

**Learning to learn:  
Consultancy, internal agency and the appropriation of learning  
theory in English Schools.**

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**Abstract:**

In the years following the 1988 Education Reform Act schools have been subject to a range of policy interventions that have been aligned to a market ideology. These have limited the impact of local authority governance whilst opening up the possibilities of collaboration with commercial providers of learning materials. More recently there has been a significant growth in the development of, and interest in, new educational theories of learning to learn – many of them have drawn upon recent discoveries in Neuroscience. This interest has spawned a range of responses in the field of commercially produced learning packages and an increased involvement with educational consultancy.

The aim of this research was to examine how learning theory is constructed and appropriated in English schools. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with teachers across a broad selection of English schools, Foucaultian discourse analysis is used to explore issues of power, agency and resistance in relation to the construction of learning theory within school communities. Findings reveal the value placed on external expertise by teachers and the impact this has on their own agency and professionalism. Furthermore the role of school-to-school networks and initiative -specific languages of learning are uncovered in relation to the significant spread and reproduction of commercial programmes in school. Ultimately the possibilities for professional, mediating practices are discussed as a means of militating the risk to teacher professionalism posed by the externalisation of educational expertise.

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**List of abbreviations:**

AST – Advanced Skills Teacher

ALPS – Accelerated Learning in the Primary School

BERA British Educational Research Association

BHAGS – Big Hairy Audacious Goals

BLP – Building Learning Power

CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

CPD Continuing Professional Development

DFE – Department For Education

DFES – Department For Education and Skills

EEG – Electro Encephalogram

ERA – Education Reform Act

FDA – Foucaultian Discourse Analysis

FMRI – Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging

GTCE – General Teaching Council for England

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

LC – Learning Communities

MCA – Management Consultancies Association

MIT Multiple Intelligence Theory

MRI – Magnetic Resonance Imaging

Ofsted – Office for Standards in Education, children's services and skills

PET – Positron Emission Tomography

PRP – Performance Related Pay

RCTs – Randomised Control Trials



REF- Research Excellence Framework

TLC – Teacher Learning Communities

TLO – The Learning Organisation

TLRP - Teaching and Learning Research Programme

TUC – Trades Unions Congress

SLT – Senior Leadership Team

VAK – Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic Learning

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction:**

This thesis takes as its focus the appropriation and implementation of metacognitive, commercial and new learning approaches in school and the rise of educational consultancy. As relatively recent phenomena its intention is to analyse in a genealogical sense how they have come into being – to deconstruct and pull apart their foundations. This is done with the express intention of better understanding the scope for teachers to engage professionally in processes that impact upon their work. Consequently this introduction will involve an exploration of key concepts that have a bearing on the field of enquiry.

### **1.1 Educational Reform and the marketisation of knowledge:**

In 1988 the introduction of the Education Reform Act (ERA) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland had a profound effect upon the work of schools and teachers' roles within them.

The ERA set in train a broad range of policy initiatives that Gewirtz (2002) refers to collectively as the 'Post-welfarist education policy complex' (p.3). Spanning both the Conservative and subsequent 1997 New Labour government and the 2010 Coalition government, the 'complex' oversaw an increase in state control of education despite being born out of a market ideology that advocated 'choice' and 'individualism'. The resultant legacy of the ERA though was a 'utilitarian discourse of efficiency, effectiveness, performance and productivity' (p.30). The role of the Local Education Authority became limited as schools were given greater financial control and the freedom to outsource services. Competition increased as schools were now measured not only against past performance but also one another. The act saw the arrival of a centrally determined National curriculum (Kelly, 2009), a move away from teacher curricular intervention and control that crucially led to the introduction of The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in the subsequent Education (Schools) Act (1992). One

impact of these substantive changes was that teachers' work was directed and scrutinised in increasingly rigorous ways with schools being subject to increasing policy directives such as the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies (DFE 1999). As a result of this, external intervention in teachers work became increasingly routine. Where once they had been directors and constructors of learning and curricular experiences, now they were increasingly seen as deliverers of curriculum (Foreman-Peck, & Winch, 2005). This did not lead to greater autonomy of professional practice but paradoxically to an 'intensification' of work and the increasing implementation of plans and learning schemes that had been designed externally (Apple, 2004; Leaton-Gray, 2007). Luke, (2003), suggests that a 'narrow version of educational science' was responsible for the resultant 'marketisation of educational knowledge' (p90) that subsequently occurred. This narrow interpretation of evidence was based upon a limited interpretation of educational evidence.

This was symptomatic of the dynamics of a quasi-educational marketplace that inducted schools into a 'culture of self-interest' rather than a broader societal, community focused engagement (Ball, 2013, p.53). Now schools were set against one another with survival being imperative and distinctiveness, in terms of exciting pedagogical initiatives, providing a market advantage. Furthermore schools were increasingly more responsive to the perceived needs of their consumers adopting commercial pedagogical programmes that replaced more traditional teacher approaches.

## **1.2 Neuroscience and learning theory:**

One manifestation of this marketisation of educational knowledge was the growth of educational products targeted at schools that laid claim to a scientific foundation. These were envisaged, both by their architects and teachers, as having the potential to transform learning. Furthermore many of these products drew upon the contested concept of learning styles as a means of tailoring lessons to individual pupil needs (Smith, 1996). In 2004 even the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) endorsed the idea of learning styles. Emerging from a standards and excellence agenda that placed pressure on schools to solve all

problems of educational under-attainment, they suggested that learning styles help teachers to 'exploit pupils' strengths and build their capacity to learn'. This intervention was symptomatic of the conceptual void between education and neuroscience that was being 'filled by packages and programmes claiming to be based on brain science' (Goswami, 2006, p.2.).

However in more recent years the field of Neuroscience, the study of how the brain functions and processes information, has grown significantly. Indeed Cambridge University's Neuroscience homepage (2012) states that 'neuroscience now transcends biology and, increasingly, involves novel intellectual alliances such as ... educational neuroscience'. The potential of Neuroscience to impact positively upon learning both in and out of the classroom has caused great debate. Geake and Cooper, (2003), suggest that, if applied thoughtfully, Neuroscientific findings offer significant pedagogical enhancements in the classroom that can support 'intuitive high-quality teaching practices' (p.16). However others, such as Bruer and Hirsch-Pasek, (2007), are more circumspect and question what they see as the brain/education barrier that separates the Neuroscientific and Educational Communities. They suggest that developmental evidence, drawn from teacher observation and experience, currently has far more relevance to educational practitioners than brain science, which does not yet offer strategies for improvements in pedagogy. Despite such concerns the emergence of a new educational science and its concomitant possibilities of enhanced learning have captured the attention of not only the educational community but also parents and, unsurprisingly, commercial providers of continuing professional development to schools (Ball, 2004a).

### **1.3 Commercialisation and consultancy:**

Since the late 1990's, it is argued, schools have been increasingly subject to packaged commercial learning solutions that reduce the learning process for pupils and teachers to an interaction where value is based on that which is quantifiable and where the 'social' has been erased (Ball, 2013, p.26).

In effect the impact and importance of the teacher/child relationship, which is undeniably difficult to quantify, has been eschewed in favour of the easily measurable. The resultant commodification of learning theory, where learning is transformed into a product to be bought and sold, has led to an increasing commercialisation of education (Ball, 2004a). Furthermore, it has added to the growth of what Revell (2000) describes as private sector, 'edu-business' involvement in education with its 'industry and 'political economy' of textbooks and knowledge construction' (p.129) driven by external educational consultancy. This has been especially prevalent in the emergence of learning style theories and metacognitive approaches that seek to develop pupils' understanding of how and when best they learn (Howard-Jones, Franey,,Mashmoushi Liao 2009). These interventions, designed for profit, have proliferated in recent years. Indeed, as Coffield et al stated;

fortunes are being made as instruments, manuals, videotapes, in-service packages, overhead transparencies, publications and workshops are all commercially advertised and promoted vigorously (2004, p62).

It is possible that, as Ball (2009) suggested, we have seen the emergence of a 'competition state' where aspects of policy – i.e. training, consultancy and continuing professional development is sold 'as a retail commodity' (p.84). Within such a landscape and as a means of satisfying the demands of state performativity, it is perhaps not surprising that schools have developed this enduring relationship with commercial providers of learning approaches. As Carr states;

Educational theory is simply an expression of a widely felt need to ground our beliefs and actions in knowledge that derives from some authoritative, external and independent source' (2006, p.137).

He goes on to assert that no such source of knowledge exists. Yet the financial worth of this burgeoning market is testament to this 'need' with significant

amounts being spent on the outsourcing of Continuing Professional Development to educational consultants.

Coffield argues that the ascendancy of educational consultancy within the area of metacognition and learning styles has given rise to concerns that such commercial involvement presents a danger 'of mindless and atheoretical empiricism' (2004, p62). That is practices are adopted and implemented with little if any rigour. Indeed research has shown that this adoption is even more likely when these new practices are promoted with reference to neuroscience and the brain (Weisberg, Keil, Goodstein, Rawson, & Gray, 2008). Weisberg et al suggest that this may be because of the inclusion of technical language and strong visual imagery that adds to the verisimilitude of the explanation. It is no surprise then that many of these external approaches use brain-science as a justification of their methods. Furthermore, Geake (2008) asserted that, these 'neuromythologies' often have very little basis in fact but are all too readily assimilated into the collective consciousness of the teaching profession. For example Dennison's Brain Gym (1989), a programme of 'educational kinaesthetics' that consists of physical movements pupils undertake in order to enhance specific cognitive skills, is widely used in this country despite concerns about its claims (Hyatt, 2007).

#### **1.4 Personal, professional perspectives:**

My own experience as a Deputy Head-teacher in a large Primary School first sparked my interest in this area. Having had direct involvement in the implementation of a commercial programme to develop pupils' skills of metacognition that was predicated upon neuroscientific research, it was clear that a decision to adopt the practice was made prior to its dissemination and evaluation amongst staff. This was largely borne out of the experience of a partner school in a networked learning community (Jackson & Temperley, 2006) – what seemed right for that school was assumed to be applicable elsewhere. Practice between schools in the network was shared as was a common 'educational vision' and the implementation of the programme was swift with little consideration for the wider implications. This process was very much driven by the Head-teachers of the schools as 'learning' was seen as being at the heart of

the community. The only managerial concerns seemingly were related to the practicalities of resourcing materials for all classrooms.

I was not convinced at the time that there was sufficient professional intelligence of the programme or understanding of the best means for its implementation.

There was, however, an acceptance that the implementation of the programme needed to be 'managed' and that its success lay in the efficacy of this implementation. This focus on practicalities seemed to override any consideration of the validity or worth of the chosen initiative. Senior leaders in the community of schools were keen to share their ideas of how best to embed the programme and 'learning walks' were organised for teachers to visit each other's schools. The evidential basis for the programme seemed to rely on simplistic, casual acceptance of the validity of the commercial materials rather than any detailed analysis. As Slavin (2002) suggested;

It is not that we have not learned anything ... It is that applications of the findings of educational research remain haphazard, and that evidence is respected only occasionally, and only if it happens to correspond to current educational or political fashions (p.16).

