘definitely mostly university-educated... they’re working in law, finance, medicine... and they’ve got similar aspirations for their children’. These parents fit the description of Bernstein’s ‘old middle class’ and Bourdieu’s ‘inheritors’ of capital described in Chapter 2.

In contrast, parents at both Maybank and PAC are described by the teachers I interviewed as being part of the 'nouveau-riche' aspirational middle-class, unlikely to have had a university education and likely to be working in entrepreneurial businesses or in a trade such as building.
This description aligns with Bernstein’s ‘new middle-class’ described in Chapter 2. Barbara (Maybank) describes these parents as ‘pushier’ and in wanting to purchase a sense of status. She characterises the aspirational nature of these parents as follows:

[they are looking for] value for money, and some of them being able to say to their friends
‘my child is in the top set’. They have very high expectations of their children. Some of them are also giving up an awful lot to be able to afford the fees... it’s where you get more with parents with high expectations or ones who are struggling to do it but value the education, tend to be a bit more hands on.

Rachel (Maybank) felt that the demographic make-up of Maybank’s parent body was not what people would expect at an independent school. She feels that there is a preconception that all independent school parents are all similar to those at Clarendon; however she states this is not the case:

Everyone thinks ‘you’re an independent school, it must be really posh, and everyone must be wealthy... For the most part, no.... most people here don't have tons and tons of disposable income. The parents make the conscious decision to send their child to a fee-paying school and think ‘yeah we can afford to do this but we are sacrificing a lot’ .... [T]herefore because they are sacrificing so much they want a good return... it makes you laugh at parents’ evening and open evenings and concerts when there is wine and canapés floating around. One of my colleagues has said they've seen someone take a bottle of wine off the table and stick it in their bag. They probably feel they have a right to – ‘oh, we’ve paid for this so why not’?

Diane describes the parent body of PAC as ‘very much nouveau-riche’, and ‘middle-class in terms of income but not in terms of profession’:

I know there are tools you can use to define them, which classifies people like A, B, C... so traditionally one would have thought the parents here [would be] A, B... would be professional. But that's no longer the case because a lot of parents are not what we actually call professional because you could have all sorts of builders or plumbers who are very wealthy and they can afford to come here... many parents who would be sending girls here will not have gone to private school.
The following section explores these social class differences in the parental makeup of the schools and their differential impact on teachers’ practice in more depth. However, it is important to note that social class is not the only possible explanation for the differences found between the schools. As described above, the stronger institutional confidence exhibited at Clarendon (which results in the school management taking a much stronger line allowing teachers to keep parents ‘at arm’s length’) could well be a factor. Furthermore, there are differences in both the gender and ethnic makeup of the three schools that may also have had a differential impact on teachers’ practice. The following section uses just one lens through which to analyse the differences between the case study schools – that of social class.

9.1 The differing behaviour of middle-class parents: a Bourdieusian perspective

To arrive at an explanation of why different fractions of middle-class parents might behave differently, it is useful to analyse the findings through the Bourdieusian theory discussed in Chapter 2. This lens helps to illuminate how the different types of parents (the aspirational middle classes or ‘newcomers’ and the upper-middle classes) each come with different species of capital, which, combined with what parents expect of the school (and what they believe they are purchasing), affects their behaviour. Changes in parental behaviour also need to be seen in the context of economic change. The nature of social reproduction has changed considerably in recent years as the middle-classes have grown, the job market has shrunk as a result of the economic downturn, and an increasing number of students have higher examination results and university degrees. As described in Chapter 2, previously, aspirational middle-class parents could use their economic capital to purchase advantage, by buying into an institutional habitus which would help to ensure their children’s access to university. A university degree would in turn give their children a distinct advantage in the work-place and provide them with valued forms of cultural capital. However, the increased competition faced by an ever-expanding lower middle-class means that their children face a current situation where ‘being good is no longer good enough’ (Brown et al. 2011, p.85) generating a ‘middle-class at war with itself’ (ibid., p85). As
the competition increases, it could be argued that parents are more likely to intervene, making increasing demands on schools to ensure they still benefit from social reproduction. To explain this phenomenon further, we must look at the different species of capital possessed by the typical parent in each case study school.

Clarendon parents have considerably more of the kinds of capital that can be effectively leveraged in support of their children’s academic and occupational success than parents at PAC and Maybank. Firstly, this can be seen in the volume of their capital (for example, in terms of economic capital, parents at Clarendon are more likely to be more wealthy). But, more importantly, it is the variety of types of capital that they bring into the field (of education) that sets them apart. Clarendon parents, being more likely to have attended an independent school themselves, and belonging to the traditional professions, possess the forms of cultural and social capital that can help to secure social and economic advantage for their children and that new middle-class parents lack. Reay et al. (2001) argue, ‘schools and colleges [have] identifiable institutional habituses’ and these ‘habitues, no less than individual habituses, have a history and have been established over time’ (paragraph 1.3). They further suggest that institutional habituses are more rigid than those of individuals. This is important as it could help to explain why Clarendon parents are less likely to intervene in ways which work against teachers’ professional aims (remembering that this is one potential explanation, given the caveat above regarding possible alternative contributing factors such as gender and race).

Clarendon parents’ habitus is closely aligned to that of the school, and they come into the school field understanding and sympathetic to what Bourdieu (1987) described as the institution’s ‘doxa’ – the codes of conduct, the procedures and the intrinsic modes of behaviour expected by the agents in this field (teachers, pupils and parents). Whilst ‘habitus’ is the sum of capital resources and ways actors behave in the field, ‘doxa’ describes the inherent rules, values and expected behaviours actors collectively conform to. The habitus of Clarendon parents could

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23 It should be noted that there is some contestation in the academic literature as to the appropriateness of
also help to explain why, when they do intervene, they are more likely to make demands relating to disciplinary and pastoral matters rather than academic ones. Clarendon parents possess the kinds of social and cultural capital that are of value in securing social and economic advantage for their children. Their children are less dependent on academic success to achieve. Furthermore, the nature of the school (being highly academically selective) means that high attainment in terms of grades is to some extent taken for granted. Either way, future success in the job market is easier for children with access to the sorts of cultural and social capital possessed by their parents.

PAC and Maybank parents do not possess the same kinds of social and cultural capital. Their primary source of capital is economic. As Edgerton and Roberts (2014) explain, 'economic capital affords the time and resources for investment in the development of children's cultural capital, which is associated with future educational and occupational success and, in turn, contributes to the accumulation of economic capital... greater social capital... and further enhancement of one's other capital stocks' (p.195).

