Mid-day Supervisors in English Primary Schools: A Role Theory Perspective.

Key words

Mid-day supervisors; role theory; primary schools; ethnography; school lunchtimes.

Abstract

This paper presents the findings of a multi-site case study focused on the role of mid-day supervisors in English primary schools. Ethnographic approaches were employed to gain an understanding of the role and how this is experienced by those who undertake it. This included a fully-participatory phase where the researcher inhabited the role of a mid-day supervisor. Ethnographic interviews were also conducted. The research found that role strain, caused by a range of factors, as well as whether the role was legitimised or marginalised, had a significant impact on how the role was enacted and experienced by mid-day supervisors.

Introduction

At lunchtimes in English primary schools, pupils are almost always supervised by ancillary staff, usually referred to as mid-day supervisors, who are responsible for the day-to-day management of the lunchtime period.

The role of the mid-day supervisor was established in the late 1980s. Up until this point, teachers held the responsibility for supervising children during the lunchtime period. Whist the 1960 Conditions of Service for Teachers introduced statutory ‘breaks’ for teachers, these were not a set length or at a set time. As such, supervising pupils over lunchtime remained the responsibility of teaching staff. During the mid-1980s, long-running industrial action by teaching staff saw many teachers ‘work to rule’. One of the areas of contestation was the supervision of children during school lunchtimes. On the resolution of the industrial action,

the 1987 Teachers' Pay and Conditions of Employment Act removed responsibility for the supervision of pupils from teaching staff and, for the first time, introduced a new group of staff who held responsibility for the day-to-day management of lunchtime, referred to interchangeably as mid-day supervisors. However, the more commonly used term within schools is that of 'dinner lady', reflecting the almost exclusively female composition of the workforce (Pike, 2010). The general duties of a mid-day supervisor include supervising pupils on the playground, supporting children to eat lunch by ensuring this is done on time in a safe and hygienic setting and encouraging appropriate behaviour from pupils (UNISON, 2022).

Previous research relating to this group of school staff is sparse and often small-scale. At the time of writing there are 16,796 primary schools in England and almost five million pupils enrolled at these schools. The average primary school has 282 pupils on its roll and the national average class size is 27 pupils (DfE, 2022). It is common practice for schools to employ approximately one mid-day supervisor per class of pupils, so based on the statistics available this suggests a workforce of primary-school mid-day supervisors is in the region of 175,000 individuals. Despite this substantial number, very little is known about the role itself, the nature of the work this involves or the challenges of undertaking the role.

Literature Review

Mid-day supervisors within English Primary Schools

Moore et al (2010) highlight the role of the mid-day supervisor as being one that appears to be separate from the school as a whole, with mid-day supervisors arriving and leaving at the beginning and end of lunchtime, and rarely interacting with anyone apart from pupils and each other.

Concerns about the supervision provided by mid-day supervisors were raised initially by Elton (1989), who stated that mid-day supervisors 'may actually provoke a certain amount of bad behaviour unintentionally while trying to maintain order' as they are 'not likely to be trained in group management skills' (Elton, 1989; 123). Similar concerns have continued to be raised in the intervening years, with three linked studies highlighting mid-day supervisors' perceived lack of capability in fulfilling the role (Blatchford & Sumpner, 1998; Blatchford & Baines, 2006; Baines & Blatchford, 2019).

The concern expressed by teachers about the quality of mid-day supervision could be a result of conflicting views of school staff regarding the purpose of school lunchtimes. Pike (2010) highlights this difference of views and suggests that teachers hold high regard for the opportunity lunchtime provides for children to practise speaking, listening and social skills that have been learned in classrooms in the dining hall and on the playground. Teachers also emphasise the educational 'life skills' that can be taught at lunchtimes (such as how to cut up food, zip up coats and tie shoelaces) and express frustration that rather than preparing children for the future, mid-day supervisors sometimes intervene and do things for children. Conversely, Pike (2010) comments that mid-day supervisors prioritise the safeguarding and physical well-being of pupils and ensuring that children's have consumed their lunch. The temptation to do things for children stems from the practical constraints of supervising a large number of children and the pressure to ensure that all children have finished eating before the end of lunchtime (Pike, 2010). This difference of views on the purpose of lunchtimes and the tension between teachers' emphasis on preparing children for the future as opposed to the mid-day supervisors' emphasis on pupils' safety and immediate well-being (Thomson, 2007) may go some way to explaining the concerns raised about the effectiveness of mid-day supervision.