It was this experience that led me to consider the ways in which learning theory is constructed and implemented in English schools and in particular how justifications for new programmes are related to neuroscientific findings and further scientific warrants. I was also wished to better understand how teachers were able to assess such external interventions and whether there was a theoretical basis to their chosen approaches. In essence I was concerned with the degree to which teachers possessed the agency to be able to make critical judgements about the value of new pedagogical programmes and the evidence base for their adoption. In recent history, the now defunct General Teaching Council for England (GTCE) made attempts to make teachers more aware of research findings and the evidence base for particular educational approaches (GTCE, 2001) but of late the dissemination of research has been limited to a search for 'the most effective ways to achieve certain ends' without addressing questions about the 'desirability of the ends themselves' (Biesta, 2007, p.21).

Consequently this thesis examines the conditions of possibility that have given rise to the emergence of such approaches within English schools. That is to say it is concerned with exploring the limits and boundaries of the discourses of learning to learn and how these have created the space within which learning to learn programmes exist.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

After considering the wider post ERA policy context, subsequent emergence of market principles within education and the growth of learning programmes, often informed by neuroscience the following research questions were developed:

*How are new learning approaches popularised in English schools and upon what frameworks are they contingent?* The focus here is on the ways and means in which new learning approaches are adopted, disseminated and reinforced. As many of these approaches are packaged, 'off the peg' educational 'solutions' it is important to consider how individual and collective teacher agency impacts upon the assimilation of such theories in school.

*How has recent educational discourse shaped and influenced pedagogical implementation of neuroscientific research?* This question considers the specific appropriation of neuroscientific research findings into commercial (and other) pedagogical programmes. It seeks to find out whether there is a relationship between this appropriation and the post ERA policy context of increasing marketisation within education.

*How can teacher-led resistance bridge the gap between commercial providers of educational materials and educational communities?* This question considers how teacher-led action may militate against the inappropriate or inexperienced utilisation of new pedagogical programmes (both commercial and state endorsed).

*How do schools perceive the role of external educational consultancy and what are the drivers for employing them?* This question reflects upon the rise of educational consultancy and attempts to uncover the institutional, political and policy driven pressures that encourage schools to employ external consultants and utilise their learning materials.



*What areas of consultancy are predominantly employed in the research schools and how are these evaluated?*

After identifying the types of consultancy used within the schools the focus here is to explore how these are evaluated both prior to, and after, implementation. The role of the class teacher within this process as well as that of senior managers is key.

### **1.6 Methodological focus:**

The above research questions attempt to explore the broad conditions of possibility that have given rise to the growth of commercial learning programmes in schools. To be able to examine the discourses that constitute this phenomenon this study sets out to critically analyse them using a genealogical method that is informed by the work of Foucault. Foucault's contribution to critical theory is complex, contested and at times controversial (Mills, 2003). The overarching aim of his work was as Allen (2014) reflected to;

Pursue power to its multiple locations and render visible operations that have hitherto remained unremarked (p.58)

It is the intention of this research to focus on power in relation to the hidden procedures that may govern the implementation of learning programmes in schools. However in doing so it does not seek to replicate Foucault. Instead Foucault's 'tool box' is seen as a point of departure for the research ahead. As Ball (2013) observed;

The challenge is not to agree with Foucault but to be disconcerted by him, to be made to think in new spaces and to consider new possibilities for thought (p.4).

Whilst genealogy is typically categorised as historical inquiry, Foucault's conception is less concerned with the nature of the field of study. Rather it considers the ways in which the subject is constituted. More specifically this will entail developing a 'history of the present' that explores the phenomena of the appropriation of metacognitive and new learning approaches in schools and asks:

In what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory,  
what place is occupied by whatever is singular,  
contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints?  
(Foucault, 1984 p.45)

Hence where specific learning interventions are seen, unquestioningly, as obligatory and necessary, the contingencies and conditions upon which they rely need to be exposed. Therefore I intend to use a genealogical methodology as a means of examining and uncovering the constraints that endorse specific approaches whilst limiting others.

This chapter has briefly introduced the terrain of inquiry, its research questions and methodological focus. It is now important to undertake an examination of the literature in relation to the key areas identified above. This is necessary in order to position the inquiry within its field and to locate more coherently its contextual background.

## **Chapter 2**

### **2.1 Literature Review**

The purpose of this literature review is to critically assess the body of academic writing that has relevance to the study. As such I intend to focus on those texts and articles, both recent and historic, which are apposite and have a bearing on the research questions detailed in the introductory chapter. My intention in doing this is to locate my area of research clearly within the field of study and demonstrate how and why models of learning, some of which claim to be based on neuroscience, have emerged over time.

### **2.2 Learning and neuroscience**

Our understanding of learning in education has traditionally been drawn from the field of psychology and constituent disciplines such as developmental psychology and cognitive psychology. In particular behavioural psychology has historically had a significant impact upon the study of learning within schools from Pavlov's model of classical conditioning through to the work of Watson, Thorndike and Skinner in relation to operant conditioning (Bartlett & Burton, 2012). More recently there has been a sustained interest in the work of Piaget and Bruner with their focus on internal learning processes, a renaissance of Vygotsky's consideration of socially constructed learning and the popularisation of Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory (Illeris, 2007).

However, as Illeris (1999) contends, many of these models of learning have been seen as being in competition with one another with individual schools subscribing to one model rather than seeking to develop a holistic conception of learning (p.7) if indeed that is possible. It is into this fractured landscape that models of learning, some of which lay claim to being informed by neuroscience, have begun to make their influence felt. In particular, there has been an increased emphasis in recent years on investigating the potential that neuroscience, and more specifically educational neuroscience, may have for education.

Indeed in 1990 the United States Congress declared that the following decade would be the 'Decade of the Brain'. More specifically the intention was to fund

multi agency initiatives and disseminate the subsequent findings of neuroscientific research in order to enhance public awareness. Consequently educational neuroscience has attracted a good deal of attention and funding in recent years as evidenced by The University of Cambridge opening the first Centre for Neuroscience in Education in 2005. The centre's explicit stated intention is 'to establish the basic parameters of brain development in the cognitive skills critical for education' (CNE, 2005). The implication of this is that there may be the potential, albeit in the future, of what Howard-Jones (2011) refers to as 'neuroeducational' research directly informing pedagogical practice.

### **2.3 The appeal of neuroscience**

The growth of this field of study has not passed schools by. Whilst neuroscience and education remain practically and theoretically distanced from one another, brain based commercial programmes and packages have been aggressively marketed at schools (Goswami, 2006, p.2). It is worth noting that many of these external packages claim to be based upon research findings from educational neuroscience. The inclusions of such findings are appealing in so much as they create a perception of legitimacy. As Bruer (2008, p53) states 'Brain science appears to give hard biological data and explanations that, for some reason, we find more compelling than the soft data that come from psychological science.'

Geake (2008) raised these concerns of the misinterpretation of neuroscientific findings in terms of the development of 'neuromythologies' (p.123) that have very little basis in fact but are all too readily assimilated into the collective consciousness of the teaching profession e.g. Dennison's Brain Gym (1989).

In particular the prevalence of the 'learning styles industry' is envisaged as particularly troubling (2009, p1). This is a concern echoed by Coffield et al (2004) who talk of a 'large commercial industry' promoting 'particular inventories and instruments' (p1) which purport to assess pupils learning styles. These instruments are used widely but often in the absence of empirical research. Also the significant profits that can be made by commercial producers of these products tend to militate against any engagement with a meaningful critical analysis of their evidence base (p.1).

However, Prashnig (2004) who has promoted her 'Creative Learning Company' vigorously across several countries remains a strong advocate for the learning styles approach. In particular she claims it is important for our current economic climate and is able to improve the quality of teaching and learning (p.70).

Similarly Riding and Rayner (1998) proposed that an analysis of cognitive styles and learning strategies can uncover a range of individual learning differences and that these have far reaching implications for educators. Drawing their evidence from psychology and a consideration of physiological evidence from electroencephalograms (EEG) they produced a taxonomy for models of learning styles.

Whilst 'Learning style' programmes are just one example of such commercial learning products, they do exemplify the zeal with which these initiatives can be adopted by the teaching profession. When such adoptions take place in the absence of a rigorous scientific evidence base, they can be seen to 'undermine the professionalism of teachers' (Geake, 2008 p.124). In particular the idea that learning style programmes and other 'off the peg' initiatives can be delivered and followed can cast the teacher more in the role of a skilled technician rather than a thoughtful professional with the capacity to evaluate the efficacy of new learning approaches (Dadds, 1997).

Therefore, when the stakes are so high, it is important to attempt to understand why such models appeal to teachers.

Is it because, as Geake claims, that they 'affect a scientific legitimacy' to teacher interventions? This perhaps can explain what Weisberg et al (2008) referred to as 'the seductive allure of neuroscience explanations' (p.470). Weisberg and colleagues tested the degree to which non-experts, students studying neuroscience and experts in the field were persuaded by explanations of psychological phenomena when irrelevant neuroscientific information was included in the account. They gave each group 'brief descriptions of psychological phenomena followed by one of four types of explanation according to a 2 (good explanation vs bad explanation) x 2 (without neuroscience vs. with neuroscience) design'. Their conclusion that 'extraneous neuroscience information makes explanations look more satisfying than they actually are, or at

least more satisfying than they would otherwise be judged to be' (p.475) is of particular interest. Whilst the 'expert' group were not convinced by the inclusion of irrelevant neuroscientific information, the neuroscience students and the novices were. It is possible that when it comes to considering their capacity to judge the worth of 'brain-based' teaching programs that use neuroscientific findings as justification, teachers mirror most closely the 'novice' group in Weisberg's experiment. Strikingly, the experiment found that 'the ratings for bad explanations increased much more markedly than ratings for good explanations with the addition of neuroscience information' (p.476). Lindell and Kidd, (2013), also demonstrated that simply including the word 'brain' in training materials deemed them to be 'more interesting, educationally valuable, and scientifically strong' than comparable materials with the word removed. Furthermore, McCabe and Castel (2008) found the same to be true of the inclusion of images of the brain in scientific articles.

It is important to acknowledge that neuroscientists themselves are particularly concerned about misinterpretation of their research and the dangers of presenting their work in accessible ways. Keehner and Fischer (2011) raise concerns of the 'dazzle effect' of the inclusion of brain images in research findings. They found that 'the more concrete and 'brain-like' the image is, the more credibility it has' (p.1) ie the more realistic the included image of the brain the greater the verisimilitude of the accompanying research. More specifically they concluded that the 'more object like' the images were the more they were interpreted as being real life depictions as opposed to mere graphics. They explain this as a 'naïve realism' that represents a 'misplaced faith in realistic, object like displays' (p.1).