Conclusion

As noted above, whilst there is a range of possible factors that may have contributed to differences in teachers’ practices in the difference schools and their ability to achieve their
stated aims, the focus here has been on the impact of differences in the social class composition of the schools’ respective parental bodies. The pressure to reproduce economic capital has become more intense as the economic fortunes of the middle-classes have changed, particularly since the economic downturn (Dronkers et al. 2010; Ward 2014; Brown et al. 2011). What is more, economic capital is not guaranteed for the children of middle-class backgrounds. As Brown et al. (2011) argue, what money their parents have 'extends to paying college tuition fees, contributing to a first mortgage, or purchasing a new automobile ... it's inadequate to support a middle-class lifestyle.' (p.138). Previously, gaining a place at university would be enough to secure good employment. However, 'as many more graduate with a bachelor's degree... [companies] limit the pool of talent by targeting elite universities and ignoring graduates from less prestigious universities and colleges, who are written off as having subprime credentials' (ibid. p.93). PAC and Maybank parents are less likely than Clarendon parents to have the kinds of social capital which could ensure employment through professional societal networks. In addition, if there is a direct link between parents’ educational status and the future academic and employment success of their children (Eccles 2005; Blau and Duncan 1967), PAC and Maybank parents (who are not as likely as Clarendon parents to have been privately educated and be in possession of a degree) wish to break this link. They are highly aspirational and are concerned about 'the competitive nature of the current educational system and their uncertainty about doing enough to ensure their children's successful future' (Bodovski 2010, p.153).

In Chapter 8 it was suggested that Clarendon teachers (and the school management) are more able to resist the pressures of parental interventions and, as Alex stated, 'keep them at arms' length'. They suggest that this is because the institution has a high level of confidence. However, this may only be part of the reason. As described above, the habitus of Clarendon parents closely matches that of the school. They are 'in tune with values and practices in the educational settings' (Bodovski 2010, p.141) allowing for what Bourdieu defines as 'cohesion without
concept’. They are ‘fishes in water’ and, without realising it, fit naturally into the school habitus, understanding its doxa. Parents at PAC and Maybank do not necessarily have this cohesion, and could be described as ‘fishes out of water’. When there is variance between familial and institutional habitus, tension between the parents and the school can occur (Reay et al. 2001). Edgerton and Roberts (2014) suggest ‘people’s practices or actions – their behavioural repertoire – are the consequences of their habitus and cultural capital interacting within the context of a given field’ (p.195). It could be argued that, if there is a contrast in habituses, such actions may be more likely to cause tension.

Therefore, it is suggested that, rather than parents' interaction with schools (and schools’ compliance or resistance to their demands) being shaped purely by a school’s place in the market – how easy it is to recruit or select students – it is also the social class of the parent that has a considerable influence. This is in part due to greater anxiety on the part of certain middle-class fractions who now find themselves in a ‘positional conflict’ having to use whatever capital and influence they have to secure future success for their children (Brown et al. 2011). The findings reported in this chapter suggest that some parents are more anxious than others, exerting their influence more aggressively, generating tensions amongst parents, teachers and school leaders. These tensions are reported to impact negatively on teachers’ ability to achieve their professional aims, as described in Chapter 8. The differences in how anxious parents are seem to be drawn on social class lines, with the ‘new middle-class’ parents typical of PAC and Maybank more likely to interact more forcefully. I have suggested that this can be explained by two factors: first, that they need to ensure academic success for their children by exerting pressure on the school because they cannot rely on the kinds of social capital accessible to Clarendon parents; and second, that there is a disparity between the familial and institutional habituses which causes tension between parents and schools.
10 The Potential for Improvement? Teachers’ Perceptions of the Impact of the New A Levels

As described in Chapters 4 and 7, changes to assessments either through specifications or their overall structures, can have both positive and negative effects on teachers’ practice, through the phenomenon of assessment washback. In Section 7.4, I described the ways in which teachers felt assessments affected their ability to achieve their professional aims of supporting students to acquire the skills and dispositions of independent learning, teaching a broad curriculum, and creating enjoyable lessons. Considerable changes to England’s high-stakes examinations (GCSEs and A Levels) have been introduced over the last three years. This chapter analyses teachers’ perceptions of how these changes may facilitate, or continue to impede, their ability to realise their professional aims.

10.1 The context behind the A Level changes

A Level qualifications have, since their creation in 1951, been the ‘gold standard’ of the English education system (Hyde 2011). Despite many proposals for their abolition over a number of decades (with baccalaureate style exams and post-16 Diplomas both advocated numerous times24) they stayed untouched for fifty years. However, by the late 1990s, it was clear that a growing number of post-16 students were disenfranchised from the system. Despite participation in post-16 education growing, from 50 to 70 per cent of 16-19 year olds between 1979 and 1997, one third of all students left formal education without passing any qualifications at all (Hill 2011). The New Labour Government of 1997-2001 sought to address this problem by undertaking the biggest change in the A Level system since its creation. Curriculum 2000 introduced a modular system, with students taking AS Level units after one year, followed by further ‘A2’ units the following year. Units could be resat, and there was a considerable amount of choice over units and topics to be examined open to students and teachers. These reforms

24 For a detailed history of the A level and the suggested alternatives since its inception, see Hodgson and Spours (1999); Hodgson and Spours (2003); Hyde (2011).
were designed both to reduce the drop-out rate in post 16-19 education and support a government target of at least 50% of all young people attending university.

Whilst the reforms were followed by an increase in university attendance of 25% (Universities UK 2011), there were many who believed that the changes had resulted in grade inflation, weakening the educational value of the examinations (Birkhead 2007; de Burgh et al. 2007). This view was shared by Michael Gove, the incoming Secretary of State of Education following the election of the 2010 Conservative-led coalition government. His department immediately set out to address the criticisms of Curriculum 2000. The 2010 white paper, *The Importance of Teaching*, outlined an aim (achieved by 2013) to end the possibility of resitting units. Gove's letter to the examinations regulator, Ofqual, in 2013 documented his criticisms of the system:

> Current A levels do not always provide the solid foundation that students need to prepare them for degree-level study and for vocational education. The modular nature of the qualification and repeated assessment windows have contributed to many students not developing deep understanding or the necessary skills to make connections between topics.  
> (Gove 2013)

In this letter he outlined how A Levels were to change. The qualification would become linear, with units examined after two years. The smaller AS Level qualification was to be 'uncoupled' from the A Level, and universities would have a much greater say in the content of A Level specifications.

These changes were implemented, and all A Levels have since been reformed according to similar principles: a linear two-year course; terminal summative written exams; and no coursework element except where deemed to be absolutely necessary for practical subjects. However, the launch of new exams for individual subjects has been staggered into three phases. This has led to a situation where teachers are delivering (and students are undertaking) both old-style (legacy) AS and A Levels in some subjects, alongside new decoupled AS or A Level courses in others. Confusion, anxiety and pressure associated with the gradual roll-out of the
new courses has been widely reported (Morrison 2014; Chapman 2015; Adams 2015) and these feelings were similarly expressed by teachers participating in this research. Barbara, a history teacher at Maybank and also the examinations officer, expressed her frustration that ‘they didn’t do it all in one go, which would be so much easier for schools to cope with than do it on the stagger thing, which is an absolute nightmare’.

10.2 A Level delivery at the case study schools

The three-year schedule for the introduction of new courses means that the teachers who participated in this research were at different stages. Many were giving their views on how their practice might be supported (or not) having just seen their new syllabus - but not yet having actually taught it. Some had students who had already sat the new decoupled AS Level and students who were one-year into the full A Level course.