Theories of Role

Role Expectations – Obligatory, Optional and Forbidden Behaviours

Role theory is designed to explain how individuals who occupy a particular position, such as that of a mid-day supervisor, are expected to behave (Cottrell & James, 2016; Hindin, 2011). Every role, both organizational and societal, has certain expectations that are applied to an incumbent of that position (Gross et al, 1958). Both those inhabiting the role and others who interact with the role-holders have beliefs and attitudes about what should and should not be done by those who undertake it (Kahn et al, 1964). Similarly, Linton's (1936) work on role theory argues that for every position that can be occupied within an organization or within society, there is an attached role, and that every role has an attached collection of rights and duties. Newcomb (1950) and Dahrendorf (1973) refine this further and propose that every role consists of *obligatory*, *optional* and *forbidden* behaviours for those who occupy it. These behaviours are generated and reinforced through the positioning of the role within an organization and within wider society, as well as interactions with individuals and groups occupying other roles (Turner, 2011).

Through the concept of *organisational role theory*, Biddle (1986) identifies that an employment position, such as that of a school mid-day supervisor, is associated with normative expectations of any individual undertaking the role. Alongside these expectations, organisational constraints are placed on the role, often through the use of a hierarchical system with clear role boundaries. This ensures that anyone occupying a particular role undertakes this in accordance with the normative expectations of the organisation (Turner, 2011) and conforms to the obligatory, optional and forbidden behaviours that are required.

Role Legitimisation and Marginalisation

Lave & Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998; 2011) identify that some roles within an organisation are not fully participatory, but can be occasional, peripheral, or transactional. These part-participatory roles are often those that are enacted at specific times, resulting in the limited participation of those who in occupy the role within the organisation. The role of the mid-day supervisor is an example of such a role, as it is only enacted for a short period of time during the school day. Wenger (1998) highlights that when part-participatory roles exist, these can either become legitimised or marginalised, and that this is very much dependent on how those who hold fully-participatory roles perceive those who hold part-participatory roles.

In the case of legitimate participation (Wenger, 1998), a role's part-participation in the community is deemed by others to be unproblematic, and the participation that does occur is perceived by others to be valuable within the community. When a role becomes legitimized, often there will be elements of shared activity, practice and knowledge between those who inhabit the part-participatory role and those who occupy full-participatory roles within the organisation. Positive interactions between individuals in part-participatory and full-participatory roles occur regularly, creating positive role relationships and a sense of belonging for those in the part-participatory role.

In the case of marginalised participation, the role's part-participation in the community is deemed by others to be problematic, and the participation that does occur is perceived by other to have little value within the community. When a role becomes marginalised, there will be a lack of shared activity and practice between those who inhabit the part-participatory role and those who occupy full-participatory roles within the community. Often, knowledge will be withheld from those in part-participatory roles and there will be an absence of

interaction or negative interactions between those in part-participatory roles and those in full-participatory roles, creating negative role relationships and a sense of separateness for those in the part-participatory role.

Role Conflict and Role Strain

Whilst there are normative expectations of a role in terms of the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of those who undertake it (Biddle & Thomas, 1966; Biddle, 1986; Dahrendorf, 1973; Gross, 1958; Hindin,2011; Kahn et al, 1964; Linton, 1936; Newcomb, 1950) role conflict can occur when the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of an individual who undertakes the role are in conflict with normative organisational or societal expectations of the role.

Shivers-Blackwell (2004) highlights role conflict as a concept that occurs when there are differences between the individual's conception of their job and how it should be enacted and the organisational conception of this, whilst Matthews & Crow (2003) highlight that role conflict can occur when there are different co-existing expectations of a role. Turner (2011) defines this type of role conflict as *intra-role conflict* and highlights how this is often influenced by the organisational hierarchy, whereby the expectations of the role that are held by those more highly placed in the hierarchy are given precedence, even when these conflict with the expectations of the role held by those who actually undertake it. As a result, when limited time or resources preclude equal attention to all aspects of a role, it is the expectations of those positioned higher in the hierarchy that are prioritised, often to the detriment of other aspects of the role that may be perceived to be equally or more valuable by those who undertake it (Turner, 1978).

