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Part-time women teachers- having it all?

Suzanne Brown

Introduction

Being able to combine a successful career with family life is often referred to as 'having it all'. This notion is situated within the neo-liberal view of women regarded by Campo (2009, p.65) as a 'much reduced and distorted message of feminism.' 'Having it all' for the part-time women teachers discussed in this chapter meant making difficult decisions and sacrifices about whose and which needs they should prioritise- often at the expense of their own careers and wellbeing. Decisions were shaped by expectations at work around professionalism, and at home by gendered expectations of motherhood. This left little scope for the questionable notion of 'free choice' (Hakim, 2006) in terms of how decisions around career were made.

Drawing on ideas from feminist research, this chapter discusses a body of life history research which I carried out within this epistemological stance. The life histories of part-time women teachers in relation to career progression are discussed. The context for working part-time is discussed and highlights issues relating to wellbeing, motherhood, teacher recruitment and retention and excessive workload. The implications of the research findings are considered in relation to the post Covid-19 era where flexible working is becoming a greater entitlement. The findings emphasise the importance of helping teaching mothers to combine a progressive career pathway with family life in post- Covid-19 times.

Teaching as a career might be perceived as being ‘family friendly’ due to the (false) perception of short working days and long holidays, yet too many teachers leaving the profession is a global issue (See *et al*, 2020). In England, in the 12 months to November 2021, the ‘leavers rate’ was 8.1% of the state funded teaching workforce. This equates to around 36,300 full time equivalent (FTE) qualified teachers, with around 32,000 leaving for reasons for other than death or retirement (Long and Donechi, 2022). As most research around teacher recruitment and retention concerns early career teachers (Booth *et al*, 2021) there is gap in understanding of how to retain teachers further into their careers. Moreau (2018) argues that such ‘friendliness’ is underpinned by heteronormative and maternal views of women which do not consider what this might mean in terms of women's careers.

Compared to their proportion in the teaching workforce, women are under-represented at senior leadership level (Gov.uk, 2017; Jerrim and Sims 2019; European Union, 2020). Across the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), whilst 68% of all teachers are female, only 47% of school principals are women (Jerrim and Sims, 2019). Ninety six percent of school principals work on a full-time basis. (ibid) 2002). This context of inequality is important: being a woman and working part-time are factors which individually reduce the chances of achieving senior leadership in schools. Crucially, when combined, the chances of a part-time woman teacher becoming a senior leader are slim (Brown, 2019). The findings of the research discussed in this chapter provide a new contribution to understanding this inequality.

Literature review

For many women, their role as carers, and particular as mothers, appears to be a major factor in making the decision to not work full-time (Hughes, 2002; Smith, 2012). Stubborn and persistent social expectations of women assuming the role as the primary carer to their children still exist (Coleman, 2002, Smith, 2012). Taking career breaks to look after children result in some women teachers' career patterns being misaligned with the advantageous (Moreau, Osgood and Halsall, 2005) continuous and linear model of progression. This can lead to women being overlooked for promoted positions because their career pathway is considered abnormal and indicative of a lack of commitment (ibid).

Heavy workload is also a common reason for teachers taking the decision not to work full-time. In the United Kingdom, sixty per cent of teachers mentioned caring responsibilities as their reason for working reduced hours, whilst 43% did so to try and manage their excessive workload (National Education Union, 2018)- although some overlap may exist in the statistics. Part-time working may help to manage workload alongside other responsibilities, yet this pattern of working does not necessarily resolve the difficulties for women teachers who work part-time because the workload is still too big (Brown, 2019).

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers reported working around 46 hours per week (Worth and Faulkner- Ellis, 2022). Teacher working hours in the UK are higher than those reported in countries who took part in the OECD Teaching and Learning International Study (TALIS) in 2018 (Jerrim and Sims, 2019). Excessive workload is the most cited reason that ex-teachers

give for leaving the profession and contributes to the difficulties in teacher recruitment and retention (Worth and Faulkner-Ellis, 2022). However, periods of lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic, saw teachers' working patterns change and a reduction in their working hours. Teachers were working around 40 hours per week-a figure similar to other professionals (Worth and Faulkner-Ellis, 2022). However, this reduction was short-lived, with working hours soon returning to pre-pandemic levels.