Similarly the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) published a commentary in 2007 in which they sought to debunk some of the mythologies surrounding neuroscience and education, with a view to forging inquiry in a more scientific and educational manner (p.4). What was noticeable from their work was the prevalence of neuromythologies within the 'educational culture' such as linking fish oils with educational performance, left and right brain hemispheric differences and the spurious claims that children need to constantly hydrate

themselves to perform well in school. Whilst the major thrust of their commentary was to uncover common misinterpretations of the scientific evidence base, they also recognised the need for neuroscience, psychology, and education to collaborate in order to address educational issues.

For example they suggest that the use of neurofeedback, i.e. monitoring brain activity with the use of EEG's, has the potential to transform educational outcomes with regard to pupil performance, as evidenced by work carried out at the Royal College of Music (TLRP 2007). Key difficulties here though are the contrasting philosophies, competing interests and paradigms that underpin these collaborations and the challenge of how best to incorporate such an approach in the classroom. For example neuroscientific enquiry as detailed above demands the utilisation of specialised scientific equipment that is not easily incorporated in the classroom.

## **2.4 Possibilities and challenges of collaboration**

Educational research has traditionally drawn extensively from the social sciences and is particularly concerned with social context and the impact it has upon pupils and teachers alike. This is exemplified by the Cambridge Primary Review (2010) that drew its extensive body of research knowledge from broadly qualitative means of inquiry.

In contrast, neuroscience clearly relies more on the testing of hypotheses through controlled experimentation in order to determine cause and effect (TLRP, 2007). In order to bridge such a paradigmatic gulf the TLRP propose the adoption of collaborative research projects that take specific account of the 'cognitive neuroscience model of brain – mind – behaviour'. This model recognises that in order to develop shared understanding, cognitive neuroscience needs to extend its reach beyond a study of behaviour in isolated individuals to account for 'complex social domains'.

One example cited details the use of Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging F.M.R.I. in the teaching of creative writing. The study found that the use of

unrelated stimuli e.g. including the words 'dolphin', 'jewel' and print rather than artist, brushes and paint in a story resulted in greater creative brain activity in students. This was judged both by an independent panel and by fMRI revealing greater brain activity in areas associated with 'creative effort' (p.23). The definition of creative brain activity is a relatively subjective conception as is the identification of what is deemed to be a creative story. However these findings are now being utilised by teacher trainers along with insights from psychology and neuroscience as a means of promoting educational approaches that claim to foster creativity.

It could be argued however that years of insight from cognitive psychology and educational practice could have already told us this.

Such collaborations between disciplines are therefore fraught with difficulty. It is also possible that the growth of neuromythologies is symptomatic of what has been an uneasy, historic relationship between educational practice and research. Hinton and Fischer (2008) note that in many fields of human endeavour research combines readily with practice e.g. 'biologists and medical practitioners (physicians, nurses, etc) *working* together in teaching hospitals' (p.3).

However, Fischer (2009) suggests that 'there is no infrastructure in education that routinely studies learning and teaching to assess effectiveness' (p.4). Such an infrastructure would need more direct practical engagement between educational neuroscience researchers and teachers in schools, as well as a means for teachers to become active consumers of research.

As far back as 1896 Dewey proposed the idea of 'laboratory schools' with the express intention of research informing practice and yet it seems that such a model, to this day, is exceptional. Indeed, Hargreaves (1996) raised the concern that, unlike the field of medicine where many practitioners are researchers also, teaching is not yet a research based profession. Instead, according to his analysis, most educational research is singular, non-cumulative and does not create a useful body of knowledge from which teachers can draw. However, the parallel drawn with the medical profession is not necessarily helpful as the two professions are not easily comparable and issues of the quality of research could



also be equally applied to the medical field (Hammersley, 1997). What is of relevance for this research though is just why educational research is disconnected significantly from educational practice (Carr, 2006, Elliot, 2001).

Fischer (2009) suggests that there is a causal link between the lack of research-informed practice in education and the rise of standardised testing in many countries across the globe. Such measures of educational performance, though often decried by teachers as being unhelpful and limited, have perhaps led to neuroscientifically informed models of learning being viewed with optimism. This may be in part due to the implicit suggestion that they offer definitive solutions to educational problems. Such an assumption corresponds readily with the neo-liberal agenda of performativity and competition where teachers are measured against one another (Ball, 2003). Within such a climate to seek some advantage through the utilisation of neuroscientific ‘insights’ begins to make sense both at an individual teacher and whole school level where the drivers and forces of an educational market place are now at play (Apple, 2004).

Despite the issues of the conditions within which such approaches have emerged, Fischer (2009) sees great potential for neuroscience to make a difference to education stating that ‘neuroscience and genetics make possible analysis of the “black box” of biological processes that underpin learning’ (p.3). Similarly, Geake (2009) sees educational neuroscience as having relevance for education that ‘might lead to applications in, educational practice and policy – pedagogy and curriculum’ (p.12). However caution is justified when considering what are potentially complex interdisciplinary collaborations. As Morrison and Swora (1982) observe:

Interdisciplinarity is far more than a relatively recent addition to the educational jargon. It is a mode of thought which, at all societal and academic levels, ultimately purports to enable one to synthesize ever-increasing amounts of discernible and subliminal input (p.46)

The focus here is on the ‘synthesis’ of potentially diverse ideas from different disciplines. Developing this, Gilbert (1998) refers to interdisciplinarity as an

activity that produces knowledge across disciplines. This is not to be confused with multidisciplinary activities, which 'assemble, in an additive fashion, knowledge from more than one discipline.' (p.6) Clearly the difference between the two is the production of new knowledge as opposed to the retention of 'disciplinary elements' and their ontological and epistemological foundations.

If there is to be a synthesis between neuroscience and education that results in the production of new knowledge, then an interdisciplinary approach, rather than a multidisciplinary approach, seems to be advisable. As Blakemore and Frith (2005) assert 'there are many obstacles to interdisciplinary understanding, not least the confusion caused by claims and counterclaims in brain research. One finding about the brain can be contradicted just months later by another scientist's research' (p.3) whilst others may persist despite evidence to the contrary.

So the interpretation of research evidence across disciplines is fraught with difficulty. It is too simplistic to assume that research within this area builds, cumulatively, on what has gone before to produce an incontrovertible knowledge base. Rather there is an ebb and flow of findings that either correspond or contradict with that which precedes it (Byrnes, 2001). Also, as Hewitt (2010) explains 'much of this (neuroscientific) evidence is based on learning in quite decontextualised experiments which do not reflect the complex psychological, social and emotional settings of everyday life' (p.114). It is difficult to see how educational neuroscientific experimentation and testing could easily be administered in the classroom. In its' absence there is not yet a consensus as to how a truly interdisciplinary approach might be fostered.

Paradoxically it is this interdisciplinarity that can be seen as both part of the solution and the problem. Without a common language and a transparency of approach it is hard to see 'educational neuroscience' crossing the theory/practice divide (Blakemore & Frith 2005). Bassey (1995) even suggests that research that is not directly focused on improving educational judgements and decision making cannot be classed as educational research at all (p.145). Within such an analysis a great deal of neuroscientific research would fall short as it primarily focuses on developing understanding of specific anatomical structures within the

brain. Where there is no clarity of vocabulary around learning, spaces are created where each new idea or educational innovation casts its own classifications creating a line of new educational language along the way. Furthermore these phraseologies say little to one another.

To some degree then, it is the nomenclature of individual educational programmes that allow them to set themselves apart within an emerging 'brain based' market of educational products. Whether it is Claxton's (2002) 4 'R's of learning power, Smith's (2001) 'accelerated learning cycle' and 'ALPS' approach or Dennison's (2006) 'educational kinesiology' teachers are confusingly presented with a plethora of vocabularies. Such distinct terminologies allow individual programmes or products to market themselves competitively. These individualised discursive formations operate as epistemic markers making 'possible the separation, not of the true from the false, but of what may from what may not be characterised as scientific.' (Foucault, 1980, p. 197).

Rather than building cumulatively on that which has gone before they create an illusion of scientific legitimacy and claimed expertise that is predicated upon their distinctiveness as compared with other pedagogical approaches. They therefore seek to discredit alternatives.

Whilst comparisons with the field of medicine are problematic, as already mentioned, it is hard to imagine the medical community entertaining such imprecision within professional discourse. However, the language of learning within education is disparate and neuroscientifically based models of learning have added little clarity. As Fischer states 'what is needed is not a quick fix from neuroscience, which will not work for education, but the creation of a new field that integrates neuroscience and other areas of biology and cognitive science with education.' (p xvii, 2008). However, Bruer (1997) considers this a 'bridge too far':

Currently we do not know enough about neural function  
to link that understanding directly, in any meaningful,

defensible way to instruction and educational practice. (p 4)

His contention is that neuroscience, whilst clearly offering the potential for future development, is at an embryonic stage of development and therefore not able to readily 'translate' into practice. This view is echoed by Illeris (1999) who suggests that 'even though brain research has made colossal progress, it is as yet far from being able to give exhaustive answers to the more advanced brain functions, including learning'. Rather 'its' particular contribution is in a quite general and a very specific area, respectively' – 'general' in that cognitive processes can be identified in localised areas of the brain and 'specific' in that the electrochemistry of brain impulses are understood (p.12).

## **2.5 Levels of analysis**

The above are examples of findings made at a different 'level of analysis' from the level of socially interactive learning in the classroom.

For example neuroscience technologies such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Positron Emission Tomography (PET) have identified that 'grammatical processing relies more on frontal regions of the left hemisphere, whereas semantic processing and vocabulary learning activate posterior lateral regions of both hemispheres' (Goshwami, 2008, p.39.) This is a distinction made at the level of anatomic structures of the brain. However these findings have been distorted as a justification for many of Dennison's (1989) Brain Gym activities where, for example, 'cross crawl sit ups activate the brain for left-right integration....and encourage the skill of reading (decoding and encoding)' (p.13.) This is another level of analysis altogether – that of the whole brain level. This is even before we consider the impact that the complex socio-cultural environment of an active classroom might have.

However, greater credence is given to neuroscientific findings taken out of their laboratory context rather than long established understandings of observable behaviour. Whilst neuroscience is able to identify activity at the level of the

anatomic structures of the brain it is a leap to suggest that we can make pedagogical recommendations based on this at this stage.

According to Geake (2009) Educational Neuroscience is 'cognitive neuroscience which investigates educationally inspired research questions' (p.12). However, when reference is made to findings from 'Cognitive Neuroscience' in educational settings we hear talk of 'brain based learning' and 'brain science' instead (Jensen, 1995). The allure of this language is seemingly irresistible to the educational community. It provides a scientific warrant for commercial products and leads to the 'generalising' of disciplines, whilst an understanding of the underlying science remains elusive (Bruer, 2008).