Another aspect of role conflict that can occur is that of a conflict between different roles occupied by an individual. All individuals hold a diverse range of roles and, at times, the different expectations of these may result in conflict or incompatibility with each other

(Hindin, 2011). Through the use of the term *inter-role conflict*, Turner (2011) highlights that people can undertake different roles that require contradictory kinds of attitudes, beliefs and behaviours.

Goode (1960) highlights that both *intra-role conflict* and *inter-role conflict* can lead to *role strain*, whereby the enactment of the role involves 'anxiety, tension and frustration' (Turner, 2011; p249) for those who undertake it. The occurrence, intensity or absence of role strain felt by individuals undertaking a role influences the way in which they enact their role, and their own perceptions of the role that they hold (Goode, 1960).

However, role strain can also be an outcome of other factors aside from role conflict, such as the incumbent's self-perceived incapability to fulfil the role, a lack of sufficient training or a lack of experience undertaking the role (Goode, 1960). *Role overload* can also lead to role strain, when the requirements of the role exceed the time, energy or resources of the individual who is undertaking it (Turner, 2011). Role strain can also be the outcome of *role ambiguity* (Karkolla, Kuittinen & Hintsa, 2019), whereby the incumbent of the role is uncertain as to the functions that they are supposed to perform whist undertaking it, or a lack of *role clarity* (Papastylianou, Kaila & Polychronopoulos, 2008) whereby the purpose of the role is unclear to those who undertake it.

The obligatory, optional and forbidden behaviours that are established, the legitimisation or marginalisation of a role and the factors that influence levels of role strain all have an impact on the way in which a role is enacted and experienced by those who perform it.

Methodology

Multi-site Case Study Design

The study was undertaken in three primary schools in England. Three school catchment areas were identified that provided variety in terms of locational demographics; inner-city,

suburban and rural. One primary school from each catchment area was then identified and an e-mail was sent to each headteacher to provide an overview of the project and to request consideration of the research being conducted within the school. Two of the three headteachers replied and following a meeting, both agreed that the research could be undertaken. For the purposes of the research, the suburban school became known as Kirkley Road Primary School and the rural school as Brecks Drive Primary School.

No response was received from the inner-city school. Therefore, a further email was sent to the headteacher of a different school within the identified catchment area. A reply was received and following a meeting, the headteacher agreed that the research could be undertaken within the school. For the purposes of the research, this inner-city school became known as Gleneagles Park Primary School.

Each school was located in different Local Authority, but they were all part of a different Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). As such, the schools were not subject to authority-wide policy or regulations. None of the MATs had published policies or guidance related to lunchtimes at schools within the trust, so this was determined by each individual school. All three schools had a 'lunchtime policy' published on their website that was agreed by the head teacher and academy governors, but not the Board of Trustees for the MAT. School lunchtime was therefore an aspect of school life that was operationalised at individual-school level, with decisions about this time of the school day being the responsibility of the head teacher.

Kirkley Road Primary School was located on a suburban estate comprising of mostly social housing, with approximately 300 pupils on roll, mostly within walking-distance of the school. A large majority of pupils at the school came from a white British background and there was a very high proportion of pupils entitled to Free School Meals (FSM). Brecks Drive Primary School was located in a rural setting and most of the 70 pupils on roll lived in surrounding

towns and villages. There was an average proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and a low proportion of pupils entitled to FSM. Gleneagles Park Primary School was located in an inner-city estate, with approximately 500 pupils on roll, mostly in the immediate streets surrounding the school. The vast majority of pupils came from ethnic minority backgrounds and many were born abroad and had moved to the UK during their childhood.