The issues around teacher recruitment and retention are highlighted by Sharp *et al* (2019, p.10) when arguing for greater opportunities for teachers to be able to adopt flexible working patterns:

One of the ways of encouraging more teachers to remain in the profession for longer - and potentially to attract more to join the profession - is to ensure there are part-time or flexible working opportunities when teachers need them. Providing opportunities to keep teachers who would have left without being able to go part-time retains their expertise and reduces the risk of losing them from the profession permanently.

In the United Kingdom as part of the Children and Families Act (legislation.gov.uk, 2014), everyone who has worked continuously for an employer for at least 26 weeks is entitled to request to work flexibly (2014). However, teachers' flexible working requests are more likely refused than in the wider workforce. Sixty six percent of teachers are granted their requests compared to 80% in the wider workforce (NASUWT, 2016). Furthermore, most teachers who have management or senior leadership roles usually find their requests are refused (ibid.).

It can be seen from the points made above that working part-time, which is only one of many forms of flexible working (Gov.uk, 2014), is situated within a complexity of gendered expectations and workplace practices. Being able to adopt this pattern of working is not always a straightforward decision or a 'free' choice (Hakim, 2006). Instead, an individual's choice is situated within, and shaped by, the attitudes and expectations of a range of interested parties. Furthermore, having adopted a part-time rather than full-time pattern of working, the needs and priorities of others do not go away- as we shall see in this chapter. Stark and difficult examples of women being left to decide whether they should prioritise their own families, or the children at their school workplaces, are highlighted in the findings from this life history research. Bringing these difficulties under the spotlight helps to explain how trying to balance the needs and priorities of others leaves the women in this study with little time for free choice around career- and in one case fuels her exit from the profession. The life history approach taken in this study will now be explained.

Methodology

Stanley and Wise (2002) reject arguments for one truthful, and irrefutable social reality when discussing epistemology from a feminist perspective. The research discussed in this chapter is aligned with this epistemological stance and draws on ideas from feminist research. A life history approach (Goodson, 2008) was employed to gather women's differing and subjective truths or realities of working part-time and their relationships with career progression.

Methods

Six women, all of whom were white, married and mothers agreed to be part of the study. They were each interviewed twice over a 6-month period for around 90 minutes each time. Their schools were not aware of their participation. Headteachers or School Principles had been previously asked to advertise my request for women part-time teacher to participate in the research. The women were asked to reply to me directly. The methodological limitations arising from the lack of diversity within the group of participants were recognised and considered throughout the research. The cohort were of interest however, due to the differences between them in terms of their education, histories of employment, management experiences, ages of their children and working patterns. More detailed vignettes of all the women's lives and experiences are found in Brown (2019).

At our first meeting, each participant was asked to talk about her life and career so far- including how part-time working was significant to her story. After transcription of both recorded interviews, each participant was encouraged to check the transcriptions for accuracy, to make amendments and to add further points/clarifications. Measor and Sikes (1992) argue that 'respondent validation' is an important part of co-constructing life histories as well as being one of the best ethical safeguards.

Repeated and active readings of the transcripts took place alongside listening to the recordings to encourage familiarisation and immersion in the data. Prior to the second meetings, long pauses and periods of silence were noted on the transcripts from the first

meetings (Goodson, 2008). These notes acted as a trigger for further exploration at our second meetings and supported the process of co-constructing the women's life histories (Biott, Moos and Moller 2001).

Rich narratives emerged from the second meetings which involved exploring form and meaning together by highlighting potentially critical incidences (Measor, 1985). These were identified in the stories and highlighted on the transcripts from the first meetings in readiness for further exploration at the second meetings along with the silences and pauses. According to Measor (1985), critical incidences can indicate instances of change and choices being made in people's lives where priorities are re-assessed and hence yield an insight into how identities are built at various times of life.

The transcripts from both meetings with each participant were inductively coded (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) as part of a thematic approach (Braun and Clark, 2006). This chapter focuses on the theme of 'Perceptions' (Brown, 2019) which emerged from the data.

Discussion and findings

All the women in the study were mothers and this was a crucial influence in the stories they told and their decision-making. The stories of three of the women have been chosen for discussion in this chapter: Alice, Leah and Louise.