Phase one subjects comprise English (Language and Literature), History, Sciences (Biology, Chemistry and Physics), Psychology, Art and Design, Economics, Sociology, Business and Computer Science. The majority of participants in this research teach phase one subjects, and a wide range of subjects were represented across all three case-study schools. Subjects represented comprise Art, Business, English, History, Psychology and the Sciences. Teaching of phase one subjects began in September 2015 and, at the time of interviewing, these teachers had taught one year of the course.

Phase two subjects comprise Ancient Languages (classical Greek and Latin), Dance, Drama and Theatre, Geography, Modern Foreign Languages, Music, Physical Education and Religious Studies. Teaching of these subjects began in September 2016, and, at the time of the interviews, the specifications had been approved and teachers were preparing for first teaching. Three teachers were in this position, two teaching Modern Foreign Languages and one teaching

25 Information taken from DfE (2017)
Religious Studies. There was one teacher from each of the case study schools teaching a phase two subject.

Phase three includes all other subjects, and in this research involved teachers of Mathematics and Design and Technology (DT). I interviewed two Mathematics teachers at Maybank, and one DT Teacher. It should be noted that, at Maybank, DT is not offered at A Level; therefore, the DT teacher spoke more generally about his perception of linear courses. At PAC, I interviewed one Mathematics teacher and one DT teacher. No phase three teachers were interviewed at Clarendon.

The case study schools have responded differently to the implementation of the new A Level. At PAC, they have continued to teach the legacy subjects, with AS leading to A Level, in the same modular way as before. At the same time, they have begun teaching the new linear-style courses. Rebecca, a History teacher there, has found this overlap ‘challenging’, but is was considered the best response to the changes, as their students, academically lower attaining than at both Maybank and Clarendon, have always thrived through a modular approach with the possibility of resits. With the new A Levels, some subjects at PAC are still offering decoupled AS Levels; however, most are only offering the full two-year A Level course.

Both Maybank and Clarendon have responded by making all subjects, legacy and new, linear. This has resulted in students of legacy courses taking both their AS and A2 examinations at the end of two years with little opportunity to re-sit. Rachael revealed that teachers at Maybank were feeling ‘nervous’ about this decision and ‘a bit sorry for the kids’, but ultimately accepted the decision as a pragmatic ‘short-term’ solution. Janet, at Clarendon, was more emphatic about the benefits of enforcing a linear delivery on the modular legacy subjects, stating ‘we’ve always known they’ll be better at French after two years than one, they’re better at critically assessing a play after two years than one.’ She acknowledges that Clarendon could make this decision due to the highly academic nature of the student intake: ‘I think we’re very lucky here. We’re very selective’.
10.3 The impact of new A Level courses on teachers’ ability to realise their professional aims

As detailed in Section 6.3, the teachers interviewed for this research identified five main professional aims they wished to achieve through their work. These were: to ensure the academic progress of their students; to ensure students enjoyed their lessons; to inculcate independent learning dispositions and skills to equip students for life beyond school; to promote a deep, rather than surface, learning approach to ensure students have an understanding of their subject and an ability to apply this understanding across different contexts; and to provide an experience which promotes a love of learning in students, making them ‘life-long learners’.

Chapters 7 and 8 detailed how managerial and market-based forms of accountability have placed barriers in the way of teachers achieving these aims. This has led to a change in teachers’ practice, where teachers still try to achieve their aims but at some considerable cost to themselves - specifically in terms of time, agency and a feeling of diminished professional status. Chapter 4 detailed how the design of assessments, through washback, has been shown to both positively and (in the main) negatively affect teachers’ practice. This research sought to find out whether teachers felt that the new A Level system would facilitate, or inhibit, their ability to achieve their aims.

10.3.1 The impact of the new A level system on students’ academic progress

The phase one teachers, who have already taught one year of the new courses, reported that they have already seen an improvement in students’ progress and that they thought this was a result of the increased time available for teaching through the linear system. Previously, teaching time was disrupted due to students being out of lessons for a large part of January, May and June whilst they sat modular exams. In addition, the time taken to complete past and practice papers to prepare the students for these examinations had further limited the time available for teaching. These pressures were documented in my pilot study (Hyde 2015). Alex
(Clarendon), believes that the legacy A Level structure, introduced with the Curriculum 2000 reforms, should be seen as a minor ‘blip’ in educational policy, and that the new system is, in fact, a return to a system that had been successful for decades:

It’s perfectly natural to have a two-year course... I think [the new A Levels] are definitely better but I think you’ll find a range of opinion about that... some people are saying ‘why can’t we go back to the good old days of AS’... We did A Levels for fifty years before that so I don’t really understand, but it’s just people treating the immediate past as if it’s always been that way. To me linear is great. You get more time... I think it’s definitely better.

Maggie (PAC) has also seen her teaching time increase as her students have had a higher attendance rate towards the end of their Year 12 - a time that traditionally was compromised as students were either still taking AS examinations, or lacked motivation to start the new Year 13 modules:

It’s always a dead time from coming back from AS’s until the end of this term... it’s always been a real nightmare... The beauty of this is the girls that we’ve got now are taking it right through to A Level so we’ve had almost no absence. They’ve been very conservative about the number of open days they’ve gone to. It’s been a real bonus... the two years is so much better. It will be so much better once it’s embedded, I think.

Maggie also believed the system would work better if students were not allowed to take the (decoupled) AS examination. She has had to teach two different courses concurrently, and this has impacted negatively on her time, increasing her overall workload.

Jessica (PAC) is an MFL teacher and therefore has yet to begin teaching the new course. She, too, believes that the two-year linear course will help students to make better academic progress by providing more teaching time, stating ‘I very much welcome not losing them for several weeks of study leave in Year 12. I think that will make a huge difference to the girls’ ability to produce French spontaneously’.
However, not all teachers were convinced that the linear structure of the course would support students’ academic progress. Both Phil, a Mathematics teacher at PAC, and Dean, a DT teacher at Maybank, were concerned that students would lose their motivation with no mid-point assessment to aim for, with Dean positing that ‘it gets very hard to motivate [during the] first year fully because they know they’ve got two years’. Phil accepts that he will have more time to teach, but worries he will lose the opportunity for formative assessment the AS gave him as a ‘kind of position, statement, half-way through’. However, it should be noted that neither of these teachers are teaching the new linear course yet – indeed they are both phase three subject teachers (with Dean not teaching A Level at all at Maybank). Alex, who has been teaching the new course for a year, dismisses these concerns:

They think their pupils won’t do any work if they don’t have exams to work to, which I find very odd. They just put children through a two-year GCSE course but now suddenly believe that if they have to do the same for A Level, they won’t do any work, which is bizarre.

Furthermore, he feels that schools are missing the opportunities provided by a two-year linear course if they still continue to offer the decoupled AS, and believes that schools doing this (such as PAC for certain subjects), are doing so ‘driven by fear [of] accountability to parents’, which highlights the potential for market-based accountability measures to limit the benefits of positive washback.

