**I: = Interviewer (Interviewer in bold)**

R: = Respondent [name]

**I: Obviously, as I said, it’s all anonymous. I’m going to delete all the identifiable data. So thank you so much. I don’t know anything about you so can you tell me where you teach, what subjects.**

R: I’m a high school teacher and I teach in all girl’s faith school in [area in England], in [borough]. I teach religious education.

**I: How long have you been a teacher for?**

R: I’ve been teaching for, this is my fourteenth year. I started teaching in 2005.

**I: You’ve been always teaching the same subject?**

R: The same subject, same school. I mean mainly it’s religious education but also A-level we call it philosophy ethics and theology and then occasionally we teach PSHE which is physical, social education, citizenship. Then a few years ago I taught maths but then stopped teaching that because they have enough staff time.

**I: There was a shortage of staff?**

R: Yes.

**I: Have you always taught in the same school?**

R: Yes, I’ve taught in the same school, yes.

**I: For fourteen years? Wow, that’s impressive. That’s going to be interesting to hear about your experiences then. Can I ask you a little bit about your own background, where you grew up, what was your experience like with diversity and disadvantage maybe in your own schooling?**

R: Well I grew up in Kenya and the primary school I went to was mostly Kenyans but Kenya is quite diverse as well. So you’ve got Arab Kenyans, you’ve got Asian Kenyans. Then apart from ethnicity, I mean we also have the different, what do you call it, the tribes, although I don’t like using the word tribe, ethnic groups in Kenya. So it was diverse in terms of the languages people speak or where they come from, the region. Also it was diverse in terms of race at the primary school. The secondary school I went from a small village to the city. The city was quite diverse because we had about 10% white and we had about 20% Asians, particularly people of Pakistani, Indian and Arab background. Then the rest were black Africans.

**I: So can I ask you a little bit about the beginning of your teaching career? Anything you remember is interesting. So how did you decide to be a teacher? Where did you do your training?**

R: Well actually I did not decide to work… I did want to be a teacher but I started to think about becoming a teacher when I worked in a development project in Pakistan. They asked me, during my spare time, to help tutor English to MA and BA students. That is where my interest of teaching came about. So when I got back to England, I started thinking of going for teaching so then I went for teacher training.

**I: Here in England?**

R: In [area in England], [university]. So in [area in England] when I was doing my training I was sent predominantly to white schools. I mean one of the schools I went to, of all the staff and the students, I was the only ethnic minority Asian. Yes, it was fine. When I was doing my training, I was the only African. We were 36 but I was only one. The other minority person was from Poland.

**I: Immigrant?**

R: Yes. But for him, he finished and he didn’t go into teaching. He went back to Poland to work in IT.

**I: How was your experience with those placements? Do you think being from a minority background affected it in any way or you had…?**

R: I think I did not have any issue actually in the schools. I think because I was used to being a minority and so long as I’m not targeted, I’m fine. So in schools, actually a student in one of the schools told me, “We don’t see you as a teacher. We see you as a friend.” I think they were so intrigued by my background, not just in terms of where I come from but in terms of my experience especially in Asia and the Middle East.

**I: So what did you do before you trained as a teacher in those projects that you mentioned?**

R: I worked in the development project, mostly trying to set up a self-help project for women. That was partly in Pakistan and then partly in Afghanistan. That was before the Taliban, before September 11th so that happened when I was there.

**I: So was it part of an international organisation then?**

R: Yes.

**I: Interesting. So it must have been quite a change going into teaching then after working in places like…**

R: Yes. It was a big change because I was used to dealing with adults and then I came to deal with a high school. I think the good thing in terms of training was when I came back, I did not go straight into teaching. I did a bit of care work for a year, trying to think whether to go for nursing or go for teaching. During that I contact [university] in [area in England] because some of my friends said that [university] is very good for teacher training. So I contacted [university] and they sent me to visit schools. So they sent me to go to a primary school. So I went to two primary schools to observe and see if that’s what I wanted. Then they sent me to observe three secondary schools as well. So that was fine but I think when I got disappointed because during that time you had to fill in, it was called a GTTR form. So basically you got this form, graduate teacher training registry. So you fill it in and you choose four universities and then you send the form to GTTR and they submit it to the universities.