Alice

Alice is married, white and in her thirties. Her husband became a Headteacher between our two meetings. Alice has two young children, the eldest started school during this interval.

She felt unsupported in her first teaching job and left because she did not feel trained to teach outside her subject specialism. She taught her specialism in her second school but was refused part-time working after the birth of her second child. She left to work part-time in her current school.

At our first meeting, Alice explained that her mother stayed with the family for two consecutive days to provide childcare. She could attend to any emergency childcare issues whilst Alice worked. Alice appeared very happy with her working and childcare arrangements and felt supported at school. She said she had a good work-life balance.

However, at our second meeting, six months later, Alice said her school had become an academy and policy and procedure had changed. Her working days were no longer consecutive and so her mother was no longer able to child-mind. Combined with her husband's new role and child starting school, Alice described feeling stressed and was struggling to cope with these changes. No longer feeling supported by the school, she decided to leave and was exploring possibilities outside of teaching.

Leah

Leah, white and in her forties is married to a Deputy Headteacher with three sons under the age of ten. Prior to motherhood, Leah occupied a middle-management position, spending long hours at work, explaining that her work had been her life. She considered herself to have had a voice in decision-making. She had volunteered as a sports coach.

Returning full-time after her first maternity leave, she felt guilty for not spending time with her baby and for not devoting the previous amount of time to work. A second and difficult pregnancy quickly followed making her transition back to work difficult. Not coping, her request for part-time working was granted with the condition that she relinquished her management position.

Leah felt she needed to prove herself to the new Head of Faculty. She felt her opinions were no longer sought, and her voice reduced. Leah participated in various community activities as a response to feeling guilty for not working full-time and to prove herself to her wider family, whom she regarded as being high achieving.

Leah aspired to future senior leadership but considered her current unwillingness to work full-time a barrier to her promotion.

Louise

Louise, white and in her late thirties has three young children. Her husband occasionally works away from home.

After graduation, Louise went straight into teaching, consecutively occupying two full-time teaching jobs before her current position. Louise involved her teaching union when her request to work part-time was initially refused after the birth of her first child.

Louise now works three consecutive days each week, arriving early and leaving very late. She employed a nanny 36 hours a week to cover these days. This made financial sense to Louise.

Having previously considered promotion she had not pursued it as she felt her children were too young.

The discussion of the life histories begins with an exploration of the women's commitment to their paid work and families. In the first instance this is done through Louise's story. From here, the women's experiences of juggling their paid work and responsibilities at home are considered, before exploring the outcomes and implications of prioritising their respective husband's careers.

The stories of Leah and Alice are included because they were both married to school leaders and interestingly had prioritised their husband's careers over their own. This prioritisation included the two women not working full-time. The accompanying detrimental impact on their careers and experiences at work is glaring. The notions of 'having it all' and choices around career are interwoven threads in these discussions along with how these findings can inform working practices in the post-Covid-19 era.

Commitment

This section begins with Louise describing how she felt when her commitment to her part-time teaching role was challenged by a male member of the senior leadership team (SLT).

Louise's husband had gone to work before her and the children's nanny was late arriving, which resulted in Louise arriving late at her own place of employment:

But he (the Senior Leader) brought up a couple of times that I'd be late in as well. I think he felt he had to address these, and I can remember it because, I remember the phrase that he used because it really obviously sort of hit me. He said, "Do you see teaching as a bit of a hobby?". It just made me realise that perhaps they do feel that I am less committed now. I mean the reasons for my being late those couple of times were that I was dealing with children at home, that's the only reason that ever causes me to be late into work when perhaps I wouldn't have been otherwise.

(Louise, second meeting)

Because Louise had previously been late a couple of times due to prioritising her own children, her commitment and professionalism was questioned in a way which frustrated her. Her vignette highlights a previous issue around her part-time working which needed teaching union involvement before it was resolved. The language used by the SLT member implies that working part-time and being professional are mutually exclusive (Negrey, 1993). He angered Louise by his reference to a 'hobby'. This unfortunate event is aligned with the findings of Cockburn (2002) who found that many men in senior positions question the commitment of mothers, particularly those who work part-time. However, Gatrell (2005) found that women's sacrificing of their own time suggests their commitment to their paid work is greater than before they became mothers. The Senior Leader's inappropriate choice of language suggests he views Louise's part-time working as being voluntary and situated within a lack of commitment to full-time working (Durbin and Tomlinson, 2014). Louise's sense of marginalisation and lack of value is apparent from her comments.