Geake and Cooper, (2003) are seemingly less concerned about the disingenuous use of research findings suggesting that over simplification of neuroscientific research in the past does not necessarily limit its future potential but rather requires us to be cautious. They take an optimistic view of the potential for educational impact of neuroscience stating that it could in theory and practice inform our understanding of learning. However they also suggest that '...we can remain agnostic over whether neural correlates of all human thought will ever be found.'" (p.10).

## **2.6 Neuromythologies, misappropriations, consultants and evidence.**

Despite this, recent educational practice is littered with examples of misinterpretation of neuroscientific findings such as Dennison's 'Brain Gym' (1989) and Smith's 'Accelerated Learning' (1996). Conceptually Smith's model has its roots in the work on Multiple Intelligence Theory proposed by Howard Gardner (1993). The idea that intelligence is not a unitary concept rather that individuals can display particular aptitudes within specific areas e.g. visual awareness. Smith and others have misappropriated Gardner's ideas and coalesced them into a model of Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic learning. His books also contain several references to 'brain science' and 'brain based learning'. He talks readily about the science of learning and acknowledges that 'our understanding of the human brain and all its complexity is immature' yet he

is then keen to offer 'Nine Principles for Brain Based Learning' (p.29) but without any reference to the need for research or meaningful analysis of its findings. Here is one such principle:

The brain develops best in environments with high levels of sensory stimulation and sustained cognitive challenge. Such enriched environments produce a greater number of dendritic branches, and hence connections between neurons (p.29).

He then argues for the construction of learning spaces with high levels of sensory stimulation. What he is alluding to here is the oft cited finding that enriched environments were beneficial for the development of rats brains. Research experiments carried out by Greenough (1987) on newborn rats found that when they were raised in enriched environments they had '20% to 25% more synapses per neuron in the visual cortex' (p.9). The populist neuromyth extrapolated from this finding was that it is essential that young children interact with 'stimulating early childhood environments' (p.9). Furthermore this has implied a deficit model for the potential of learning later in childhood, leading to a focus largely on the importance of the birth to three years phase. The recurrent theme here, and in other applications of neuroscience in the classroom, is one of selective interpretation of the research. Whilst Greenough's research did find that young rats benefited from enrichment he also found that 'even the brains of mature, adult rats form new synapses in response to new experiences' (p.9). However, this suggestion of 'experience dependent brain plasticity' was not widely reported and does not sit comfortably with the commercial promotion of learning stimuli aimed at young children and schools which often refer to a 'use it or lose it' mantra, that suggests that brain plasticity can only occur in the young (Blakemore and Frith, 2005).

Smith et al (2004) have been careful to adopt a more measured, circumspect position of late regarding the Accelerated Learning Model, 'Learning models are just that: models. They are not how people learn...' (p.16).

This differs somewhat from the certainty with which he espoused his views on Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic learning and multiple intelligences in 1996:

In many ways the extent to which one agrees with Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligence is irrelevant. What it offers is a schema (VAK) whereby we can provide a variety of teaching and learning strategies to accord with the differing ways in which our students learn. (p.10)

If agreement is 'irrelevant' why should teachers' be expected to give any credence to such a VAK model? Even more surprisingly he went on to suggest that in any given classroom of learners 29% will be visual, 34% will be auditory and 37% will be kinaesthetic.

This in particular is of interest as it is an assertion that is not supported by any reference to research and yet it is one I have heard communicated as fact in several school settings. As Geake, 2008, explains:

Literally following a VAK regime in real classrooms would lead to all sorts of ridiculous paradoxes: what does a teacher do with; the V and K 'learners' in a music lesson/ the A and K 'learners' at an art lesson/ the V and K 'learners' in a craft practical lesson? (p.131)

In the intervening years between Smith's earliest works and most recent publications, it would seem that our understanding of educational neuroscience has not developed sufficiently for such strong convictions to be held.

Indeed, despite the proliferation of VAK 'learning' in schools, research has quite clearly demonstrated that adapting teaching to cater for specific learning styles does not result in an improvement in learning. Rather it can lead to unhelpful labelling of pupils and narrow educational approaches that seek to match teaching and learning styles in a limiting way (Coffield et al. 2004). Also it is not clear that there is a truly interdisciplinary approach being adopted to enable sense to be made of the neuroscience. It seems more common for education to take one neuroscientific finding and to apply it in isolation without any further recourse to research or dialogue between educational practitioners, researchers

and neuroscientists. Consequently misinterpretations and spurious claims abound. (Geake, 2008).

Such is the concern of the currency these 'neuromyths' enjoy in educational circles, that in 2007 an international group of neuroscientists and cognitive psychologists signed the 'Santiago Declaration'. In this they collectively raised concerns about their research being 'abused' and identified a list of informing principles for early childhood education and research. Most striking amongst these was a consensus that best practice is 'based primarily on findings from **social and behavioural** research, not brain research.' The importance of developmental models of educational practice, which, in their view, tell us how children learn, are crucial. They then state that 'Neuroscientific research, at this stage in it' development, does not offer scientific guidelines for policy, practice, or parenting.' (p. 2). They conclude with the following statement:

We, the undersigned, recognise that the political agenda and the marketplace forces often proceed without meaningful input from the science of child development. Given the manifest needs of many young children throughout the world, the current state of knowledge and consensus in development science, this gap between knowledge and action must be closed. Scientific data and evidence-based practice must be integral to the ongoing global dialogue. (p.2)

Whilst this suggests a less than enthusiastic response to the emergence of educational neuroscience the signatories do seek to acknowledge the potential of future collaboration suggesting that 'scientific data and evidence-based practice must be integral to the ongoing global debate'.

Geake and Cooper (2003) are more cautiously optimistic and see the active adoption of cognitive neuroscience in the classroom as having the potential to 'stem the increasing marginalisation of teachers as pedagogues' (p.11). Indeed Geake (2004) seeks to counter many of Bruer's assertions stating that 'cognitive neuroscience' has been bridging the brain education divide for nearly a decade. Fischer et al (2007) are more explicit and state that 'to connect mind, biology and education, research must move beyond the ivory tower into real-life settings, and



educational practices must be available for scientific scrutiny' (p.1). Whilst Fischer does not provide a clear rationale as to how this might be done, his view does chime with moves on both sides of the Atlantic to strive for 'evidence based practice' within education. There is an increasing suggestion that randomised controlled trials (RCTs) should be the gold standard of any future educational research (Haynes, Goldacre, Service & Togerson, 2012). They suggest that RCTs are the best way to evaluate whether public policy is working. Primarily the preference for RCTs seems to be because they have become the norm in the field of scientific enquiry spreading from medicine to dentistry, physiotherapy and beyond to social work and other realms of public practice (Davies, Nutley & Smith, 2000). Furthermore, they have become a means of providing a warrant for new knowledge and validating particular approaches.

However, Biesta (2007), has questioned the degree to which such an approach is appropriate. For example what passes as evidence in such trials often overlooks the differences between scientific and educational enquiry and favours a 'linear, top-down approach to educational improvement' (p.2) where new ideas and approaches are transplanted into the school with little regard for contextual issues.

He has also raised concerns as to whether evidence based practice may favour a particular view as to what professional practice may mean. In particular he suggests that it casts the professional as someone who 'administers a treatment' and 'intervenes in a particular situation' (p.3). Such a model of professionalism is bound up in archaic notions of the teacher as the active fount of all knowledge and the pupil as the passive receiver of wisdom. Consequently, neuroscientific solutions to educational problems can be marketed readily here as they fit the interventionist model of a teaching professional where solutions lie without rather than within.

## **2.7 Discourse, power and performativity**

There is much here around the exercise of discourse and power that can inform our understanding of the phenomenon of brain based and other models of

learning. In developing Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) idea of 'cultural fields' Rizvi talks of 'discursive fields' and refers to 'the range of assumptions that are made implicitly in debating a particular topic or issue; ideas that are presumed, and notions that are simply ruled out of the bounds of possibility' (2007, p27).

Clearly then 'discursive fields' emerge around the idea of 'learning' in schools and, as well as setting the parameters within which certain ideas are allowed to germinate, they also exert the power, subliminally, to cauterize alternatives. The prevalence of the VAK model of learning is testament to this. Such was its standing within educational circles in the late 1990's and into the next decade that the Department for Education endorsed it within their materials (2004). Schools are therefore subject to the dominant educational discourse or episteme which is informed by Government, policy-makers and the media leading towards what Hall (1988) described as 'the horizon of the taken for granted' where 'Ruling ideas may dominate other conceptions of the social world by setting the limit on what will appear as rational, reasonable, credible, indeed sayable or thinkable..' (p.44).

These ruling ideas, as has been discussed, are often those validated by a narrow articulation of what passes as evidence. Furthermore, in terms of dominant educational ideas and practices, they may well be those that are most readily transferable from one context to another.

It seems that there is a real possibility that the discourse of 'learning to learn' could permeate the collective consciousness of the educational community and rise, unhelpfully, above critique. Coupled with the compelling appeal of neuroscientific justifications as previously discussed, it appears that teachers are too ready to accept 'brain based' and other more generalised educational products especially when their schools have invested heavily in them. The manifold reasons as to why this might be are a key focus of this research. The 'allure' of neuroscience as an unquestionable, evidence based scientific discipline is but one facet of this. As it is educational neuroscience sits uncomfortably between the positivistic approaches adopted by pure

neuroscientific research into brain function and the more interpretivist methodologies favoured by social and behavioural research.

Inevitably tensions arise here, as the former is concerned more with the search for an absolute truth whilst the latter is more open to a dialogic consensus of truths. Indeed it is true to say that science sees itself set apart from practice. As Usher and Edwards (1994) suggest, as part of a post-structuralist critique, science observes itself as 'transcendental' being 'outside any context of social locatedness arguing that its knowledge is warranted precisely because it is 'outside.' (p.33).

Neuroscience 'sits outside' the educational discourse and this relationship of 'otherness' perhaps adds to its' potential to influence practice. We also need to consider this in relation to the wider positivistic climate within education at present. This can be seen from the standardised assessments in the classroom to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) at higher education level as a means of allocating University research funds. The quest for that which is measurable or is seen to be measurable is a key driver within our current education system. This is due in no small part to the introduction of performance related pay (PRP) and an educational system that has embraced surveillance as a 'controlling technology' (Foucault, 1977). This all forms part of the 'audit culture' as Leys (2003) explained:

There is a proliferation of auditing, ie.,the use of business derived concepts of independent supervision to measure and evaluate performance by public agencies and public employees, from civil servants and school teachers to university (faculty) and doctors.(p.35)

Teachers, as Ball argues, now live under a cloud of surveillance, accountability and external measurement (2012). As such they interact and engage institutionally in a new set of ways in relation to this performative culture and in so doing embody the values of the institution. As Scott (2010) suggested:

Performative regulation occurs where groups of people submit themselves to the authority of an institution, internalize its values and enact them through mutual surveillance in an inmate culture. Power operates horizontally as well as vertically, as members monitor each other's conduct, sanction deviance and evaluate their own progress in relative terms (p.221)

Therefore their professional judgments and behaviours are 'regulated by their will to be marked by this observing technology' (McDougall, 2004). This is, in effect, the exercise of administrative control and the power of the discourse of assessment and public accountability operates through the individual teacher. As Foucault (1984) stated, 'Power insidiously objectifies those on whom it is applied; to form a body of knowledge about those individuals' (p.220). This obsession with measurement is neatly summed up by Apple (2006) thus:

A key to all of this is the devaluing of public goods and services. It takes long term and creative ideological work, but people must be made to see anything that is public as 'bad' and anything that is private as 'good'. And anyone who works in these public institutions must be seen as inefficient and in need of the sobering facts of competition so that they work longer and harder. (p.100).