If your first choice doesn’t select you, they send you to the second university. So my first choice was [university] because I was in contact with them before applying. I was so surprised that when my form was submitted to [university] University they declined. Then I went to the second one, declined. The third one, declined. So the fourth one was [university] and [area in England], a year before me they had one African. This person, I’d worked with him in Pakistan but he left a year before I came back. They liked him. When I applied, he told them that I’d applied and so they called before the interview, even before they received my form. Anyway, I’ve called [university] to tell them how disappointed. I asked them to give me the reason. The director at the time, director of PGCE whom I was in touch with, I called him and he told me point blank, “We don’t like African students. We don’t take African students.”

I asked him, “Why you don’t take or don’t like African students,” they said, “They don’t focus on their studies. They tend to work with studies. They don’t give it 100%,” and that basically put me off. It put me off [university] completely. But the good thing is when I went to [area in England], [university] was a Catholic university, I mean Catholic and Church of England. They have the same kind of rigour in terms of R.E. teacher training at [university]. Then the population was bigger. I think [area in England] was a big support, the support from tutors. There was a time I had a problem at school with one of my mentors, my school mentors and I phoned uni and my tutor at uni was there within a few hours to sort it out. I really was happy that I went to [university]. Even before I finished my training [university] asked me if I would like to work in the education department. I told them, “I’ve just got a job in [area in England].”

So I opted to work in the international project so vocationally. I still work for them. I’m going to a project in South Africa and in India.

**I: So did you do an NQT year after or…?**

R: I did NQT in the same school where I was.

**I: I see. So they’re up north?**

R: No, (unclear 00:09:38).

**I: So you had placements there but then you got NQT acceptance in [area in England]?**

R: In [area in England], yes.

**I: Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about that school. Why did you go to that school? What’s your experience been like?**

R: I wanted to stay up in [area in England] I think because I lived in [area in England] for about four years before I went to [area in England] so I knew [area in England]. I didn’t live in [area in England]. I lived in [area in England]. So coming back to [area in England] was like coming back to where I know. When I applied for a job in [area in England], actually I didn’t know that I was going to be accepted because I’d been to four interviews and I didn’t get a job. I’d been to a school in [area in England] and I’ve been to a school in [area in England] and I’d also been to, yes, two schools in [area in England] area and then another in [area in England] so I didn’t get them. I had this interview. One of the schools I had a [area in England] placement and I pulled out of the interview because they didn’t have a sixth form. So there’s another school who wanted me to go for the interview so I applied to another school. So they expected me to go for an interview so I was looking forward to going to that one in [area in England]. But then the one in [area in England] called me for an interview.

When I went for the interview I didn’t actually expect to be selected. I was selected for the interview. For me it was like a big change because in [area in England] I taught in very, very white schools without diversity. When I came for the interview in [area in England], I was so intrigued at the class I taught everyone was a minority. There was black, Asians, Polish, Irish, etc. It was pretty mixed.

**I: So how did you feel about it? I’m also interested not just about the children but about the staff of that school as well.**

R: Well the staff was not mixed. The staff was predominantly white. The students, I felt at home with the students. It took a while to be accepted. My first year was very, very difficult because the school was not so sure about my capability.

**I: Why do you say that?**

R: Because what was put in place for my training was different from others because I was the only black person. It ranged from like, “We can’t understand you because you speak very fast,” or, “Our students are very impatient. You need to learn how to teach them or learn how to adapt to their environment.” I remember that I had an instance whereby they wanted to extend my NQT year. I asked for the reason why they wanted to extend it and there was no good reason to extend it. I said, “I’m not accepting it.” I remember falling out with my head of department because they said, “This is good for you,” and I said it was patronising. I don’t want to be patronised. So the headteacher made a point of coming to observe me herself. She observed me. She sent her deputy to observe me, so another deputy observed me so I was observed by two deputies and a headteacher and all of them were satisfied that my lessons were fine so then there was no reason to extend my NQT. So my experience compared to my colleagues’ experience is quite different.