There is some variety across the three case study schools in teachers’ perceptions of the impact of the new system on the academic achievement of their students. Three of the teachers at Maybank share a concern that the linear system will impact negatively on schools with lower-attaining academic cohorts. Howard shows little concern regarding the introduction of the new courses despite a lack of past papers and uncertainty over content, as Maybank has ‘bright pupils’. Both Victor and Barbara are also concerned that state schools will not have teachers with the ability to teach the wide range of topics now included in Mathematics A Level. The teachers at PAC, which has a comprehensive intake at Sixth-Form, recognise that the exams will
be more difficult, and that this may result in lower attainment for their students in terms of lower grades. However, they equally believe that the achievement of their students, in terms of their academic knowledge and ability, will increase. Diane (Business Studies, PAC) welcomes her subject becoming more academically challenging for students. Rebecca (History, PAC) believes that the increased challenge will improve the quality of the ‘education and learning’. Both separate the academic progress of the students from the grades they might achieve, believing that ‘grade inflation’ needed to be addressed to ensure a wider distribution of grades and more differentiation for ‘brighter’ students:

I think there needs that spreading out. The number of A*[s] is quite ridiculous when you actually think of the calibre of the students. That’s probably been a bit unfair, but in terms of there shouldn’t be that many A*s... the exam system has been somewhat flawed over the years whereas now hopefully with the reforms it will open that difference again. (Rebecca, PAC)

I think I do believe that, from the students’ point of view, the system that we’re leaving has been better for them to get better grades... If my students get all Cs where in the past they would have got all As, as long as all students in the whole country are getting Cs then I’m happy with that... Maybe that’s what should happen because maybe too many students were getting falsely high results. (Diane, PAC)

George, at Clarendon, similarly believes the system has never supported differentiation in assessment outcomes, neither acknowledging the achievement of ‘weaker’ students nor that of the most academically ‘able’.

I’ve got friends who work in schools with very unable children who say ‘it isn’t fair that so and so works and applies himself for three years and okay they don’t get a GCSE’ whereas I’ve got a friend who is an admissions tutor at Cambridge and he sort of pulls his hair and says ‘We’ve got all these people coming in with As and A*s and you can’t tell one from the other.

10.3.2 The impact of new A Levels on students’ enjoyment of lessons

A number of teachers, across all three of the case study schools, commented that they felt that studying the new A levels was a more enjoyable experience for students. Indeed, only one
teacher had a contrary view. Those teachers who were already delivering the new courses commented that their professional aim to ensure that lessons were engaging and enjoyable was being supported by the two-year linear structure of the qualification. This was giving them more time to ‘get off-piste and do things that are interesting’ (Alex, Clarendon).

Sophie, an MFL teacher at Maybank, felt that the education system in England comprehensively worked against students’ enjoyment, describing the pressure on them as resulting in ‘burnout, depression, at a very young age’. When asked whether she felt the new linear courses would relieve some of this pressure, she disagreed:

> No. [It will] make it worse. My daughter is in the Lower Sixth and she’s stressed beyond belief because she doesn’t know what is going to happen... and we don’t either!... I think that has put a lot of very young people into serious distress and I don’t think we do as schools, as society, enough to make sure that our children and young people are well prepared to deal with those uncertainties.

Perhaps Sophie’s divergent view comes from her background in learning, and teaching, in a continental European context with fewer high-stakes examinations, although another reason she felt children experience increased stress is that there is now no longer the chance to retake modules to improve their marks. Similarly to George (Clarendon), who, as discussed in Chapter 7, felt that an opportunity was missed to include teachers’ input in the formulation of the new examinations, Sophie feels frustrated that the government have ‘ignored the assessment they do on the continent’ and this would have been an auspicious time to ‘try to get our A Levels a bit closer to the European framework’. Sophie feels that the effect of the increased pressure on students extends beyond its impact on students enjoying her lessons. She feels that this pressure impacts negatively on their achievement as academic progress can be limited ‘if a young person already thinks they’re failing’.

Whilst Sophie believes that ‘the stress will increase’, Anne (PAC), who has been teaching the new Art A Level for a year, shares the view of other phase one teachers that the linear structure
means that, for students, ‘the pressure is off in Year 12 and that’s brilliant’. She feels that the increased time given by the linear structure is allowing students to develop their work more and become more immersed in their subject. She believes this has made them ‘really engaged in the modules, [they’ve] really enjoyed them’. Other phase one teachers shared this opinion, but Anne spoke with particularly passionate language, repeatedly describing the changes as ‘brilliant’, stating ‘we love it’.

Anne is a teacher of a practical, creative, subject in a school that has a comprehensive Sixth Form. Janet (History, Clarendon), thinks that students at her, highly academic, school are also enjoying their studies more. This is due to the exams being, as she sees it, more academically rigorous. Rather than causing more pressure and decreasing enjoyment, her students are ‘ambitious... clever and hard-working’ and feel satisfaction that the new courses provide more challenge, fewer ‘quick fixes or easy ways’. This perception of increased rigour and challenge was also noted by Anne, who felt that her girls were enjoying this challenge. Beyond pure enjoyment, she felt that it was also teaching them valuable life-skills in resilience.

10.3.3 The impact of new A Levels on independent learning dispositions and skills

The teachers I interviewed felt that the new A Level system provides more opportunities for developing a range of particular independent learning dispositions. Independent learning has been a core initiative at PAC for many years, where students from Year 7 are trained in ‘the 4Rs’ – Resilience, Resourcefulness, Reciprocity and Reflectiveness. These concepts are embedded in the culture of teaching and learning at the school, and teachers have reported that these dispositions are successfully inculcated in students during Years 7, 8 and 9. However, when students undertake GCSE and A Level examination courses, teachers at PAC believe they fall back to rote-learning as teachers feel pressured to didactically ‘spoon-feed’, undermining their previous success in embedding the 4Rs. This pressure was documented in my pilot research at PAC (Hyde 2015). It is not a surprise, therefore that, whilst teachers from all three case study schools felt that promoting a disposition to independent learning was an important professional
aim, teachers at PAC were particularly vocal in discussing the impact of the reformed A Levels on the development of independent learning dispositions, doing so in terms of the 4Rs.

Anne (PAC) feels that the increased challenge of the new A Level Art course, combined with the greater amount of class time available to work on non-examined pieces, is giving students more opportunity to take ‘imaginative leaps and risk’ and, equally, to ‘have the time to fail’ as they are not expected to submit work for high-stakes examinations in Year 12. Despite the challenging course potentially leading to ‘low points’ as students had to sustain their work over two years, rather than one, Anne felt this was ‘part of the character building’ she felt was vital in developing ‘their diversity of skill sets’. It is important here to note that the Art Department at PAC are not offering the AS course, and this was considered to be a caveat in the benefits Anne describes.