Motherhood has its own powerful discourse which can act as a resistive parameter to decision-making (Smith, 2016). Louise was in a tricky situation with an expectation made clear from the Senior Leader that that she should prioritise her work and the needs of the children at the school over her own children- despite a lack of childcare. Whilst lateness is not professionally advisable, what he imagined she should do with the three young children instead of waiting for childcare is not clear. The situation was clearly one he did not approve of and is suggestive of him thinking she should not be working if she could not fit within the rigidity of the normalised school day.

Louise's being late in the morning was an example of her sacrificing her own reputation and prioritising her husband's career. Essentialist constructions of men and women, depict women as willing to assume the primary responsibilities for childcare and domestic issues (Moreau, Osgood and Halsall, 2007). Unlike men, this often results in women like Louise having to choose between their families and their careers (ibid.) or in this case between her own children or those at school. During Covid-19 times this has become more apparent: women were more likely to pick up the gap in childcare, resulting from lockdown and beyond, with greater detrimental impacts on their employment than those experienced by men (Modestino, Lincoln and Ladge, 2021). The issue of prioritisation will be revisited later in the chapter.

Women's role as carers makes a valuable and wider economic contribution and helps to maintain the workforce (Hughes, 2002). Yet women's caring for their own children is considered low value - this is not the case when men assume this responsibility (Tronto, 1993).

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of good and available childcare in enabling parents, especially women to remain in the workforce (Modestino, Lincoln and Ladge, 2021). Paying for childcare is expensive, this is illustrated by Louise's decision to pay for a nanny for her three children because this was less expensive than paying nursery fees. This type of childcare provision also gave Louise more flexibility to meet the demands of her paid work- although this meant employing a full-time nanny for more hours than Louise herself was contracted to be at the school. On the three days Louise was at work, she paid a nanny for 12 hours each day so that she could go to work early and stay until 7pm so that she did not need to bring schoolwork home. Louise's comments highlight this arrangement was fallible: if the family nanny arrived late then Louise picked up the slack at the cost of her own reputation.

Employing a nanny in this way was a more flexible option than those offered by many day nurseries, where opening hours are usually fixed around the typical working day. Start and finishing times vary between individual schools in the United Kingdom with teachers expected to be in school early to prepare for the day and greet pupils. Care provisions which enable teacher-carers to do this are seemingly a crucial factor in enabling them to fulfil their professional commitments. Enabling teacher-carers to arrive in good time at school to prepare for the school day requires care provision to be available even earlier than schools are-but this is not always the case.

Temporal arrangements around the organisation of the school day are inflexible, resulting in tensions (Brown, 2019). Meeting professional responsibilities alongside those of being a carer

of young children, or indeed anyone requiring care, necessitates good, affordable and flexible care provision and/or more flexible working arrangements within schools. The Covid-19 pandemic was an unexpected and unwanted event, but it also served as a social experiment around responses and changes and in working patterns and practices. Reported outcomes include the wider consideration and adoption of flexible working patterns within the wider workforce (Cranfield, 2022) and greater desire from people to work flexibly (Chung *et al*, 2020). This puts pressure on the teaching profession to embrace alternative ways of working beyond the normalisation of a linear and full-time working pattern if it is not to lose more ground in terms of flexible working practices.

Discursive constructions of the part-time professional worker can lead to them considered less committed due to the misalignment in professional assumptions around ability and willingness to prioritise work (Dick, 2010). This is despite Jacobsen (2000) finding that in comparison to their full-time colleagues, part-time professionals are more affectively committed to their work. It may be obvious, but women can still be committed to their work even though they love their children (Gatrell, 2005). The women who are the focus of this chapter were committed to their work and wanted to maintain their professional reputations. They did not align themselves with the notions of deficiency or being less committed than their colleagues who worked full-time. Durbin and Tomlinson (2014) argue that the transition to part-time working is not about a lack of commitment but instead reflects the complexity of people's working lives at different life stages. This is particularly pertinent in the post-Covid-19 era where according to (Vyas, 2022, p1)