**I: Who were your colleagues there at that time?**

R: NQT groups. There was a lady who was a geography teacher from, I think it was mixed. I think the mum was Polish and the dad was English but she was born and brought up here. She was a graduate from Cambridge. Then there were about three from St Mary’s University. They were all English, from Londoners. Then there was a lady, another English but she was more someone who had worked before. I think she was much older, yes. Those were the group of NQTs but in the department we’d got like experienced staff. There was a young guy there who was the one who was employed before me. He had been there for a year. He was just finishing his NQT but the department was all…

**I: All white?**

R: …white English, yes.

**I: But nevertheless you stayed in that school despite the bad experience with your head of department.**

R: Yes, with my head of department, yes, and the NQT. What do you call it? We had someone in charge of NQTs.

**I: Like a mentor or something?**

R: Mentor, yes.

**I: Why did you decide to stay?**

R: I decided to stay because the school was not mixed in terms of diversity and because I went there in 2005, in 2006 we had an Ofsted. One of the recommendations from Ofsted was the school to employ more black teachers because the staff body was not reflecting the student body. Apart from that there was also the students themselves because I realised that I had a great rapport with student from ethnic minority, especially a black students, mixed race and Asians. Asians (unclear 00:15:52) Pakistani and Indian because I was able to speak their language, Urdu or Hindi. So yes, so that actually made me stay because I find the students, black kids, they find it easy to come to talk to me. So I then, over the years you get, I mean the ones that I’ve taught like my reputation kind of (unclear 00:16:19).

**I: So did you feel that you were aware of those results by Ofsted and recommendations or did you feel that your SLT team wanted you to stay?**

R: They didn’t say anything. They didn’t say anything to me. They’ve not said a thing up to now about black teachers. Like recently I’ve heard about the head of English when one of the teachers resigned the head of English told me that, the head teacher told me that, “I want more black teachers but I can’t get them.” But for me, for the Ofsted one, because the report was given to staff so I read it in the report.

**I: So you felt you were needed but also you said that you have very good rapport with students which is quite interesting because many minority teachers tell me that as well.**

R: So for me, I think I stayed in my school not because of SLT, not because of the staff. I stayed in that school not because of the student. I’m staying in this school at the moment because of the student.

**I: Your school continues to be quite diverse in terms of the intake of students?**

R: Yes. I mean black student I think is not really, it’s not that diverse and also with Eastern Europeans, mainly from Poland are not that many now because they are going back to Poland. Because it’s a Catholic school, we used to have 80% Catholics and the rest will be from other faith backgrounds. But then now it is about 98% Catholic. So in terms of diversity, it’s not getting that…

**I: It’s all girls you said?**

R: It’s all girls, yes.

**I: That’s interesting. How do you find that, that it’s single sex school? Working with girls nevertheless, you find that you can have a better rapport, interest?**

R: I think, because I have a daughter as well, so my daughter goes to the same school. I think it depends with the girls. It’s having built a history because I’ve been there for a long time and again, because I’ve taught some of them from Year 7 to Year 13. They know the result of this because it’s a high achieving school as well. We are in the top 4%. So it is, yes, build that reputation and they know that your subject or your classes do this.

**I: Do you find in that school there is some conversation about diversity? Is there some kind of multicultural capital that…?**

R: Actually now they are trying to bring it in but not much because what triggered it, because the black student complained about racism. So one incident that actually triggered it was in October when one of the students had a friend using the N word and reported to the teacher who was the head of year. The head of year didn’t take it seriously. He said, “I don’t see anything wrong with it because black people use the N word themselves. They use it in their songs as well,” and she repeated it. That actually annoyed the student and because they felt that the school was not doing much, they took it to social media so the school had to do something because of social media. So just before the half term they had a special, what do you call it, PSHE session which was focusing so much on respecting diversity, focusing on racism, talking about, what do you call it, there was racism, racial profiling, something like that.

**I: I mean many teachers talk about workload as an issue. Do you have any issues with workload at all?**

R: We have a big issue with workload. I think in my school we have a very, very high staff turnover. So every year we lose at least 30 teachers.

**I: White teachers mainly or it’s… because I feel sometimes the reasons for minority teachers and white teachers leaving schools might be different so it’s interesting to your perspective.**

R: Because in my school we don’t have many minority teachers. Most teachers are white. I mean having been there for… I mean we don’t have many Asian or black teachers. Those who have been there don’t last for long.

**I: Why is that?**

R: The main thing is workload.