In this climate 'brain-based' and other packages of learning offer a market-based, 'private' solution to a 'public' educational problem where external expertise, it is suggested, can make a difference.

Set against such a backdrop it is perhaps understandable to see how teachers are under pressure to make a success of these commercial techniques. These interventions are often aggressively marketed and seemingly reliant upon the charisma of consultants who charge significant fees for their materials and training (Coffield, 2004). It is therefore more understandable as to why schools seem so ready to look outside of their own expertise for solutions to the challenges that they face. The frequently, isolated initial implementation of these packages also militates against any meaningful analysis of their validity and impact. They operate within an educational marketplace where success is

ultimately measured in commercial terms, word of mouth recommendations and Ofsted validations.

Brain Gym (1989) is undoubtedly a commercial 'success' as it is used 'across eighty countries' and 'has been translated into nine languages' according to its own promotional materials. However there is no peer reviewed evidence base for its claims (Simmonds, 2014) and as such it is in need of greater empirical scrutiny (Spaulding, Mostert & Beam, 2010, p.27).

It is also worth considering the impact of recent educational reform and the role that it may have played in creating the climate where consultancy can thrive. In the Cambridge Primary Review Research Survey (2010) reference is made to the work of Balerin and Lauder who suggest that despite proposals to move towards decentralised government since the 1988 Education Reform Act, in effect a 'centralised system of 'learning', i.e. the 'state theory of learning' has been allowed to develop that is predicated upon the belief that a national curriculum, rigorous testing and 'mandated pedagogy' in Primary Schools for Literacy and Numeracy will inevitably raise standards. They go on to suggest that the 'machinery of surveillance and accountability' in effect militates against any pedagogical practice other than that which focuses on 'test performance' (p.291).

There is perhaps no better example of this than the government endorsed promotion of synthetic phonics across Primary schools in England as detailed in the Governments' 2010 white paper *'The Importance of Teaching'*. The Department For Education's website has a list of approved, independently reviewed, commercial providers of synthetic phonics training for schools to peruse along with a significant number of guidelines in relation to phonics. The white paper explicitly endorses the 'teaching of systematic synthetic phonics' and also neatly ties its success to Ofsted inspectors' expertise in 'recognising the particular features of systematic synthetic phonics teaching' (2010, para 4.17). In essence synthetic phonics is the approved mandated pedagogy that is in turn validated through a rigorous inspection process. Schools are left in no doubt that they should look externally for synthetic phonics expertise with the suggestion being that there is a lack of internal capacity and expertise in these areas. Since

the 1988 Education Reform Act teachers and schools have become habituated to a steady stream of external directives and initiatives that they are tasked with implementing. Alexander et al (2010) are particularly concerned about this and note that since 1997 the 'quality of ideas and prescriptions on teaching and learning' are of great concern. In particular they bemoan the 'bland and generalised' nature of these materials and how 'evidential sources are rarely cited' and even that accusations of plagiarism could be levelled at many of them (p.298). When some of the materials lay claim to being neuroscientifically informed or brain based, as discussed earlier, it only lends verisimilitude to what are often spurious, unfounded assertions. Teachers, as Alexander concludes, are faced with 'unacknowledged ideas' that are 'frequently distorted beyond recognition in order to fit the policy agenda' (p.298). This leaves them with the unenviable position of having to 'trust' in the materials' veracity whilst acknowledging that if pupil improvement does not result, the blame will more likely than not be placed upon them.

The pressure to conform to such a 'state theory of learning' perhaps explains teachers' readiness to adopt some of the practices described above. They seemingly offer the teacher an educational panacea that will help them meet the demands of the state. The concept of a 'state theory of learning' certainly resonates with recent government-mandated pedagogical change such as statutory synthetic phonics testing in Primary schools. However, it could also be argued that we have seen the emergence of aligned but autonomous 'commercial theories of learning' colonising some of the spaces within which Local Authorities traditionally operated.

For example Claxton's (2002) Building Learning Power (BLP) offers a metacognitive framework for developing young people as 'better learners' (p.3) and is predicated upon the 'three roots' of 'research into the nature of learning', 'practitioner research and experience' and a 'commitment to a vision of education'.

These are admirable aims but they do sit uncomfortably alongside an active and flourishing commercial enterprise where a variety of products and opportunities

for consultancy are sold to schools. For example a pack of 5 sets of BLP cards are sold for £50 whilst a variety of training courses are offered with prices upon application. The implication of this is that there is a clear and direct correlation being forged between financial investment and the promise of successful learning in schools. As Whitty, (2000), ominously suggested there is a;

strong temptation for schools to enhance their market advantage through glossy, commercially sponsored materials and attractive ICT resources (p.3).

This all serves to reinforce the notion of authoritative, external experts and teachers as deliverers or technicians of pedagogy.

There are links here to the rise of performativity in schools. As Ball, (2003), asserted performative agendas make judgements and comparisons of the individual and as a consequence are a form of control that regulates their performance.

Educational performance is measured through 'output' – and the success or failure of the individual teacher is inextricably bound to this. The discourse of 'performativity' is pervasive in Primary schools as Jeffrey (2002) explains:

Teachers are defined as deliverer, team-player and performer. Children are redefined as pupils, colleagues as competitors, team members, experts and 'weak or strong links' and inspectors are now examiners and authoritative coaches (p.544).

Here we could include the increasing role of the educational consultant being defined as 'expert and authoritative coach'. Coupled with an 'intensification' of work and, paradoxically, a reduction in individual teacher agency, the identity of the 'teacher' is affected as Ball (2003) states:

The act of teaching and the subjectivity of the teacher are both profoundly changed within the new management panopticism (of quality and excellence) and

the new forms of entrepreneurial control (through marketing and competition) (p.219).

These 'new forms of control' exert pressure upon the teacher to 'perform' highly where 'performance' is measured in terms of quantitative output. What is common to many of the 'brain based' educational solutions available is that their discourse is one of 'improvement' and 'acceleration' and 'extending the horizons of possibility' (Smith, 1999). They allude to a classroom where all teachers will now be able to unlock the potential of their students. The recurrent implied suggestion here is that the body of knowledge that teachers have traditionally relied upon is redundant. As Smith and Call (1999) suggest in the foreword to 'Accelerated Learning in Primary Schools' (ALPS) their methodology will prepare the child for lifelong learning as traditional skills will no longer suffice for future challenges

Similarly Dennison's (2010) Brain Gym talks of 'advancing learning' and 'increasing self-confidence in approaching new learning tasks'. Interestingly, and in contrast to Smith, Dennison is rather candid when discussing the evidence base for his theory noting that he is uncertain as to how his methods work but that an investigation into the underpinning neuroscience would be welcome (2010).

This lack of underpinning research has not stopped the active promotion of these strategies however. The suggestion that learners in the new millennium must now equip themselves with a repertoire of new cognitive strategies seems odd at best and fatuous at worst. It is, however, symptomatic of educational change since the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) that teachers and teaching have been cast as being in need of reform. The ERA effectively reduced teacher autonomy, particularly in relation to the curriculum, and left many teachers feeling deskilled and deprofessionalised (McCulloch, 2001).

This deficit view of teacher led pedagogy and research created a space within which intervention within schools could thrive. Alexander (2010) suggests that many of these new strategies 'rarely advance beyond sentiment and assertion into argument and justification'. Whilst a state theory of learning may be



described as a state endorsed 'prescribed' approach to pedagogy (such as synthetic phonics currently) these commercial theories are multitudinous and are allowed to operate within a free market.

With the new conservative governments' shrinking of local authority influence and greater freedoms being afforded schools (through initiatives such as the expansion of academies and free schools) it is possible to see how commercial theories of learning to learn could fill any vacuum left by Labour's neo-liberal expansion of state prescription.

As a whole, public sector spending on consultancy was £7.2bn in the three years leading up to 2007 according to the Commons Public Accounts Committee (2007) - not surprising when you consider that the 'average daily rate for public sector work is £1250' – even fees of £4000 per day have been charged (Times, 2009). During 2010, as a result of austerity measures introduced by the coalition government, public sector consultancy fell overall by 15% according to the Management Consultancies Association MCA (2012). Despite this overall trend they noted that the spend on consultancy in education actually increased. Whilst it seems likely that the increase is partly as a result of the rollout of synthetic phonics in schools (the report alludes to there being one major project accounting for much of the increase) there is still a sustained engagement with external consultancy in the education sector. Indeed the TUC (2014) recently suggested that the coalition government spent £76.7 million pounds on consultancy within education since 2010. This chimed with the MCA's earlier prediction that the level of consultancy spending was no longer reducing in the public sector and would remain the same up to 2012 and beyond. It is evident therefore that despite austerity measures external consultancy remains prevalent in schools. Furthermore it is seen as a demonstration of the new freedoms that schools are now afforded through academisation.

However the suggestion of greater devolvement and freedom for schools can be seen in a different light, as Ball (2003) suggests:

...crucially it is a mis-recognition to see these reform processes as simply a strategy of de-regulation, they are processes of re-regulation. Not the abandonment by the State of its controls but the establishment of a new form of control; what Du Gay (1996) calls 'controlled de-control' and indeed a new kind of state (p.217)

## **2.8 Marketisation, competency and teacher agency**

Within such a new State the pressures for schools to succeed are amplified by the introduction of marketisation. Perhaps one of the most disconcerting facets of the proliferation of 'brain-based' and new learning techniques in the classroom is that they form part of the 'commodification' of education where ideas of production and consumption become naturalised and the school becomes subject to the market driven forces of capitalism (Ball, 2006). Schools, their services and individual pupils are increasingly being viewed in terms of their intrinsic value – both monetarily and in terms of performance (Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz, 1995). This embedding of 'consumer cultures' within the education system in turn supports the purchase of 'off the peg' solutions to educational problems as commercial engagements have been normalised within schools. At the heart of this dilemma is what Ball, (2006), refers to as the 'school to school' market. The emergence of schools, and educational consultants being able to:

Assert their Intellectual Property Rights and thus profit from the sale of their curriculum developments or act as for-profit consultants etc. Again what is created is a new form of social relations between schools and a new relationship of schools to knowledge, a relationship which is no longer articulated in terms of the public good, and certainly not in terms of knowledge for its own sake, but rather a relationship to knowledge as a commodity (p, 20).