Anne also spoke of the increased potential for encouraging resourcefulness in students which she felt was enabled by the increased time the students have to ‘go off to exhibitions and galleries... carry out research, which is important’. Maggie (Psychology, PAC) is still teaching the AS to some students, which limits the additional time the new structure brings, but she also felt there was greater opportunity for resourcefulness in students due to there being no model answers, and questions which are designed so that they can’t be ‘practised’. Victor (Maybank) sees a similar opportunity for promoting these ‘higher level, kind of solving problems’ skills when he starts teaching the new A Level.

10.3.4 The impact of the new A Level on promoting deep learning

For three main reasons, the new A Level was considered by teachers from all of the case study schools to provide more opportunities for deep, rather than surface, learning in students. Teachers felt that the linear course structure, the reduced possibility for spoon-feeding and teaching to the test, and the new content of the syllabi all supported a deep learning approach.
The greater opportunity for research described by Anne, above, was also considered by Anne to facilitate more in-depth study of a subject. Maggie agrees, suggesting that the two-year course allows students to consider concepts in more depth as they mature, academically, over two years. Janet (Clarendon) similarly believes that she is seeing this even with, as she puts it, the ‘faux linear’ courses they are offering (teaching all legacy AS and A levels after two years). Spending two years teaching a subject allows teachers to think about developing independent learning skills rather than simply preparing for exams, pushing ‘the pragmatism aside a bit longer’.

As described in Chapter 7, it seems that the new courses are being examined in such a way that the ‘tick-box’ mark schemes introduced with the Curriculum 2000 reforms which promoted teaching to the test (Hyde 2011) are no longer applied. Rather than learning exact answers to specific questions, students are being expected to understand concepts and learn skills, with examinations testing how they are able to apply these skills. Whilst it could be said that any new examination, where there is not an extensive back-catalogue of past papers to revise from, will discourage surface learning, the new courses include a greater amount of content, much of which will not be examined. As students and teachers do not know what will be on the examination paper, they must teach the breadth of the syllabus, but also the skills required by students to apply their knowledge to whatever the paper brings up. Maggie, as noted in Chapter 7, referred to this when describing students’ responses to the new AS Level examination sat in 2016, stating that ‘all students who had been practising a standard question were thrown’.

Howard (Maybank), shares the belief that the new courses foster a deeper learning approach and feels that they support what he has been trying to do previously, stating ‘we were trying to make them put it altogether and not treat it as compartmentalised... to get away from this idea of spoon-feeding them mark schemes’.

Rebecca (PAC) believes the same will be the case with A Level History, and also thought this was due to the new content of the syllabus:
They’re expected to know a lot more content... it’s not bite-size learning [where you] learn that, you do an exam and you never have to think about it again. It’s encouraging that idea of breadth, of its challenge of the scope of the material, they’ll be able to see themes throughout it... [to] go away and do further reading... I think it will encourage it.

Barbara, the Exams Officer at Maybank, who also teaches Mathematics (and therefore is not yet delivering the new course but has seen the new specification), believes that the course content will test whether students have a deeper understanding of the subject and its application, rather than focusing on technical accuracy as it does currently. This will reward those students who can apply their knowledge in a broad range of contexts, giving them the highest grades:

From what we have seen, it’s more who can apply the mathematics that they know and think more about it rather than looking for accuracy. You’ve still got to be good at mathematics to get an A*, don’t get me wrong, but sometimes you get kids who are really good mathematicians but don’t get the A* because they’ve made one too many careless mistakes in doing it, whereas the new linear one, I get the impression, is going more towards actually who can apply what they know. So the grades should show who are the better mathematicians hopefully.

10.3.5 The impact on the new A Level on students’ love of learning

Although many teachers reported students enjoying the new courses more, they spoke very little about how it would support their aim of inculcating in students a love of learning in general, and thereby fostering a commitment to life-long learning. However, Anne (PAC) did suggest that the new Art course was enabling students to be more able to review, evaluate and continually refine their work – capabilities which follow the ‘reflective practitioner’ model a number of teachers spoke approvingly of when they discussed the importance of being life-long learners (as detailed in Chapter 6, section 6.3).

A number of teachers felt anxiety over the introduction of the new courses. Partly, that was due both to the number of different changes all happening at once and, conversely, the fact that the implementation of new courses was being staggered over three years. The lack of preparation
time given by the examination boards was considered to be a significant cause of pressure, and
this was affecting teachers differently depending on their subject:

Listening to some of my colleagues, especially seeing as they’re only getting their syllabuses
and they’re teaching in September, that’s not much time to prepare... they haven’t been given
enough time to settle down. So I think some departments it’s going to be quite stressful for
them, mathematics will be fine because mathematics is mathematics. (Barbara, Maybank)

Rebecca (History, PAC) felt anxiety because of the ‘uncertainty with the new reforms’, noting
that textbooks have only been issued three months before she had to start teaching the course.
This was felt to be particularly stressful for history teachers as theirs is a subject with such a wide
content base. This pressure is increased because she felt a professional duty to be as prepared
as possible, stating ‘we want to not just be competent, we wanted to be secure’.

Taking a more positive stance, Howard (Maybank) felt that the new courses provided an
opportunity to break away from negative washback practices such as teaching to the test,
because of the lack of support literature from the examination boards rather than despite it:

I know a lot of teachers are very concerned about lack of past papers and things like that for
the new courses and so on, and how are they going to be able to work out what they need to
know. But I think we have the confidence to say ‘actually, this is just chemistry, it’s the same
old chemistry, we know how it should be taught, let’s teach how we think it should be taught
and we can worry about exam questions later’.

The confidence shown in his approach was fairly unique, and perhaps exposes a difference
between schools with a highly academic cohort - where there is a greater expectation, and less
concern about, students‘ attainment - and those whose students are likely to find the new
courses considerably more difficult.

**Conclusion**

The A Level system has been significantly reformed since 2015: all specifications have been
rewritten, most being more academically demanding; all subjects have become linear, with
terminal examinations after two years, and; resits have been abolished. The teachers interviewed for this research reported confusion and anxiety over the changes, particularly because the introduction had been staggered over three years, and at the same time as considerable changes to the GCSE examination system. However, the teachers interviewed for this research spoke, overwhelmingly, very positively about the new A Level assessments. All of the teachers were able to describe ways in which the new system would support them in achieving the professional aims outlined in Chapter 6.

Teachers from all schools felt that the academic progress of students was supported by the new assessments, and teachers of phase one subjects who had already taught one year of the course reported that progress had improved due to the linear structure of the course. This had provided more teaching time as students were not missing lessons for modular exams. Neither was teaching time taken up by giving students past or practice papers. A number of teachers also felt that the more challenging academic nature of the specifications, coupled with the lack of resits, would tackle the grade inflation they perceived had occurred over recent years.

All bar one of the teachers interviewed felt that students would be more likely to enjoy their lessons as the lack of examinations in the first year of sixth-form study meant that there was more time for an interesting, broader programme of study. Teachers who already had students working on the courses reported students feeling under less pressure. Furthermore, the academic challenge offered by the new courses was considered to be enjoyable for students.