**I: I see.**

R: Yes, it’s workload because in our school we used to mark every week but now it is reduced to two weeks. Then because of (unclear 00:21:48) we have to mark every two weeks. That is standard. There is no negotiation, that is the decision by the headteacher… but when you have to report it for Year 11, 12 and 13, we report every two weeks which means you have to enter grades on the computer so the parents can see it. Other groups, other years, 7, 8, 9 and 10, you have to mark… there should be evidence of marking in their books for two weeks but then the report to parents is once every half term.

**I: So the SLT reduce that to…?**

R: So the reporting is no big deal, we have what they call book scrutiny. So when the SLT or head of department goes and checks the books. In most cases the child is not told off, it’s the teachers who are told off, like, “You need to take responsibility for the students. There are certain standards that the books have to look like” and then with the A Level they have a folder and therefore there are certain things that they must have like the specification, the grades, an assessed piece of work, wider reading, etc., so they have to have the folders divided according to those. Then the folders have to be checked every half term but SLT can check them at any time. But when they do the book scrutiny and they do folder scrutiny, the teachers do not get a notice because the student will be given a note to take their books to the office. Because of that, book scrutiny, landing walk, checking what you are doing in the classroom, teachers found it too much. Because it’s one of the things which are non-negotiable, so they say either you like it or you leave. So most of them opt to go.

**I: Do you think there is a difference by subject? So you stayed, do you think that workload is higher in other subjects?**

R: Yes, it is. I mean in my subject, workload is high because you have a lot of essay based marking. Maths is high because they teach students mostly at least four times a week. Then in Year 11 the students do mocks every week, so maths and English. So they do mocks every week alternatively so one week English, one week maths and then marking them. So in that case, another thing that makes staff here find it difficult is they can’t cope.

**I: So maths and English turnover is worse?**

R: Yes.

**I: Why did you stay for all these years? What kept you?**

R: Because for me I think I grew into it. I can’t compare with other schools because I’ve only worked in one school apart from NQT. But the teachers who come and go, they have experience of other schools so they can compare what is in other schools.

**I: Do you mainly get younger teachers who then move on to someplace else?**

R: My head tends to go for younger teachers, I think because…

**I: I mean they’re in supply, right, because they are looking for any job and in [area in England] I guess.**

R: It’s very difficult to get teachers I mean like in my school sometimes. Let’s say for example last year we were looking for an R.E. teacher and in September no one turned up.

**I: No applications?**

R: Yes, no applications.

**I: I see.**

R: Then we appointed a young girl from [area in the UK]. She came for an interview and then sent an email she is not coming. Her dad was seriously sick. So my head teacher normally goes to Ireland to get teachers and if you’re lucky they come and when they come they stay for a year because I think the culture, the school culture is quite different from in [area in the UK] compared to here and then another thing, workload. Last year we got four Irish teachers who stay for a year and then they went back.

**I: I see. Okay, well interesting. So I don’t know that you only have been in one school so would you say that reducing workload is the way forward in terms of keeping teachers or there is something else which could…?**

R: I think it’s workload but also because we tend to focus so much on student wellbeing but they forget the staff wellbeing. They talk about student mental health but they don’t talk about teachers mental health. I mean I’ve got teachers turning up in my office for example in tears. We’ve got a wellbeing committee and if you look at that wellbeing committee, whatever they discuss is not what actually the staff want. It is like the agenda is passed by the headteacher. But if you talk about wellbeing of their own staff, you need to get… the agenda needs to come from them and they need to air their views. Another thing, the wellbeing committee is not just for the teaching staff. We’ve got support staff as well who need to be reflected. One of the things that was discussed in the last meeting about wellbeing is that it is pointless unless it is reflective of the staff and unless the staff are allowed to discuss the important issues for them.

**I: So how is your relationship with SLT? It seems like it’s very top down.**

R: Yes, it is top down. I mean in my school you go to a meeting, it’s not a meeting because…

**I: It’s information giving…**

R: Exactly. I mean working in international development, the meeting is getting information from people and we look for the midway and look at how to run… I mean working in international organisations I don’t walk into a meeting in Pakistan or Afghanistan telling them what to do. I don’t understand their context. So they explain to me their context, we ask them what we can do to improve it and then you can’t just bring ideas or bring what works here, it’s not going to work there. So again, I think in a school as well, because dealing with staff, some of them are experienced, I mean they’ve experienced times of teaching in the class, they have good outcomes as well, they understand the kids because they see them on a day to day basis. I think sometimes it is better to listen to them or to try to get information from them and to be able to run a school whereby people feel like they are valued. So for me I think the main thing in terms of in my own context is when it comes to retention, I think it is workload but another thing is feeling valued.