When such a knowledge market is introduced momentum is maintained for many of these commercial approaches because of the vested interests of the purchasing school to see value for money in their investment. As Bernstein (1996) put it 'The principles of the market and its managers are more and more

the managers of the policy and practices of education' (p.87). In such a scenario the 'control of the field of judgment' does not lie with the teacher. Rather they are subject to 'power coercive' strategies as Bennis et al (1969) described them that dictate, often subliminally, the educational direction of the school and its' teachers.

What has been removed, despite Claxton's, (2002), assertion of its importance, is the capacity to clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of a particular approach through research. As Simmonds (2014) warns 'teachers' desire to implement interventions based upon neuroscience are running ahead of the evidence base' and the primary source of their learning about such interventions are not academic or scientific sources, but other teachers, schools, consultants and the media (p.10). In their work to try and understand educators' views of the role of neuroscience in education Pickering and Howard-Jones (2007) received this response from a teacher at a seminar they arranged entitled 'Developing Collaborative Frameworks for Neuroscience and Education':

There isn't one person here who doesn't know about visual learners, auditory learners, brain gym, and it's because I guess it's something easy to understand, and I don't mean that in a patronising way. It's the sort of thing you can grab onto and you can run with –but- we've been misguided about that sort of thing haven't we –not having the time to verify it for ourselves-we have no choice.  
(p.111)

Verification is lacking and what is needed is perhaps what Bennis (1962) referred to as an 'empirical-rational strategy' of change where teachers are empowered to check the validity of new pedagogical approaches through research. However, this would require greater levels of teacher autonomy but as Kenway (1990) suggested, the teaching profession has been subject to a 'discourse of derision' where successive governments have demonised an increasingly disempowered teaching body through the implementation of progressively punitive measures of performance.

Furthermore 'both state and market forces imply a "low trust" relationship between society and its teachers' (Whitty, 1997, p.307) and their professionalism and autonomy is called into question by the onward march of 'reform' and 'revolution'. At the heart of the coalition governments' educational strategy is the concept of 'choice'. As Michael Gove, the former Secretary of State for Education, (2010) stated on his website;

As a matter of proven fact...choice can help raise standards by generating innovation and allowing competitive pressures to stimulate improvements all round.

Competitive pressures, choice and increased autonomy are essential components of the current government's market philosophy of educational change. However there is an incongruity at the heart of their reforms. Whilst their mantra speaks of greater freedoms for schools and teachers (primarily through academisation and free schooling) and a distancing of the state's involvement in educational work, there has been an increase in measurement through appraisal and target setting (Ball, 2013). Jeffrey and Troman, (2012), propose that this suggestion of freedom is in fact 'tied to performative guidelines'. In such a performative culture freedom to practice autonomously is an illusion and teachers' direction of travel towards anything other than centralised targets of performance becomes restricted.

From a Habermasian perspective the lifeworld of teachers, which once was predicated upon value rational and communicative actions, has become colonised by increasing levels of technical and instrumental control (Habermas, 1984). Where once teachers arrived at decisions consensually they are now subject to the pressures and demands of the state. However, as Murphy and Skillen, 2013 suggest, whilst teachers may perceive that they have 'an ever loosening grip on their capacity to make professional judgements' there are still pockets of resistance on the fringes of their professional lives (p.89) where teachers may negotiate their work practices.

Neuroscientific interventions offer the promise of salvation from this performative agenda as their 'extravagant claims' suggest that cognitive performance can be enhanced through their utilisation (Claxton & Lucas, 2010). Whilst educational neuroscience may have the potential to revolutionise education the TLRP (2007) suggest that 'most of what we know arises from scientific experimentation, in environments that differ greatly from everyday learning contexts' (p.24). Clearly then there are problems of the applicability of neuroscience within the classroom. Consequently it is perhaps understandable to see how teachers can be seduced by the 'brain based' techniques that purport to be based on 'experimental' neuroscientific data.

With marketisation of the education system the concept of competency has emerged. Since the ERA in 1988 Schools and individual teachers have increasingly been positioned in competition with one another with increased scrutiny of their work from Ofsted and publication of results. Competency is tied to the notion of 'skill sets', 'expertise' and their regulation. As Jones and Moore (1993) explain:

The success (even the existence!) of the competency approach could be seen as surprising. It can be viewed as exemplifying all the characteristics of a simplistic 'positivism' which social scientists might assume to have been laid to rest 20 years ago (p.387).

This 'simplistic positivism' resonates with the ways in which 'brain-based' learning techniques are justified in the classroom. They operate along 'behaviourist' lines of that which can presumably be observed. The efficacy of Brain Gym (Dennison, 1989) is largely based upon teachers' observations of 'improved educational outcomes'. Inevitably these observations are subjective – they are inextricably linked to the context specific and socially interactive classroom environment and perceived improvements in test scores and as such lack rigour. The success of Brain Gym, both in this country and abroad, is predicated upon the value of word of mouth recommendations and traditional marketing techniques. It is the educational equivalent of selling unlicensed drugs to the public as there is no

regulation other than the purchasers' belief in its value. Jones and Moore (1993) go on to observe:

The effectiveness of 'competency' resides in the manner in which it codifies and regulates behaviour through constructs of 'skills' and the manner in which its methodology, active within a particular policy and institutional context, facilitates technical control (p.387)

This exercise of 'technical control' leads us to a further consideration of the work of Foucault. As Ball (1990) explains when considering Foucault's writings in relation to education – 'Knowledge does not reflect power relations but is immanent within them' (p. 5).

For Foucault knowledge and power were intertwined as a 'single, inseparable configuration of ideas and practices that constitute a discourse' (p. 5). The power of the discourse of 'competency', 'marketisation', 'state and commercial theories of learning' and 'performativity' is directly relevant to this research. What they have in common is that they promote the selective dissemination of the idea of an educational marketplace where choice, standardisation and measurement are king. As Foucault (1971) explained of discourse:

...we know very well that, in its distribution, in what it permits and what it prevents, it follows the lines laid down by social differences, conflicts and struggles (p.46).

The appropriateness of teacher autonomy and the capacity of teachers to be guardians and researchers of their own practice are diminished. In their place we have a free market where state mandated pedagogy such as synthetic phonics is politicised and commercialised. Furthermore commercial pedagogies arise and the role of the teacher is diminished. This is an indictment of the value society places on teaching as a profession. As Bernstein (1971) stated;

How a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control (p.202).

Whilst Bernstein's concerns have been applied, in the main, to curriculum there is equally a resonance with the ways in which these may be used to explain the emergence of the theoretically and empirically limited pedagogical approaches in school that form the basis of this study. The pedagogies which are valued by government, and indeed by schools, typically follow interventionist lines of practice that seek to administer treatments e.g. synthetic phonics as mentioned (Biesta, 2007). This casts the teacher clearly in the role of deliverer rather than producer or arbiter of professional knowledge. As such teachers are professionally hamstrung and commercial pedagogical approaches, whether neuroscientifically informed or otherwise, fit readily with this new model of pseudo professional practice.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

This review of literature has focused upon neuroscience, its potential for education and its relationship to the emergence of commercial models of learning in schools. Furthermore attention has been given to performative pressures in schools and discourse and power.

The review of literature reveals how attraction of neuroscience is well documented and has added to the popularity of educational approaches that make reference to such research. It is significant also that the commercial models of learning considered in this research subscribe to a prevailing state discourse of educational intervention measured through a narrow range of performance indicators. Performative pressures both at the whole school level and at the level of the individual teacher create a climate within which consideration of evidence and research appears secondary to discussions of the potential for school improvement defined by these performance indicators. Under such pressures educational interventions, many of which are informed by limited interpretations of neuroscientific research, have become popular. Their popularity can be understood in terms of a wider educational discourse of standardisation and performativity and the assumption that all schools and educational settings are the same and therefore require the same treatment or intervention.

The research and policy literature points to the emergence of this discourse in the 1988 Education Reform Act. It alludes to the idea of a generic, idealised school that can implement initiatives readily. Consequently the incorporation of neuroscientific findings into many of these initiatives goes hand in hand with their limited consideration of context specific issues.

Building upon this it is my contention that there is a lack of discussion and research that scrutinises how such learning approaches are appropriated and implemented within school and the impact of this appropriation on the teacher. It is this gap that this research intends to plug. In order to explore this fully attention now needs to be turned towards a consideration of appropriate methodology and methods.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

The intention of this thesis is to better understand the construction and appropriation of metacognitive, learning theories and their commodification in school settings. As such it draws upon a critical, qualitative methodological approach to research informed, to some degree, by the writings of Foucault (1994). Hence this chapter sets out the principles governing the design of the research for the study in terms of its ontological and epistemological foundations and the decisions governing the selection of appropriate tools for the research. The intention therefore is that the research should be faithful to the phenomena under investigation as Blumer (1954) suggested.

It is, of course, important that methodological considerations are linked clearly to the area being studied. Hence this research has been designed expressly to answer the research questions that form the focus of the study. Not only do these research questions detail the area to be studied, but they also crucially outline the boundaries of their remit and in doing so identify that which is to be excluded from the research (Bryman, 2004, p.31). As well as being imperative for the researcher they form the focal point for the audience of the research and ultimately give meaning to the study. The methodology chapter therefore will be positioned in relation to the research questions detailed previously on page 10.

### **3.1 Epistemological foundations**

Epistemologically speaking, this research draws upon an empirical approach where meanings are based around the interpretation of the world according to the experiences of the individuals being studied and those of the researcher (Merriam, 2009). Knowledge, therefore, of the construction and appropriation of learning theory does not sit outside of the teachers' experience which is situated primarily within the school context. In order to deconstruct this experience an interpretative approach that seeks to understand the 'lived experience' of the construction and appropriation of learning theory in English Schools is necessary

in order to provide 'richer critical insight' (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p.593).