Yin (2012) outlines the benefit of case studies, which provide examples of real people in real situations and allows the deep penetration of a context that may not be achievable through other methodological approaches. This was judged to be appropriate to this study, as it aimed to gain an understanding of real people (the mid-day supervisors) within a real situation (the primary school in which they worked). A multi-site case study design allowed an exploration of the role and place of the mid-day supervisors in different locations and contexts.

Often, case study research maintains a focus on one specific site and provides an in-depth exploration of a particular context or situation (Thomas, 2011). There were two reasons for making the decision not to do this and instead spend time within three schools, thus adopting a multi-site case study design (Yin, 2014). It was felt that using a single-case design would compromise the generalisability of the study (Newby, 2014). Whilst a single-case design may be appropriate to explore an extreme or unique context (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011), this research involved mainstream primary schools and there were no obvious reasons to suspect these were significantly different from each other, or to primary schools across the country. A multi-site case study design allowed analysis of the similarities and differences in the role of mid-day supervisors in different schools. This better determined commonalities that were likely to be mirrored on a wider basis within primary schools, increasing the

potential generalisability of the findings and going some way towards avoiding the common criticism that a single-case design attracts in this respect (Hammersley, 2008).

An Ethnographic Approach

Previous research projects focused on social times in schools, such as breaktimes and lunchtimes, have successfully adopted ethnographic approaches (Willett, 2011; Marsh, 2012; Mercader, Weber & Durif-Varembont, 2015). Pole & Morrison (2003) define an ethnographic approach as 'an approach to social research based on the first-hand experience of social action within a discrete location, in which the objective is to collect data which will convey the subjective reality of the lived experiences of those who inhabit that location'.

Due to the focus of this research being on a time in school that is dominated by social interaction within a discrete location, ethnographic approaches were considered to be an appropriate means of data collection. Grieg, Taylor & Mackay (2013) state that ethnographic approaches are particularly suitable for collecting data in informal and unstructured settings, which matched the situation of the time of the school day in which the study was being conducted. The potential of ethnographic approaches to provide a unique insight into educational worlds (Mills & Morton, 2013) and the ability to provide a comprehensive description of the social interaction within a location or event (Pole & Morrison, 2003), such as a school lunchtime, also made this approach to data collection suitable for this research.

Within each school, ethnographic approaches to data collection were therefore adopted. This involved the researcher becoming fully participant by assuming the role of a mid-day supervisor at each school for fifteen consecutive days. By working in-role alongside the mid-day supervisors, it was possible to observe their working practices and interactions, both with

each other and with others in the school, such as staff and pupils. Sharing in the work of the mid-day supervisors also positioned the researcher in a way that offered regular opportunities to collect data through their own day-to-day observations and interactions with them. Being fully-participant also provided the opportunity to interact with the mid-day supervisors in a way that other approaches would not have allowed. As Puttick (2017) highlights, it is fair to assume that the mid-day supervisors said different things to someone who was sharing in their work than they would have done to someone who was not.

Field Notes

Although there is debate surrounding the extent to which different methods can be considered as ethnographic, there is consensus that use of field notes should be the core method when a study adopts an ethnographic approach to data collection (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Mills & Morton, 2013; Delamont, 2014; Campbell & Lassiter, 2015).

As this study involved becoming fully-participant in the role of a mid-day supervisor, it was decided that making notes 'in the field' was impractical and might also have compromised the researcher's fully-participant role. The work of a mid-day supervisor in a primary school is generally one of constant activity such as cleaning tables, zipping-up coats, tying shoelaces, holding play equipment and administering minor first-aid as well as supervising children. Being an active a full participant in the field left very little time for writing (Atkins & Wallace, 2012), particularly as the work required frequent movement or use of the hands (Murchison, 2010). Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, making notes is not generally seen as 'normal' for mid-day supervisors. Although writing may be seen as an unremarkable activity in a school, this does not generally take place at lunchtime by mid-day supervisors. It was quite likely that this would have influenced the natural behaviour of the others (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), which would have compromised a key principle of the ethnographic approach. It was also possible that pupils and mid-day supervisors would

perceive note-taking as inappropriate or threatening and perhaps even create suspicion about what was being written, which again would lead to unnatural 'reactive' behaviour (Madden, 2010) and therefore put at risk the principles of the ethnographic approach to data collection.