Teachers report that the lack of past papers and a less prescriptive syllabus (of which not all topics would be examined) had removed the ability to ‘teach to the test’. They felt that this then supported them in their aim to foster independent learning dispositions and give the students a deeper and broader understanding of their subject. The teachers also felt that their aim to promote deep learning was supported by the linear structure of the course as there was more teaching and learning time. Finally, whilst teachers spoke little about how the new courses might engender a love of life-long learning, one did suggest that the new art A Level course would build
skills of reflection as students had more time to refine their work. This ‘reflective practitioner’
approach was considered important by teachers who believed in ‘life-long learning’.

None of the teachers interviewed had seen students go through the full linear course. Indeed,
some had not started teaching the new specifications. Therefore, whilst the teachers
overwhelmingly suggest the changes are positive, the data analysed here can only give us their
initial perceptions.
11 Conclusion

Through a case study qualitative interview-based approach, this research aimed to investigate independent school teachers' professional aims and how these are supported or compromised by managerial and market based accountability measures. The research centred on three case study schools each representing a different type of independent school: a 'great' school, an academic 'selector' school and a 'recruiter' school. There is currently a dearth of research on the effects of accountability measures on the independent school sector. If, as was suggested by the pilot study upon which the research reported here builds, market-based accountability in the form of fee-paying parents acts as the main barrier to teachers fulfilling their professional aims, a form of 'Goodhart's law' (which suggests when measures become the primary target they cease to be effective) is enacted. Moreover, as O'Neill (2013) suggests, the 'perverse effects' of accountability measures may mean 'life chances are... at stake' (p.5).

This research is based on the analysis of interviews with 23 teachers across three schools. There are over 2,600 independent schools in the UK, therefore the limited scale of this research means the findings must be treated with caution and should be used as the basis for further research into the sector.

This chapter summarises the findings of this research, specifically: the professional aims of the teachers interviewed; how their ability to achieve these aims is affected by accountability measures; how and why this differs between schools, and; the impact of recent major changes to the examination system on teachers' practice. Finally, the policy implications of these results are considered, with suggestions given to how accountability reforms might help independent school teachers to, rather than hinder them from, achieving their professional aims.

Teachers across all three case study schools identified clear professional aims which they felt were imperative to achieve in their work. These aims clearly aligned with their primary motivations for entering the teaching profession and, unsurprisingly, their beliefs about what
makes ‘good’ teaching and ‘good’ teachers. Nearly all of the teachers began by stating that pupil progress was a key goal. This was articulated in terms of students knowing more at the end of a lesson or unit than at the beginning. It was also referred to in terms of achieving good grades. However, whilst this was the aim articulated first by most of the teachers, they all continued to talk, at greater length, about the importance of ensuring that students enjoy their lessons. This correlated closely with the main intrinsic motivation for teachers entering the profession – their own love and enjoyment of their subject.

Further to the two principal professional aims of ensuring pupil progress and enjoyment came three further aims: to develop in students dispositions and transferable skills for use in their lives after school (primarily a disposition for independent learning); to ensure that students had a ‘deep’ rather than shallow understanding of concepts (specifically being able to apply knowledge to a range of circumstances rather than learning by rote), and; to instil in students a general love of learning and education, making students life-long learners.

These aims were placed within the context of a conviction in the value of the pastoral dimension of teaching, taking an empathetic approach ensuring that students felt nurtured and safe. These concerns, along with the emphasis the teachers placed on their intrinsic motivations for entering the profession, correspond with the conceptualisation of teaching as a ‘virtuous’ profession, one which is routed in ideology, values and ethics (Socket 1993; Carr 2000; Pfadenhauer 2006; Cribb & Gewirtz 2015; Biesta 2015). Both Hoyle (2001) and Pfadenhauer (2006) suggest that professionalism understood in this way requires trust between professionals (the teachers) and their clients (in this case, parents and students). The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 details how the educational landscape has changed since the ‘golden days’ of teacher professionalism in the 1960s. Teachers are now working in a context of reduced trust, intensified by negative media and successive governments’ attempts at ‘professionalising’ teachers through top-down, low-trust accountability methods. The reduction of trust has corresponded with an increased intensity of managerial and market-based accountability measures designed to ‘improve
outcomes for all students’ (Barber 2004), including a stricter inspection regime, the publication of examination results data in ‘league tables’ which rank schools, and the empowerment of parents as stakeholders to whom schools must be accountable.

In the state sector, the literature suggests that these accountability measures have negatively impacted on teachers’ ability to achieve their professional aims. Examples of this include target-setting leading to negative washback in the form of ‘teaching to the test’ and narrowing the curriculum (Pan 2009; Longo 2010). It has also been suggested that the intensification of target setting has led to the fabrication of data (Popham 2001). The pressure to meet targets and perform for inspections and observations has led to higher levels of stress, increased workloads and ‘teacher burnout’ as teachers strive to still realise their aims (Perryman et al. 2011; Bailey & Colley 2014; Courtney 2014).

Concurring with the findings of research carried out in the state maintained sector on the implications of the intensification of accountability measures, teachers from all three case study schools described how they felt the profession had changed over their careers, the decreasing amount of esteem in which teachers were held and the trust they commanded. The independent school teachers participating in this research described experiencing the same tensions as those experienced by state school teachers. However, with the exception of one member of staff at Clarendon (the member of the Senior Management Team responsible for academic matters), the driver of these tensions was not felt to be managerial accountability. Rather, the greatest barrier to these teachers realising their professional aims is felt to be market-based accountability and more specifically pressure from fee-paying parents. Teachers report being able to achieve their aims, but only by giving an increasing amount of their own time, as Alex (Clarendon) states, ‘the workload grows every year... lots of things are added and nothing really is ever taken away’.

However, the extent to which parental pressure affected their work was not similar across the three case study schools. One reason why the pressures of market accountability might differ between schools could be their place in the market. Using the ‘selector/recruiter’ distinction
Waring et al. (2003) have applied to pre- and post-1992 universities, one might expect that oversubscribed ‘selector’ independent schools would feel less parental pressure than ‘recruiter’ schools, as their relationship with their clients (parents) is less subservient. However, the research reported here suggests this is not the case. Teachers at Maybank, an academic ‘selector’ school experienced the same, considerable, amount of pressure from parents to ensure that students achieved (often unrealistic) high grades as the teachers at PAC, a ‘recruiter’ school. In contrast teachers at Clarendon, a school with a similarly academic intake as Maybank yet with a longer history and a habitus akin to the ‘Great Schools’ of the 1861 Clarendon Report, experienced less pressure from parents relating to academic matters. Rather, they reported pressure from parents regarding pastoral issues – with parents more likely to question school discipline procedures.

Whilst it is recognised that other factors not considered here, such as differences in the gender and ethnic makeup of the schools, might also be in play, one possible explanation of why there is a similarity in the way teachers at PAC and Maybank experience the effects of market accountability, and why the responses of Clarendon teachers differed, can be found by looking at the data through a Bourdieusian lens.