The derivation of 'lived experience' can be traced back to Dilthey:

Lived experience is directly 'there-for-me' as its own reality. In its most basic mode, a lived experience involves a reflexive or self-given awareness which is an immediate, pre-reflective consciousness where there is not yet the distinction between act and content, subject and object that characterizes representational consciousness. (1985, p. 16)

This hermeneutical position suggests that individual experience is unique and leads to an exploration of the 'Lebenswelt' (lifeworld) as Husserl (1913) conceived of it. This is important as a means of giving the research 'structural and historical' insight (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Heidegger (1927) drawing on the work of Dilthey and others, developed the 'lived experience' into an 'interpretive phenomenology', that acknowledges the importance of given contexts which are unique and delves into a greater consideration of ontology i.e. the nature of being as related to the specific context. As Berger and Luckmann (1967) suggested reality is socially constructed and;

The world of everyday life is not only taken for granted as reality by the ordinary members of society in the subjectively meaningful conduct of their lives. It is a world that originates in their thoughts and their actions, and is maintained as real by these (p.33)

As such consideration needs to be given to these life worlds. As Bassey explained interpretivism 'cannot accept the idea of there being a reality 'out there' which exists irrespective of people, for reality is seen as a construct of the human mind'. Given situations and 'human actions' cannot be explained through generalised statements. Rather, what is of interest, are the interpretations of the subjects being studied and those of the researcher. There is also an acknowledgement here that the researcher is explicitly 'part of the world which they are observing, and so, by observing, may change what they are trying to observe' (1995, p.12-13). In essence their own unique perspectives and

interpretations bind them and as such there is the possibility that they may, like any other variable, influence their research. It is the researcher's job therefore to ensure that they are aware not only of their own interpretations but also of the interpretations of others.

Therefore, interpretations of the world will be dependent on the assumptions made by particular ontological positions. For example, different academic disciplines subscribe to particular values, key thinkers, customs, classifications and rules that define their ontological disposition (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Attempts to distil these into a singular essence of being may be problematic. As a consequence of this care has been taken to consider the prevailing ontological assumptions of the researcher and the effect these will have on both the epistemological and methodological direction of the study (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995). For example the research question 'How are new learning approaches popularised in English schools and upon what factors are they contingent?' adopts a particular relativist ontological position that assumes 'local and specific constructed and co-constructed realities' (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). This sits clearly within a 'constructivist' paradigm where knowledge is 'transactional' and 'subjective'.

Consequently at the heart of interpretivism there is an acceptance that 'reality is ... a construct of the human mind' (Bassey, 1995, p.13). Whilst this research aligns itself within the qualitative, interpretive paradigm it is important, essential even, to consider its limitations. As a consequence of this the most salient reservation that needs to be addressed here is the 'crisis of representation'. In particular this concern has emerged out of the post-modern and post-structural traditions of research which reject scientism's reluctance to acknowledge that it is, in itself, 'a human, social practice rather than a transcendental activity' (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p.33). Whilst interpretivism acknowledges the ways in which knowledge is a social construct it is 'not the belief in the real but confidence in its representation' (Somekh & Lewin, 2005, p.303) that is of concern. Therefore, representations are inextricably bound to the specific discourses that are situated within the time and place constraints of the 'Lebenswelt'. As Usher and Edwards (1994) explained 'knowing the world is not a matter of faithfully representing it since the very act of representation is itself discursively bound up with values and

power' (p.15). This reflects concerns regarding the colonial origins of ethnography and its' epistemological leanings towards positivism. The danger of representation therefore rests on the epistemological distinction between knowledge as an absolute, as favoured by Randomised Control Trials (R.C.T.s) and the multiple realities suggested by critical theory and constructivism

The 'othering' of the individual through the descriptive lens of ethnography can therefore be seen as an exercising of power that is never truly objective. Hammersley (1992) recognised the limitations of the ethnographer's conception of reality as it is constructed 'from some point of view which makes some features of the phenomena represented relevant and others irrelevant' (p.51). This separating out of that which is 'relevant' is inevitably a partial process. The post-modern perspective, in contrast, studies the specific and multifarious interpretations within settings and also considers the notion of fluid identities. This raises important methodological dilemmas for this research: as the study focuses on a selection of individual settings are the discourses identified immanent within these unique 'lifeworlds' or are they part of a wider assembly? Also, in what ways do interpretivist methodologies mirror the 'logic' of scientism? Put another way, what will be the 'reach' of this research and are the chosen methods appropriate or are they, at heart, more aligned with the power dynamics of measurement? This will be a consistent theme within the research.

Pring (2000) cautions against what he sees as the 'false dualism' of educational research. Whilst criticising positivism for its lack of acknowledgement of the 'context', he is equally robust in his critique of qualitative research. In particular he refers to the 'uniqueness fallacy' that 'refers to the false entailment from every event being unique in some respect to every event being unique in every respect' (p.258). Pring suggests that there are 'norms' of behaviour that rise above the specific context and that lessons can be learned from the study of such contexts. This leads us to a consideration of the overall purpose of this research. Carr and Kemmis (1986) were clear that educational improvement is the driver:

It is important to recognise that since it is the investigation of educational problems that provides

educational research with whatever unity or coherence it may have, the testing ground for educational research is not its theoretical sophistication or its ability to conform to criteria derived from the social sciences, but rather its capacity to resolve educational problems and improve educational practice (p.127)

These are worthy aims but such educational practices and research can be seen as value-laden activities and therefore it is difficult to arrive at a consensus of what 'educational improvement' actually is. Educational improvement from a policy perspective may be limited to narrow definitions of attainment in test scores whilst ignoring the potentially more complex social and affective domains that may have more of a bearing for teachers' conceptions of improvement.

Hammersley (2010) draws a distinction between 'scientific inquiry' and 'practical inquiry'. The former is concerned more with the accumulation of knowledge for an audience of 'fellow researchers' whilst the latter focuses more on provision of 'practical knowledge' for an audience of practitioners and policy makers. Scientific inquiry 'involve(s) abstracted models of human beings that are necessarily partial' and often leads to 'theoretical' research that provides the 'basis for practical or political action' through the development and testing of theories. Again RCTs lend themselves to such approaches. Practical inquiry, in contrast, draws on 'theories from the whole range of disciplines' and is concerned with 'substantive' research that seeks to 'describe events and actions in particular contexts, micro or macro, explaining why these occurred, and perhaps also tracing their consequences' (p. 13). Clearly 'substantive' research is more concerned with values than its more scientific counterpart. Hammersley (2010) is clear though that such practical inquiry cannot be seen as 'educative' as such an assumption would mean that the research is 'subordinated' to a different purpose. Rather, 'the conclusions of such research are factual not normative: they are about what has occurred, why, and with what effects; not about what is good or bad, and what should be done' (p.13).

The distinction here is between research that is informative, providing knowledge that may be relevant to the audience and research that is 'educative' that goes beyond the production of knowledge and seeks to potentially change attitudes

and even behaviour. Hammersley concludes by stating that 'to treat educational research as a form of education is to lose the advantages to be gained from concentrating on the task of producing knowledge' (p.13).

Therefore within 'practical inquiry' the locus of control lies with the audience and their interpretation of the 'knowledge' rather than the researcher's value-laden assumptions as to its worthiness. This places a greater onus on the validity of such 'substantive' research and its relevance to the audience. Despite this it is worth mentioning Hargreaves (1996) concern that 'educational researchers write mainly for one another in their countless academic journals, which are not to be found in a school staffroom' (p.3). Therefore whilst it is hoped that the research will be 'informative', there needs to be an acknowledgement that the process by which this might be achieved is by no means certain.

Furthermore this research seeks to have relevance to the community being studied. Hence whilst a good deal of ethical deliberation can be considered as 'procedural' e.g. gaining informed consent as discussed earlier in the methodology, an overarching ethical consideration of research relates to the paradigm that informs the study. Communitarian approaches to research value members of the community being studied and seek, at their heart, communal understanding (Christians, 2005, p.150). It is therefore important that they attempt to be of value for the communities being studied.

Olssen (2002) casts Foucault as a 'thin communitarian' in that despite the lack of a commonality of goal in his writing, his work sought to reveal hidden power structures and enable 'a social ontology of difference to take effect and function' (p.489). Therefore this unveiling of power relations enables the self to navigate more effectively through the technological practices that restrict it, leading to a greater potential for democratic, community action that allows for, and celebrates, difference. This understanding is integral to the research being undertaken and to this end a consideration of Foucault, and more particularly his concepts of archaeology and genealogy are relevant.

For Foucault discourse, in relation to archaeology and genealogy, has a 'specialised meaning, referring to conventional vocabularies and forms of expression that perpetuate and legitimate ideological or political orthodoxies'

(Gilbert, 2008, p.507). Also, inherent to the Foucaultian interpretation and as part of the post-structuralist critique, there is an acceptance that discourses are part of a wider analysis that cannot be studied in a detached sense as 'they are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972, p.49).

These language structures, then, can be used to 'understand' human interaction and culture. Therefore, whilst the focus of the research is constrained by 'time and place', it is perhaps inevitable that the analysis will draw on a wider conception of discourse and the interpretation of it will be subject to the discursive dispositions of the audience and the ways in which they themselves are discursively constructed. A genealogical analysis of the discourse may then have implications that extend beyond the immediate setting through the creation of predictions, howsoever tentative, that might in turn impact upon policy.

This research does not assume that there is a specific conclusion to be sought. Rather, what is of interest, are the interpretations of the subjects being studied and those of the researcher as 'bricoleur' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p4) piecing together the emerging narrative. There is also an acknowledgement here that the researcher is explicitly 'part of the world which they are observing, and so, by observing, may change what they are trying to observe' (Bassey, 1995, p.12-13). In essence the focus here is on a study of 'power relations' and the ways in which they impact upon the individual. As Rogers, 2004, states:

Critical research rejects the over-deterministic view of social theory espoused by Marxists and instead argues for a dialectic between individual agency and structural determinism (p.3).

This focus on the balancing of individual agency and the pressure of institutional discourses is at the heart of this research.

### 3.2 Foucault, archaeology and genealogy

Foucault's concepts of archaeology and genealogy must now be considered. Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) – a treatise on the constraints placed upon modes of thought by underlying structures that seek to limit and restrict particular ways of thinking highlights the concepts of 'Savoir' and 'Connaissance' that have especial significance for this research;

By "archaeology", I would like to designate not exactly a discipline but a domain of research, which would be the following: in a society, different bodies of learning, philosophical ideas, everyday opinions, but also institutions, commercial practices and police activities, mores – all refer to a certain implicit knowledge (savoir) special to this society. This knowledge is profoundly different from the (formal) bodies of learning (des connaissances) that one can find in scientific books, philosophical theories, and religious justifications, but it (savoir) is what makes possible at a given moment the appearance of a theory, an opinion, a practice (1972, p.261).

It is this 'implicit knowledge (savoir)' that is of particular interest. In other words how do these 'conditions of possibility' emerge and transform a learning theory (e.g. Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic learning) into a more established, 'formal' body of learning that might contribute to a 'connaissance' that becomes accepted without, in some instances, reservation? Where has this come from? What rules govern its existence? Beyond any 'face value' conclusions I am therefore more interested in arriving at an understanding of the hidden power relations that impact upon the ways in which teachers in the focus schools act and talk, and how this impacts upon the appropriation of learning theory. Discourse analysis seeks to delve deeper into the 'intersubjective contexts' in the focus schools. To this end it is important to explore in more detail Foucault's methodologies and analyses.