For these reasons, when undertaking the role of the mid-day supervisor, field notes were written from memory, as advocated by Mills & Morton (2013). These field notes were written shortly after the school lunchtime ended, and always within an hour of leaving the school because it was important that they were written before memory became 'clouded by other events and the passage of time' (Atkins & Wallace, 2012).

Ethnographic Interviews

In addition to the use of field notes, ethnographic interviews with three mid-day supervisors were conducted at all three school. Interviews are considered a cornerstone of an ethnographic approach to research (Heyl, 2007) and remain one of the most important ways of knowing others and gaining the perspectives of participants (Madden, 2010). To maintain the principles of an ethnographic approach, the interviews were undertaken in the context of a wider study (Forsey, 2008) and intertwined with other channels of fieldwork (Campbell & Lassiter, 2015). The focus of the interviews was on themes that had emerged through the participatory phase of the research in each school.

The aim of the ethnographic interview was to give the participant an opportunity to respond to questions and give their perspective on issues on his or her own terms (Pole & Morrison, 2003). To this end, the interviews conducted with mid-day supervisors were designed in such a way as to allow this to happen as successfully as possible. Firstly, each interview was structured using a loose interview schedule which allowed for some variation and change in the process (Murchison, 2010), but which focused on the key themes that had emerged or incidents that had that had occurred in the research so far. This 'interview guide approach'

(Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011: 413) allowed the questions to set the broad topics and issues to be discussed, but also gave the opportunity for the participant to move in different directions whilst maintaining the overall shape of the interview (Forsey, 2008). When conducting the interviews, the questions were open ended as these were more likely to encourage the participant to provide expansive answers and provide the 'deep' data that is at the heart of good ethnographic interviews (Murchison, 2010).

Discussion and Findings

Role Expectations – Obligatory, Optional and Forbidden Behaviours

There was significant variation in the normative expectations of mid-day supervisors at the different schools, and therefore some differences in the obligatory, optional and forbidden behaviours (Newcomb, 1950; Dahrendorf, 1973) expected of those who occupied the role.

Some behaviours that that were forbidden at one school were obligatory or optional at others. For example, administering first aid was forbidden at Kirkley Road, obligatory as part of the role at Brecks Drive and optional at Gleneagles Park, where mid-day supervisors were allowed to administer first aid, but also 'opt out' of doing so. Similarly, mid-day supervisors at Brecks Drive were expected to enact the school's behaviour policy at lunchtime, whereas this was forbidden at Kirkley Road and Gleneagles Park. Undertaking pastoral work with pupils was also an expectation of the role at Brecks Drive, whereas this was optional at Gleneagles Park and discouraged (although not forbidden) at Kirkley Road. Professional interaction with other staff was also strongly discouraged (though again not forbidden) at Kirkley Road and Gleneagles Park, yet was obligatory at Brecks Drive.

Whilst variation was evident between the schools, there were also some behaviours that were considered to be obligatory within all three schools. These mostly focused on the procedural duties that were expected to be undertaken by mid-day supervisors, such as preparing the

eating area with cutlery and crockery and setting up the outdoor area with play equipment for pupils to use at lunchtime. Mid-day supervisors at all schools were expected to intervene when poor behaviour occurred, although they way in which mid-day supervisors were expected to do this was different in each school. Mid-day supervisors at all schools were also expected to ensure that all pupils had finished eating by the end of lunchtime so that lessons could begin. There was also an expectation in all the schools that the outdoor and indoor area were cleared by the end of lunchtime so that other activities could take place in these areas during the afternoon.

Role Ligitimisation and Role Marginalisation

In the case of the mid-day supervisor role at Kirkley Road, the part-participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; 2011) of this group of staff was deemed to be problematic. Holding roles in both the local community and the school was perceived to be problematic in terms of confidentiality as the knowledge that mid-day supervisors held about pupils and families originated in the local community. As one mid-day supervisors stated, they were perceived by other staff to be "*one of them* [families from the estate], *and not one of us* [school staff]". Mid-day supervisors felt that their participation at lunchtime was considered to have little value, and that other staff did not really understand the role or consider it to be beneficial to the school and the pupils. This tension was also identified by Pike (2010), who highlighted the differing context between mid-day supervisors and other staff within the school and the potential for this to result in conflict.