Parents of Clarendon students are, generally, from the upper middle, or professional classes. They most likely attended an independent school of a similar nature and are university educated. They understand, and share, the school’s habitus and doxa. It is suggested that when the habitus of actors closely aligns with that of the field (in this case the school), they are ‘fishes in water’, achieving what Bourdieu describes as ‘cohesion without concept’. This leads to less intervention and less tension between parties (Bodovski 2010). Furthermore, in addition to economic capital, Clarendon parents are in possession of the kinds of cultural and social capital that give them an advantage when it comes to reproducing their class privilege. Their cultural capital supports their understanding of, and alignment with, the school’s habitus and doxa. As the students at Clarendon are highly academic, their examination success may be assumed. However, a lack of
intervention on these matters may also be explained by parents feeling that, whatever results their children get, they have the social capital and connections to ensure their child’s future success.

The same cannot be said for the majority of parents at PAC and Maybank. They are more likely to be of the aspirational lower middle classes, and less likely to belong to the traditional professions or to have themselves attended an independent school and university. They are relying on their economic capital to ensure their child’s future success, therefore intervening more aggressively as clients in the marketplace. This intervention has intensified over recent years as the competition for university places (and graduate jobs) has increased. Good grades and a university degree are ‘no longer good enough’ (Brown et al. 2011, p.85) and the result is a ‘middle-class at war with itself’ (ibid., p85) as parents use what capital they can to guarantee success. With limited access to the kinds of social and cultural capital required to gain educational - and hence future social and economic advantage - for their children, parents at PAC and Maybank use their position as customers to demand every advantage they can.

The educational assessment literature has identified the effect that changing assessments can have on teachers’ practice, with the phenomenon described as either ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ washback. The literature suggests that the Curriculum 2000 assessment model has created ‘negative’ washback, promoting practices that work against teachers’ professional aims. Examples of this 'negative' washback include the reduction of the possibility to achieve depth and breadth in subject teaching, and didactic ‘spoon-feeding’ or ‘teaching to the test’. This is also the experience of many of the teachers participating in this research. Changes to assessment models, coupled with the changing context in which they work (one characterised by lower trust and greater pressure from managerial and market-based accountability measures) have seen teachers being able to achieve their professional aims only by giving more of their own time. Teachers describe how changes to the profession have had a considerable effect on their sense of autonomy and professional agency.
The last three years have seen significant changes to high-stakes assessments in England. A Level examinations have become linear, with the removal of modules and opportunities to re-sit, specification content is more detailed, and coursework has been reduced as most subjects are assessed through terminal written examinations. As the new specifications have been phased in over three years, this research questioned teachers at different stages of the transition. Whilst some teachers were in their second year of teaching the new A Level specification and had students who had already taken the new AS Level examination, others were in the first year of teaching their syllabus or had only just seen the approved specification for teaching the following year. Therefore, whilst the findings are in some cases based on experience, in others this data only provides insights on teachers’ speculative perceptions of whether the new assessments might make it easier (or not) for them to achieve their professional aims.

It is suggested that the new A Level is supporting (in the case of phase one and two teachers) or will support (in the case of phase three teachers) the teachers’ aim to ensure students’ academic progress. Teachers feel this is because the linear nature of the course, with fewer disruptions from modular exams, provides more teaching time. Whilst a minority of the teachers felt some anxiety over the subject content, and whether it would adversely affect the progress of less-able students, the teachers at PAC (who in this research taught the least academically able students, or a greater mix of ability) saw this as a challenge that could well improve the quality of teaching and learning. It was also felt that the changes would address grade inflation.

All bar one of the teachers felt that the new specifications would lead to students enjoying their lessons more as the two year course gave additional time for them to explore their subjects in more depth and ‘go off piste’. The only teacher who disagreed with this was concerned by the uncertainty of the changes and felt this might make students more anxious in the short term. However, the majority of teachers reported students feeling less stressed about their studies. The two year course also was felt, particularly in creative subjects, to enable students to take more risks and engage more imaginatively with their courses, supporting the teachers’ aim to
make students more independent. The linear structure of the new courses also allowed more time to promote a deep learning approach, which is also supported by the lack of past papers as there is less opportunity for ‘teaching to the test’. This benefit could well be lost in the future, when a number of years’ past papers eventually become available. There was little evidence in either direction of the new specifications affecting students’ love of learning and inculcating a love of life-long learning beyond the perception that students were enjoying their studies more, and that they were also gaining more time to be reflective about their work.

All of the ways in which the new assessments are perceived to support teachers’ professional aims were attributed in no small part to the linear, two-year nature of the course. Furthermore, when considering the effects on pupil progress, the benefit was not felt by teachers who had entered students for the AS examination as well as the full A Level. Therefore, this may be an important consideration for schools deciding whether students should sit both.

This research considered just three case study schools in the independent sector. My findings suggest that in each school, teachers’ aims were more likely to be affected by market-based rather than managerial accountability. This is evidenced in the amount of time taken up by ‘back-covering’, and the increasing amount of data required to respond to parental complaints. Parents are more likely to be demanding if their habitus does not align with that of the school and therefore most of the teachers at PAC and Maybank did not feel that this situation was likely to improve. However, there seems to be an opportunity for positive washback, with the new assessment models providing teachers with more time. As stated earlier, these new assessments are still in their infancy, and more research is needed in the future to see if the perceived benefits are realised in the longer term. Whilst teachers have little hope that their relationship with parents will improve and believe that market accountability (rather than managerial accountability) will continue to generate tensions which they will have to negotiate in their daily practice, the greater congruency of the new A Level assessments with their professional aims may act as some kind of counterweight to these pressures.
Policy implications: Moving towards 'intelligent' accountability

Vriens et al. (2016) argue that 'market or bureaucratic control goals... lead to problems in pursuing professional goals' (p.5) and empirical research shows this to be the case in the state school sector, mainly as a result of managerial forms of accountability. This research suggests it is also true in the independent sector, as a result of market based accountability. Chapter 4 outlined the need for accountability in education to increase public trust in the profession. Chapter 3 conceptualised modern teacher professionalism as attribute-based rooted in values and, essentially, trust between teachers, parents, pupils and society (Hoyle 2001; Freidson 2001; Pfadenhauer 2006; Gewirtz et al. 2009). Current methods of accountability are shown to negatively affect teachers' practice. Amongst other deleterious effects, quantitative methods can result in performativity, and qualitative methods have failed to restore public trust in the profession. Whilst arguing against the use of assessment data for league tables and target setting in the state sector, O'Neill (2013) makes the case for 'intelligent systems of accountability' that 'do not distort' practice. This research suggests that more intelligent forms of accountability are required to counter the effects of market-based forms of accountability in the independent sector.