**I: Yes.**

R: I mean people feel they’re valued by students.

**I: Well you seem to feel valued by students.**

R: Yes but when it comes to being valued by your SLT, it is not there. Because SLT, my head is very controlling and is controlling her own SLT. We have, what do you call it, associate head? So when she’s not there and the associate head takes over, the atmosphere is completely different because the way he talks to people, the way… he is acting very serious. I think the way the language, you know, in my head I think is very… she can’t have a normal conversation with staff. They find her not approachable in a sense but I think that plays a big role in the school because I know some of my colleagues, not my colleagues but my friends who work in a very, very tough school in [area in England], it’s a black school and their staff turnover is very, very low.

**I: Interesting.**

R: Yes.

**I: So it’s organisational factors?**

R: Yes.

**I: Your staff turnover is quite high?**

R: Yes.

**I: Okay. Have you considered changing the school or you think you’ll stay there for a while?**

R: I’m waiting for my daughter to finish then definitely I’m going to move, yes.

**I: Where do you think you’ll go?**

R: I think most likely I think I’m looking for a job at [university].

**I: Ah, so you’re planning to go into academia and teacher training?**

R: Yes, the school is better.

**I: That’s why you’re doing the doctorate?**

R: Yes.

**I: Okay.**

R: So yes, move away from there or just move to work somewhere international. Education but somewhere else in the country.

**I: I mean we kind of talked about that but, you know, obviously we want to come up with some kind of recommendations about retention and specifically minority ethnic teacher retention. Do you think you could suggest some good practice messages or something like that? I know it’s quite difficult.**

R: There are a lot of good practices in some schools. Let’s say for example I went to visit, I visited a school in [borough]. I visited a school in [area in England] whereby you find the atmosphere is different. So let’s say for example both schools I visited, their workload is not the same as ours. They teach normally and they give student feedback as they go along but they don’t have a heavy scrutiny on what they are doing. They get like supported in terms of (unclear 00:32:21), the senior team is on their side. So let’s say, I mean apart from that one thing like having coffee in the staff room, so the coffee and tea is provided by the school so basically people are expected in the staff room to socialise. In my school for example, breaktime or lunchtime, most people tend to eat at their desk or in their classroom because lunchtime they see the student, the other time they want to catch up with marking so you go to the staff room look like a ghost place, a few people, a few support staff from the office are there for their lunch.

While if you went to those schools for example, the breaktime is like everyone is in the staff room, it is a requirement to be there so that you catch up with your colleagues, have coffee together. The same at lunchtime, people bring their own lunch but at least the staff room is (unclear 00:33:26) because when I first went to my school, I mean apart from having a difficult time, I knew that breaktime I’d be in the staff room, we have a corner, I’d have my lunch and talk to colleagues and then I go to teach. Nowadays, as the time goes by, it’s become more and more like paper orientated. Another thing is the problem tends to be, whether this is government or school because I know the DfE is doing a lot to help schools to reduce workload but I think sometimes it is the schools themselves. Like my head teacher, she knows what works for her and she wants to maintain that and she feels that if she lets go, this school is going to slip and then maybe Ofsted and the government, the stakeholders…

**I: It’s an outstanding school.**

R: It is outstanding. The last time we had Ofsted in 2006, we never had Ofsted because we’re outstanding. So I think that’s fear that if I let go, things are going to…

**I: They had been there all those years.**

R: So yes, I think it’s better just changing the culture, valuing your staff

**I: Do you think that could come from just reducing your workload or there should be some kind of push from SLT or some departments?**

R: Well at the moment I think it’s a culture of fear just after, before we went for Christmas because the other year, this is 2018/19, because we have seven classes each, it is a seven streamed school so I’ve got seven groups of Year 11, a group of 30 in each class (unclear 00:35:17), some of them are 32 anyway. Then I had a colleague for example who had a miscarriage just before the mock so I had to mark her classes. She had three classes, I had three classes so I had six classes I had to mark. Then that is a lot of script because it’s two papers so 60 times three so that’s 180 papers times two. Then you have each unit to mark. So I mark them over Christmas. Then this year another colleague of mine lost his dad just before Christmas so I ended up with another five groups to mark. So then the expectation was when you come back the report needs to be entered the first week back. So I said, “This is not on. It’s an assumption that you should be working during the Christmas break.” Everyone said, “Oh yes, we need to raise this.”