The coronavirus pandemic has interrupted labor markets, triggering massive and instant series of experimentations with flexible work arrangements, and

new relationships to centralized working environments. These approaches have laid the basis for the “new normal,” likely extending into the organization of work in the post-pandemic era. These new arrangements, especially flexible work arrangements, have challenged traditional relationships with employees and employers, work time and working hours, the work–life balance (WLB), and the relationship of individuals to work. (Vyas, 2022, p1)

The shifts described in this excerpt illustrate how the pandemic has resulted in people thinking differently about when, where and how we work, meaning that flexible working is likely to be more widely enacted and normalised in the post-Covid-19 era (ibid). The women teachers discussed in this chapter experienced negative discourses around part-time working. Post-Covid-19, notions of deficiency and a lack of commitment linked to part-time working continue to be inappropriate but are now even more outdated. The featured women’s commitment to both their paid work and non-paid work in the home was apparent from their stories. Both parts of their lives were ‘greedy’ (Edwards, 1993) in terms of the time they demanded. How the women tried to balance the different demands for the limited amount of time available to them is described in the next section

The juggling act

Juggling the demands of motherhood and caring alongside the demands of their teaching roles caused the women in this study conflict, guilt and anxiety. The feelings they described illustrate their commitment to both their paid roles and roles at home. A lack of commitment would not lead to such affective responses. Between the two meetings, Alice’s employer changed the days she worked each week without consulting her. This led to her childcare arrangements failing apart. In addition, her son started school. This meant he

needed wrap around care in the morning and after school, which she found difficult to arrange alongside her own working. Alice explains how her priorities became conflicted due to these two events:

We need to get the bedtime routine done, I need to work, and I need to get prepared for the next day. Because school had split my days, I was only there two days, but really, I was in a working mind frame for at least four. I can't believe the amount of favours I've already had to call in when things have cropped up: could you take my son to school, could you be there to pick him up? This is ridiculous, it was meant to be easy, they're there, you pick them up, and they're there for the whole day. Yeah, massive, massive impact on me, massive impact on the family as a whole.

(Alice, second meeting, 3rd November 2016)

Alice's anxiety is palpable and illustrates how her decision making involved a complex meshing of gendered expectations regarding motherhood and professionalism. Smith (2012, p.95) makes the point that 'For a woman who is a mother, a professional career thus becomes an extra load, to be fitted in, around and on top of the maternal load'. This 'extra load' was too much for Alice and she decided to leave teaching to prioritise her family-life (Longhurst, 2008). Part-time working turned out not to be the solution Alice was hoping for when trying to combine a professional life with being a mother:

I think that from a childcare point of view, going back full-time was never an option. I didn't want to, or I didn't see the point in having children, to put them in full-time childcare. I wanted to spend time with them and also, I wanted to come back to work. I didn't want to lose my skills and I thought it was good for the children, seeing me as a role model, a working mum, because you can't have it all, but you can try, can't you. Work, be an adult and be a mum. So, yeah, that was the motivational thing for me, wanting the kids to see 'Yeah, mum is doing this, but looks after us as well'.

(Alice, second meeting)

Alice stated that her husband told her 'Your priority is the kids' when she was deciding whether to leave teaching due to her unhappiness. Alice worked part-time because she wanted a rewarding career and a happy family life, situated within the neo-liberal notion of 'having it all'. Trying to achieve these notions presented difficulties and had negative impacts on Alice's wellbeing. Campo (2009, p.11) argues that:

Perpetuating the narrative of 'having it all' feminism may make great copy in pages of newspapers that feed on controversy, but it does nothing for the millions of women who struggle daily in a society that still makes combining a career with family life heavy work.

Stress and guilt accompanied Alice's navigations of the competing priorities of work and family life meaning that rather than 'having it all', life was 'heavy work'. In her taking of a feminist perspective to analysing care, Hughes (2002) argues that different types of care are given different prestige. Having the caring responsibility for an aspect of public life, such as being a headteacher is seen to be valuable and important. In the private realm however, looking after family, is considered relatively trivial.