Vriens et al. (2016) suggest that, rather than 'pre-determined targets or standards... that [are] abstract from the specific situations professionals have to respond to' (pp.1-2), accountability should concentrate on whether the conditions are present to enable professionals to achieve good practice. Therefore, if we agree that the five professional aims outlined in chapter 6 are desirable, a system focused on making schools accountable for enabling these aims would be welcome. Amongst other ways of facilitating this, Vriens et al. suggest that the judgement regarding the extent to which these conditions are in place could be made by professionals themselves. This could be achieved through a qualitative self-evaluation monitored by a professional body such as the National College of Teaching and Learning, or the Independent Schools' Inspectorate.
Such an approach might allow for the 'professional' mode of accountability based on Freidson’s ideal described in Chapter 4. Having a professional body using accountability tools focused on enabling professionals to achieve their aims could be a significant way of supporting the professionalisation of teachers. Such professionalisation may result in greater trust of teachers, strengthening both the 'licence' and 'mandate' Pfadenhauer (2006) believes is vital to teachers’ professional status.

The strengthening of ‘licence’ and ‘mandate’ is integral for this form of intelligent accountability to function in the independent school sector. Arguments for forms of intelligent accountability in the state sector focus on lessening the importance (or, indeed, the removal) of managerial targets (Cowie & Croxford 2007; Ellison 2012; Vriens et al. 2016). As shown in the empirical chapters of this thesis, it seems that market accountability (in the form of fee-paying parents) is operating in a way that prevents teachers from realising their professional aims. As market accountability cannot simply be removed, an effective form of intelligent accountability must work alongside it. Vriens et al.’s conditional approach, described above, should lead to improved teaching conditions – conditions which will support, rather than hinder, teachers’ professional aims. Evidencing these conditions (through publications to parents, open days etc.) could both engender greater trust in teachers by parents and boost a school’s institutional confidence. The high level of institutional confidence at Clarendon is considered to be a one of the reasons why teachers feel parents are kept ‘at arms’ length’. Furthermore, following Cowie and Croxford’s suggestion that ‘intelligent accountability... should involve the school and its community in defining the measures by which it is assessed’ (2007, p.4), if parents are engaged along with professionals in the development of identifying the desirable conditions, it might be possible to achieve a form of accountability which supports teachers’ professional aims.
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INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

REC Reference Number: MR/15/16-90

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET

An investigation into the implications of modes of teacher accountability in the private school sector for teachers’ practice and their ability to realise their professional aims.

I would like to invite you to participate in this self-funded project which I am carrying out as part of my doctoral studies at King’s College London. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

This study is investigating how both managerial and market accountability measures affect private school teachers’ practice. It is also investigating what teachers’ aims and motivations are, the challenges they face and how they negotiate these in their work. I am recruiting teachers from different departments at this school and at different career stages to give a variety of perspectives. I am also recruiting teachers from three other private schools.

It is thought that the research will be of interest to researchers in the field of sociology of education and to that extent, the findings will be developed into a research paper for publication in a relevant journal. It may also be of interest to assessment policymakers, school leaders in the private sector and independent school organisations such as the Independent Schools Council (ISC). You will receive a copy of the study when it is completed, and I would also be happy to share the research findings in a staff CPD session.

If you agree to take part, you will be interviewed once, alone. There may be a follow-up interview if necessary to clarify certain points or extend the research. Each interview will take up to one hour and will be held at your place of work, at a time convenient to you. Interviews will be recorded, subject to your permission. Recordings of interviews will be deleted upon transcription. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form.

Your participation will be anonymous. On transcription, all names, and any information that could be used to identify you will be changed. Pseudonyms will be used for participants and the school. Lists of pseudonyms and your real details will be recorded securely separately from the research data.

You may withdraw from the study at any time and may also withdraw any data/information you have already provided up until it is transcribed for use in the final report, by August 1st 2016.

It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. If this study has harmed you in any way you can contact King’s College London using the details below for further advice and information:

Researcher: Daniel Hyde
Email: Daniel.hyde@kcl.ac.uk
Supervisor: Professor Sharon Gewirtz
Email: Sharon.gewirtz@kcl.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part.
Appendix 2 – Indicative Interview Questions

Indicative questions for a semi-structured interview.

1) Please tell me a little about your career history.

2) Can you talk a little about what attracted you to teaching?

3) Have you noticed any changes to the profession during your career?

4) In what ways do you believe your teaching practice has changed during your career? What do you believe are the reasons for these changes?

5) What do you believe are the characteristics of good teaching?

6) Do you feel this has changed over your career?

7) What are your aims as a teacher?

8) Do you feel this has changed over the course of your career?

9) How well do you feel you are able to fulfil these aims?

10) What barriers are there to fulfilling these aims?

11) What things support you in fulfilling these aims?

12) What effect, if any, has the introduction (or proposed introduction) of new examination regimes in your subject had on your teaching practice?

13) In what ways do you believe that the new testing regimes for A Level might support or hinder you achieving your aims?

14) Do you think the role of parents in school education has changed during your career? If so, in what way?

15) Do you feel there are any differences between your professional aims and the goals set for you by the school or outside agencies eg. ISI/the government? How do you negotiate these differences in your practice?

16) Do you feel there are any differences between your professional aims and the expectations/demands on you by the students’ parents/guardians? How do you negotiate these differences in your practice?

17) Do you discuss the issues we have talked about with other teachers? If so, in what form do these discussions take?
Appendix 3 Examples of Categories and Coding

**Aims**
- Teaching should inspire/enthuse/challenge/stretch
- Teaching should be interesting
- Ensuring progress
- Understanding students
- Be individual – differentiation
- To support
- Caring/pastoral aspect
- Exciting lessons
- Transmitting passion of subject
- Soft skills / non-subject specific skills
- University entrance

**Barriers**
- Grade inflations
- External political effects
- Uni expectations
- Societal view of achievement
- Media
- Society view of teaching
- External pressure on students
- Wasted time
- Parental attitude
- Parents paying for education
- Parental pressure
- Expectation of high grades
- Invalidity of assessments – re aims
- Accountability – checking progress

**Changes to profession**
- Tick-box culture
- Parental pressure
- Focus on grades/attainment
- Parental expectations
- Lack of trust/respect
- Time pressures
- Political policy/initiatives
- Less autonomy
- Increased accountability
- Feeling of value
- Bureaucracy

**Support**
- Teaching = community
- Colleagues
- Loneliness of teaching
  (Fear of being weak/poor)
- Venting
- Support of middle/senior management
- Reassurance

**Parental involvement**
- Customer attitude
- Value for money
- High expectations
- Everything purchasable
- Discipline
- 24 hour service
- Class fractions
- Trust or Lack of
- Pressure from society on parents
- Effect on agency
- ‘Rights’ culture

**Accountability**
- Inspection
- Observations
- SLT expectations
- Targets/plans
- Paperwork/bureaucracy
- High stakes pressure if targets unrealistic
- Formative testing
- Accountability to parents

**Teachers Practice**
- Performativity
- Manipulation of test results
- Teaching to the test – exam prep
- Responsibility of teachers – individual students grades
- Not being individual on reports – no time
- Lack of own time
- Benefit of off-topic tangents
- Spoon-feeding
- Absorbing pressure on students
- Back-covering
- Acceptance of targets

**Parents background**
- Education
- Understanding of system
- Expectations
- Value for money
- Social status
- Discipline
- White/Blue collar
- New money