So when I asked the second in command to bring this with the head of department meeting so I went to the meeting and I was alone. The people were saying that they were going to support it, everyone is scared. So it is like turning the culture. It needs a lot of people.

**I: I see. So there seems to be lack of cohesion amongst staff somehow as well. I see.**

R: I think if you create a culture of fear where people are not able to speak. This comes back to what we talked about earlier that a meeting becomes information giving meeting rather than people sharing ideas.

**I: What do you think, you know, those people who might have stayed for a long time or want to stay for a long time, why do they have this fear? If the turnover is so high, I mean it’s not like someone is going to fire them if they say something.**

R: No. I think they want to go but people fear getting a bad…

**I: Oh a bad reference?**

R: Yes. I remember talking to the French teacher who is just tired of this country, she wants to move to Switzerland. She doesn’t have a job yet but she’s thinking about it. She was so scared to go to the head teacher to tell her what she thinks. I was like, “Why are you scared?” “Because she might give me a bad reference.”

**I: I see. Well that can really have an impact on your… especially if you’re applying for a promotion, people would look at the reference. Have you ever considered going for head of department or something?**

R: No, I’m head of department at the moment.

**I: Oh, you’re head? I didn’t realise that, okay.**

R: Before I became head of department, because I was in my school for a long time without being considered for any TLR.

**I: What’s TLR?**

R: Teaching and learning responsibility, like key stage coordinator, like key stage three, key stage four. I applied but nothing basically went through. So I remember they had to employ someone from Newcastle to be key stage coordinator. When she left, they got someone from Birmingham also. They then got someone from Australia. I was applying but my application had been turned down.

**I: What did they say? Why did they not give you that promotion?**

R: They said that my interview was not good.

**I: Not strong or something? Okay.**

R: Yes, I was not understanding the statistics. So I decided to apply for a second in department in a school in [area in England], in [borough]. I applied, I got the interview, everything. It went okay. So they told me they were waiting for a reference from my head teacher. Then I had a form to send and they told me they were faxing it. I didn’t get it, I wanted that they gave me feedback. It was a Friday, give you feedback after the weekend. On the Monday I got the feedback that yeah, they didn’t appoint me because my teaching was not up to what they expected. But I went away to see the head teacher to tell them about the interview, she told me that, “You should consider seriously having a teaching responsibility in this school.” So I kind of had a feeling, I did not ask about the reference, but I thought they didn’t appoint because of my reference, that is my feeling but I have nothing to prove.

**I: Yes, of course.**

R: So eventually then we got two head of departments and a deputy left and they advertised it and no one applied for the job. So one of the deputy heads asked me to consider applying so I applied and I got it. I’ve been doing it for the past three years.

**I: Do you think you changed the culture in the department a little bit?**

R: I’ve changed it. I mean like now, what I’ve tried to do, because I do a lot of support for my department…

**I: How many people do you have?**

R: I have four… okay, because one is assistant head SLT, no, two SLTs.

**I: In your department?**

R: Then I have head of year, head of Year 11. Then I have one person who is just a normal teacher. So in terms of delegating duty, you don’t. I can’t.

So what I do for example with the other colleague I have, because he has more workload, I mean he has 26 lessons, I’ve got 23. The rest have 21 or 14. So for him in terms of, like I don’t do lots of (unclear 00:41:26) I tell him just when we have a meeting, tell me what he’s doing. I ask him if they want book samples, just list what you need to do, “Can I have some books to have a look.” So it’s not like policing and also trying to get the department like before Christmas, end of the year, go out for a meal, sometimes just go for a drink at the end of the term to get to know people rather than, because people are not just the workplace. They have a family. They have a background [laughter].

**I: Well thank you very much, it’s very interesting. I’ve kept you I’m afraid for 45 minutes.**