At Kirkley Road, mid-day supervisors were not involved in any other aspects of the school community and opportunities to engage in joint activity or shared practice alongside other school staff did not occur. Indeed, the organisation of lunchtime had been structured so that other staff and mid-day supervisors very rarely shared the same physical space as each other.

Information about pupils and about the school was also withheld from mid-day supervisors and this prevented shared knowledge. Relationships between mid-day supervisors and other school staff were negative and often hostile. As a result, the role of the mid-day supervisor at Kirkley Road became one that was marginalised from the school community as a whole (Wenger, 1998).

Whilst the mid-day supervisors' participation in the school at Brecks Drive was still part-participatory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; 2011), although this had been extended beyond previous role boundaries, the way in which the mid-day supervisor role was considered to be a valuable part of the school workforce led to it becoming legitimised within the school, rather than marginalised. The part-participation of this group of staff was not deemed to be problematic by others, or by the mid-day supervisors themselves. Mid-day supervisors felt that their participation in the school community was considered to be valuable and worthwhile. Interactions between mid-day supervisors and other staff who held central roles were positive, creating positive role relationships and a sense of belonging for mid-day supervisors even though they held a part-participatory role within the school.

The legitimate participation of mid-day supervisors at Brecks Drive was further reinforced by mid-day supervisors and other staff engaging in shared practice (Wenger, 2011). The most obvious example of this was the time that mid-day supervisors spent in classrooms during the school's ERIC session at the beginning of the afternoon, when they would engage in the same activity as other staff. The organisation of lunchtime was also structured to ensure that mid-day supervisors and other staff shared the same physical space as each other at the beginning and end of lunchtime, creating 'boundary encounters'(Wenger, 2011) so that shared practice could occur. Instances of unplanned shared practice also occurred regularly at Brecks Drive, such as other staff undertaking the procedural duties of mid-day supervisors at the start of lunchtime and joining them on the playground towards the end of lunchtime to transition the

children back into classrooms together. Other staff and mid-day supervisors completed first aid records in the same way, enacted the same behaviour policy (often in collaboration) and attended training together.

The part-participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; 2011) of mid-day supervisors at Gleneagles Park was strictly limited to the lunchtime period. Whilst this part-participation was not perceived to be problematic in itself, either by the mid-day supervisors themselves or by other staff within the school community, it led to a distinct separation of this group of staff from the rest of the school workforce, as also highlighted in research by Moore et al (2010). Those who were fully-participant in the school community did not seem to take interest in the work of mid-day supervisors and this prevented a positive role relationship from developing between mid-day supervisors and other staff within the school.

At Gleneagles Park, mid-day supervisors were not involved in any other aspects of the school community and opportunities to engage in joint activity or shared practice alongside other school staff did not occur. Indeed, the constraint on the times that mid-day supervisors were permitted to be in the school building and the practical organisation of lunchtime meant that other staff and mid-day supervisors very rarely shared the same physical space as each other. Whilst mid-day supervisors had participated in both first aid and safeguarding training, this had occurred separately to rather than alongside other staff. Information about pupils was also withheld from mid-day supervisors and this prevented shared knowledge.

As a result, the role of the mid-day supervisor at Gleneagles Park became one that was marginalised from the school community. However, this did not seem to be perceived negatively by the mid-day supervisors themselves, who considered that their role at the school was valued within and beneficial to their cultural community.

Role Conflict and Role Strain

The extent to which role strain was experienced by mid-day supervisors, and why this occurred, was different between the three schools in this study.