Despite working part-time, the participants still felt the pressures of a heavy paid workload. Leah expressed frustration that her employer did not recognise that her decision to work part-time meant that her willingness to give as much time to her job was reduced:

So, thinking about my leaders, the ones that haven't got children, would probably think that I'm not giving as much because I've got a family. Because I think, sadly, there's a culture in education that it is a vocation and you give your life to it, there's kind of no end to it. It's just relentless and if you haven't got other distractions then that can be how it is. I know leaders that haven't got families they do other things, but it's easier to plan that in I think, but the culture of education, the culture at my school, you know it's not said, but it's kind of, how could I put it? People will say to you, oh you shouldn't be working at the weekends, oh you shouldn't

be working on your day off, but it never feels meant, it always feels as if, what's the word, like a platitude, is that the correct word to use?

(Leah, second meeting)

Dick (2010) explains that employers do not always recognise the reduced temporal contribution accompanying people's decisions not to work full-time, with part-time workers expecting clearer boundaries between their working and private lives. In using the word *platitude*, Leah implies that the advice she was given was disingenuous because her workload was not reduced to enable the advice and so she still needed to work at weekends.

Walker, Sharp and Sims (2020) report that compared to research undertaken before lockdown (Walker, Worth and Van den Brande, 2019), some teachers' workloads have become more manageable, although this was variable across distinct groups. Walker, Sharp and Sims (2020) report that younger teachers (aged 20-29) were more likely to say that their workload had become more manageable than people in their forties. Unpicking this finding through further research is important to ascertain what lessons can be learned about making workload perceivably more manageable in the post Covid-19 era.

Walker, Sharp and Sims (2020) suggest that teachers in their forties were more likely to have school-aged children and were trying to meet the additional demands of home-schooling. They support this assertion by remarking that women teachers, with greater caring responsibilities, are more likely to regard their workload as being unmanageable. This chapter through its discussion of women teachers' day to day lived experiences offers insights into why this may be the case. Furthermore, it highlights that taking the decision to work part-

time rather than full-time to try and mitigate the effects of excessive paid workload on family life does not provide the solution.

Even though the amount of time spent on domestic chores and childcare increased for both men and women during lockdown (Soraya and Rondon, 2021), gender asymmetries in childcare and domestic chores became more apparent. Women were doing two thirds of the childcare when schools and nurseries closed. Women reported being more psychologically distressed due to the increased number of hours spent on childcare and home schooling (ibid). This suggests that gendered expectations and assumed responsibilities around care provision remain difficult to shift, despite unprecedented changes in the way lives were lived during the pandemic. Even when people were at home more, it was largely women who picked up these additional responsibilities. This reinforces the stubborn and gendered nature of expectations around care (Coleman, 2002). This leaves women teacher-carers who work part-time with heavy workloads both at home and at work.

For Leah and Alice, their husbands' heavy paid workloads as school senior leaders, were an additional factor in their decision-making regarding the assumption of the primary responsibility for childcare. This included the prioritisation of their respective husbands' careers. The implications of this on the women's lives and careers will now be discussed.

Prioritisation of careers

It is important at the outset of this discussion around prioritisation not to overlook the participants' commitment to their jobs, and their husband's commitment to their families. To say otherwise would give an over-simplistic representation of how they described their day to day lives experiences.

Both Leah and Alice made direct reference to how their respective husbands' careers had been given priority. Less explicit however, is how their part-time working enabled their husbands to be continuously available to work and to follow a linear career pathway- both of which are highlighted by Moreau, Osgood and Halsall, (2005) as being favoured by employers. Consequently these men were in a better position than their wives to progress their careers.

The implicit assumption that she should be the one to respond to circumstances requiring unexpected childcare, highlights the sacrificing of Leah's reputation to prioritise her husband's career:

I worry about my husband's reputation at school, you know, I don't want him to be seen as the person that's having to shoot off for the kids all the time. I guess I think that that's frowned upon because that's something that I've seen at my school."

(Leah, second meeting)

Leah made it clear her husband's reputation and career took priority over hers. Dick and Hyde (2006) make the point that a woman's prioritisation of her family is more culturally legitimate than if a man wishes to do the same. Leah did not want her husband to be considered

problematic and deficient in the way she had been made to feel in the past by her school for prioritising her children. Seemingly, she was prepared to take the hit on her own reputation to protect her husband.

Both Leah and Alice were married to senior school leaders with a higher salary than them. This seemed to be important in their decision- making around priorities, and arguably created the financial scope for them not have to work full-time. Leah made the following point:

Because we've prioritised his job basically. We as a family, as a couple have said, your job is more important because you're earning more money. If he has to come out of school, he will do. He has responded if the children have had an accident at school, you know he has been the first person they've managed to get hold of sometimes, which I don't know why because I've tried to set it up so it's not, so it's me. But I think we just decided that he was in the more advanced position in his career, so he should carry on going up that career ladder.

(Leah, second meeting)

In addition to the influence of a higher salary, Leah and Alice had some insight of what their husbands' jobs involved and the necessity to be continuously available to work over a long working week. School leaders in the United Kingdom work more than 48 hours a week (Fuller, *et al.*, 2015). Alice made the following point which shows her growing disillusionment with how her husband working long hours was impacting on their family:

He does work very, very long hours, which you know we knew, we knew. When he first started (as a headteacher) it was a bit of a novelty, we all sort of took it on as a family. The school's only up the road, it's absolutely beautiful, it's a gorgeous building, we used to go up at the weekend and play football because we could, close the gates and we just let the kids run around and we really, really took it on as a family. But that novelty's sort of worn off now as it does, and he does work some incredibly long hours.

(Alice, second meeting)

Leah and Alice each allude to the decision-making around career progression and prioritisation of their husbands' careers as a joint process with their respective husbands. It is clear however, that they were also aware of the gendered expectations upon them as primary carers. The women knew they needed to be available to pick up the slack in terms of childcare if their husbands were to be enabled to be continuously available to work. The women were very aware of being stretched in terms of their own time and that additional time to progress their own careers was not available. They perceived that to progress their careers they would need to work full-time, which was not something they were prepared to do-along with a seeming acceptance of the negative implications of this decision for their careers (Brown, 2019).

Conclusions

This chapter has highlighted that for women teachers who work part-time alongside a family, 'having it all' was not what they hoped it would be. The impact of not working full-time on their careers was combined with the affective responses of guilt, stress and anxiety from juggling heavy workloads both at home and at work. The explorations have highlighted how being a mother and a part-time teacher influences choices and decision-making in relation to career progression. Importantly, working part-time appears to have exacerbated the negative effects of motherhood on career progression previously described by Smith (2016).

Reductionist assertions and assumptions of choices being 'free' (Hakim, 2000) are oversimplistic. Instead, in addition to an economic rationale, the women's decision making was influenced by societal and gendered expectations around women's roles as primary carers

and prioritisation of the needs and careers of others, often to their own detriment in terms of career progression and wellbeing. They walked the tightrope between showing commitment to their work and the 'moral minefield' of motherhood and the 'gendered moral rationalities' that shape mothering and paid work (Miller, 2017).

The findings of the study discussed in this chapter add a new dimension to the arguments of Moreau, Osgood and Halsall (2005) and Smith (2016) who challenged the commonly held perception that teaching is a good job to combine with having a family. Part-time working as a teacher does not necessarily provide women with the solution in terms of combining a career with having a family. Consequently, exploring other patterns of working flexibly are ever more important.

In the post-Covid-19 era where there has been greater adoption of flexible working patterns in the wider workforce (Forbes *et al*, 2020), schools still have a way to go to achieve at least parity with the wider workforce in adopting alternative working patterns. As teachers' pensionable age continues to rise in the United Kingdom (Teachers' Pensions, 2020), incidences of phased retirement seem likely to increase. People in new demographic groups will wish to work flexibly as part of this process. This chapter has shown that working part-time is not without its issues in terms of implications for both career and wellbeing.

Bold and empathetic leadership is required to ensure that the loss of teacher talent and potential is stemmed. This should include exploring different ways of being flexible in terms

of where, when and how different aspects of the teachers' role and school leadership can be achieved. The Covid-19 era showed that when there is a need and a necessity for widespread change in terms of working practices, these can be made to happen quickly along with the removal of previously perceived barriers to change. This chapter has shown that changes are required in the way part-time teachers work if they are to be happy and successful in combining their workload with a family life. The Covid-19 era has provided an unexpected momentum for such changes across the wider workforce which the teaching profession cannot afford to ignore if it is not to be left behind.

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