Mid-day supervisors at Kirkley Road experienced significant intra-role conflict as a result of conflicting conceptions of the role between themselves and those who occupied other roles in the school, and their negative and often hostile interactions and role relationships with other staff. There were also elements of inter-role conflict for mid-day supervisors at Kirkley Road, as the role held a position in the local community that was perceived to be problematic by the school and led to constraints on mid-day supervisors that were not applied to any other staff. A lack of training for mid-day supervisors, especially when they first took on the role, meant that they felt incapable of fulfilling the role and the lack of a job description caused role ambiguity about the functions of the role that they were expected to fulfil. Role overload, exacerbated by Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM), was also significant at Kirkley Road as the requirement to ensure that all pupils had finished eating by the end of lunchtime was not possible to achieve within this time with the staffing resources that were available. As a result of these factors, and especially the high levels of intra-role conflict and role overload, role strain was a significant aspect of undertaking the role for mid-day supervisors at Kirkley Road.

Mid-day supervisors at Brecks Drive, however, experienced much lower levels of role strain. There was a consistent understanding of the function of their role within the school that was shared by mid-day supervisors and other staff, who also had positive role relationships built through positive interactions that ensured that inter-role conflict was minimised. There was a clear job description that avoided role ambiguity for those who occupied it and planned induction and ongoing training that supported mid-day supervisors to feel capable of fulfilling the functions of the role. Whilst role overload had occurred with the introduction of UIFSM, this was no longer the case as the school had employed an additional mid-day

supervisor in response to this change. The only factor that contributed to role strain at Brecks Drive was that of inter-role conflict, as mid-day supervisors had begun to perform duties within the classroom that were usually undertaken by teaching assistants. This transition between performing the functions of a mid-day supervisor and what was perceived to be a function of a teaching assistant caused inter-role conflict for mid-day supervisors as they did not consider themselves to be qualified to perform this. Whilst this inter-role conflict therefore did create some element of role strain for mid-day supervisors at Brecks Drive, this was not a significant aspect of undertaking the role for mid-day supervisors at the school.

Mid-day supervisors at Gleneagles Park also experienced a number of different factors that led to role strain. The conception of the role held by the school that the role should be mostly procedural contrasted with the conception that mid-day supervisors held that the role should be focused on pastoral work with children, resulting in intra-role conflict. However, this was not as intense as the inter-role conflict experienced by mid-day supervisors. As a result of the strong positioning of the role in their cultural communities, there was significant conflict between the normative expectations of mid-day supervisors between the school and their cultural community. This created significant inter-role conflict and therefore role strain for mid-day supervisors, who were often forced to make a choice between enacting the expectations of the school or the expectations of their cultural community. Role overload was also significant at Gleneagles Park. As a result of growing pupil numbers and the shortening of the lunchtime period, the requirement to ensure that all pupils had finished eating by the end of lunchtime was not possible to achieve within the time that was available. As a result of high levels of inter-role conflict and role overload, role strain was a significant aspect of undertaking the role for mid-day supervisors at Gleneagles Park.

Conclusion

All aspects of the theories of role that have been considered impacted on how the role of the mid-day supervisor was enacted in the three different schools, and the experience of those who did so.

In each school, the obligatory, optional and forbidden behaviours established and reinforced the normative expectations of the role was different. In schools where the normative expectations of the organisation did not align with the mid-day supervisors' own normative expectations of the role, this caused discontent and job dissatisfaction. Mostly, differences focused on the difference between the organisational perception that the role should mostly be a procedural one and the mid-day supervisors' perception that the role should be mostly focused on pastoral work. When the normative expectations of the organisation and the role-holders aligned, this led to a more positive experience for mid-day supervisors and supported job satisfaction and wellbeing.

The role of the mid-day supervisor will inevitably be one that is part-participatory. However, the way in which this is either legitimised or marginalised has a significant impact on the way in which the role is perceived in the school by all stakeholders, including the mid-day supervisors themselves. When the part-participatory nature of the role is legitimised, mid-day supervisors perceive themselves to be a valued part of the school community where their work is valued and recognised. However, if the part-participatory nature of the role leads to marginalisation, the role is less likely to be one that is valued, both by the mid-day supervisors themselves and others within the school community.

Role strain can also have a significant impact on those who undertake the role of a mid-day supervisor. The presence and intensity of intra-role conflict, inter-role conflict, role overload or role ambiguity, or indeed a combination of all of these factors, has a significant impact on

the way in which the role is experienced by mid-day supervisors and their job satisfaction, commitment and performance.

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