For Foucault archaeology considers the discursive formations or epistemes that exist at particular times and govern systems of thought in order to construct a 'history of the present' (1979). Later in his writing he referred more widely to genealogy as his intellectual method of study. Genealogy built upon archaeology by focusing more upon how particular systems of thought came into being. The focus then moves from a singular consideration of discursive formations that exist at a particular time to a broader analysis of the contingent, historical factors that allow epistemic change. Its intention therefore is to uncover dangers that exist in the present by understanding how they came into being.

Consequently a consideration of the 'genealogy' of educational discourse is crucial as a means to understanding and explaining the conditions within which the learning initiatives that form the focus of this research thrive and upon what foundations they are formed. The 'connaissance' of a specific formal 'body of learning' such as 'Building Learning Power' does not just appear. From a genealogical perspective what is of interest is exactly how it has 'crossed a threshold of scientificity' (Foucault, 1972, p.187). We cannot assume that its' path was a logical consequence of cumulative, historical educational improvement. Rather its' emergence is as a result of an implied *savoir* – a set of specific conditions that have given rise to and governed its' existence. As such this 'body of learning' or knowledge has been formalised within the educational discourse to (possibly) the point of acceptance. I suggest 'possibly' because it is also important to recognise that for Foucault discourse offered the option of resistance;

Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power (p.95).

Rather resistance operates from within the institutional discourse at a number of levels. Therefore it would be a mistake to consider Foucault's analysis of power as always being played out in a repressive, authoritarian and hierarchical manner. Rather he conceives of a complex web of power relations operating in a

variety of directions. His wish was to uncover power relations in order to highlight that actually we are freer than we feel.

The 'connaissance' of learning theory then is contingent upon the conditions of possibility or 'savoir' that allow it to become acceptable. Gutting, (1989), refers to these as 'the discursive conditions that are necessary for the development of the connaissance' (p.251). So the 'connaissance' here refers to the body of knowledge that exists in relation to the particular learning theory whereas the 'savoir' relates to the underpinning discursive conditions or pre-knowledge that allows it to arise. Hence It is this 'savoir' that I believe will be critical to an understanding of how learning theories become formalised and thus accepted within a specific educational institution and within the wider educational discourse.

### **3.3 Method**

It is important to acknowledge here that Foucault would be uneasy with the idea that his name be attributed to, and synonymous with, a method or form of analysis. Rather he was eager that researchers should engage with writing their own genealogies (Sawicki, 1991). Despite such reservations in order to provide a structure for the genealogical analysis this research utilises the 2008 guidelines proposed by Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (p.99) that explicitly referenced Foucault. They suggest that the starting point is collecting a 'corpus of statements' that 'constitute a discursive object relevant to one's research'. These could be pieces of text that form the 'conditions of possibility' for the 'discursive object' or considerations of how statements about the said object vary over time or are constructed differently according to specific contexts. The texts that are used to form the 'corpus of statements' could be drawn from observation, policy documentation, semi-structured interviews and autobiographical accounts.

The analysis of these statements then considers ‘problematizations, technologies, subject positions and subjectification’. Problematizations are where ‘discursive objects and practices are made problematic and therefore visible and knowable’ (p.99). This process allows the researcher to ‘expose knowledge/power relations’ and consequently adopt a particular critical position. ‘Technologies’ can be differentiated into those of power, which ‘govern human conduct from a distance’, and those of the self which relate to self-governance. Technologies of the self can be thought of as;

..operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being’ that people make either by themselves or with the help of others in order to transform themselves to reach a ‘state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (Foucault 1988b,p18).

Hence an analysis of ‘technologies’ has the potential to expose conceptions of ‘truth’ and ‘power’ at both the macro and micro level of interaction within a given institution. ‘Subject positions’ relate to the ways in which discourses are culturally specific whilst ‘subjectification’ refers to ‘an ethics of self-formation’. In other words how do subjects ‘seek to regulate’ themselves and what constraints are placed upon them either individually or as part of a group?

### **3.4 Case study and generalisability**

The groups being studied here are constituted by their individual school contexts. These school contexts will, inevitably, be unique. It will therefore be necessary to adopt a case study approach as it will allow a study of what are effectively ‘bounded systems’ (Merriam, 2009, p.40). Consequently as this research focuses on a selective range of school settings, it could be said that it would be disingenuous of me to assume that any findings might be generalized to a broader community of schools. Rather they would hopefully provide context specific insights and develop an understanding. Greenwood and Levin (2000) explained that:

The approach of positivistic research to generalisation has been to abstract from context, average out cases, lose sight of the world as lived in by human beings, and generally make the knowledge gained impossible to apply (which for us means that it is not knowledge at all) (p.55).

Guba and Lincoln (1982) were more explicit when they said that 'Generalisations are impossible since phenomena are neither time nor context free' (p.208). However, Williams (2000) suggests that it is 'inevitable' that interpretivists generalise. He argues a case for 'moderatum' generalisations where 'aspects of (a finding) can be seen to be instances of a broader recognisable set of features' (p.215). These can be thought of in William's terms as 'everyday generalisations' - the basis of which is 'cultural consistency in the social world'. The intention of developing an understanding of the ways in which learning theories are popularised and appropriated within specific school settings will necessarily require a study of the culture within the school. However, the question of the generalisability, moderatum or otherwise, of the research outcomes is a fundamental difficulty of interpretivism and it is to be expected that it is also the case here in this research. Any transfer of knowledge from one setting to another will require a deep understanding of the 'contextual conditions' of the settings (Greenwood & Levin, 2000). Despite this Bassey (2001) has reconciled his reservations about generalisation within social research by proposing the concept of 'fuzzy generalisations'. Rather than adopting a post-positivist 'if x happens in y circumstances then z will occur in all cases' unless proved otherwise he suggests that 'if x happens in y circumstances, z may occur' (p.6). This then leads to 'fuzzy predictions' that may be of use to practitioners in other classrooms and settings.

Bassey sees this as a 'powerful tool for researchers to communicate with potential users of research and also to develop a cumulative approach to the

creation of educational theory' (p.15). Unlike the medical profession, 'much educational research is, by contrast, non-cumulative' according to Hargreaves, (1996). In other words it sits in isolation and therefore is less likely to contribute to prior educational research. Because of this concern I am therefore keen to adopt Bassey's idea of 'fuzzy generalisation and prediction' in order to contribute to a wider, cumulative educational debate. It is worth mentioning here in relation to Bassey's ideas, that the current trend for evidence-based practice within education, as previously mentioned, and more specifically Randomised Control Trials (R.C.T.s) sit uneasily with interpretivist approaches to research. Goldacre (2013) suggests that educational research could take its lead from medicines' engagement with these. Whilst no one would argue that evidence is important there are significant reservations concerning this that are pertinent to this consideration of methodology. Firstly R.C.T.s value quantitative data over qualitative explanation where perhaps what is needed is to 're-establish the qualitative grounding of the quantitative' (Campbell, 1974, pp. 29-30). Quantitative data, in the absence of any qualitative underpinning therefore, is abstracted from human experience.

Furthermore, in order for such research to operate effectively it requires necessarily the rigorous controlling of variables. These are 'predetermined to be relevant vis-à-vis "what works"' leading to the politicisation of research and positioning those who engage in critique of educational systems and practices as ideologues (Howe, 2004, p.57). This danger highlights the importance of being aware of epistemological issues as pertaining to the research. This research asks specific questions and it is important therefore that the interpretations of any findings are robust epistemologically. For example, the question 'How has recent educational discourse shaped and influenced pedagogical implementation of neuroscientific research?' seeks as its answer an arrival at a 'fuzzy generalisation'. In epistemological terms it will need to be clear as to the difference between the 'truth' of any findings and beliefs, opinions, prejudices and bias. Furthermore, it is also important to consider the internal validity of the research or the degree to which we can have confidence in its' correspondence with reality. As qualitative studies suggest that 'reality is holistic,

multidimensional, and ever changing' (Merriam, 2009, p.213) it then becomes difficult to apprehend an absolute truth in relation to such research. Rather the quest becomes more about attaining credibility through reflecting critically upon the appropriateness of the research design in relation to the research questions. This will necessitate a critical awareness of my own assumptions and theoretical positions in relation to the research, in order to be aware and mindful of the danger of advocating them in spite of the research findings.

### **3.5 Pilot study**

An initial pilot study was undertaken to test the research instruments for this study. Pilot studies have a long and established tradition in the social sciences. Whilst pilot studies can be small-scale versions of a future research project the intention of this pilot study was to trial and test particular research instruments i.e. the use of interviews and Foucault's genealogical method as a means of examining the data (Foucault, 1971). More specifically it was hoped that the use of interviews would expose the hidden discourses operating in relation to the Pilot schools' creative curriculum initiative. In this sense it may be referred to more specifically as a 'feasibility study' i.e. just how appropriate is the genealogical method for my research? It was therefore hoped that the pilot study would prove the worth of the chosen research instrument and potentially identify possible practical issues and problems that might occur along the way.

In order to collect suitable data to analyse genealogically a series of unstructured, informal interviews were conducted with teachers from the pilot study school. To structure the interviews would have had the potential to limit responses and in turn promote the researcher's position. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) suggest unstructured, informal interviews give the interviewees the chance:

To discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. In these senses the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable' (p.409).

The intention was that this would provide a good deal of contextual information to analyse critically. The unstructured or informal approach to the interviews involved, as Merriam (2009) suggested, asking open-ended questions that were flexible and exploratory and more like a conversation. It is perhaps inevitable that the design of the interview was arrived at from a philosophical position. Roulston (2007) suggested that interviews that focus on how the interview data is generated are 'constructivist' in nature and discourse analysis sits within such a framework. Inevitably the construction of research questions was of the utmost importance as it had the potential to colour the data or responses gained.

Open-ended questions, that were constructed to avoid researcher assumptions and bias, were employed. Consequently these limited the potential for interviewee responses that were constrained by the limits of the language used.

However it has to be recognised that determining interview questions may never be completely objective. Patton (2002) in Merriam (2009) suggested six types of interview questions. Experience and behaviour questions focus on individual behaviour and actions whilst opinion and values questions offer insights into the interviewee's personal positions. Feeling questions focus on the affective and seek adjective responses whilst knowledge questions seek factual knowledge. Sensory questions are similar to behaviour and experience questions but are more concerned with the specific sensory experience such as what was seen, heard, felt etc. Finally background and demographic questions are specific to a focus on the interviewee's individuality. This range of questions provides the researcher with a coherent structure to interrogate a broad range of the interviewees' personal interpretations (p. 96).

The pilot study school was specifically chosen for its reputation as an initiative led school as communicated by its own website and determined by its standing, based on inspection results, within the local authority. Essentially the school prided itself on being at the forefront of educational practice and in particular the adoption of a 'creative curriculum'. Consequently for the purposes of the pilot

study a range of questions were chosen that reflected Patton's typology to develop the following questions.

### **3.6 Interview questions:**

1. Can you tell me about a new initiative you have been involved in recently at school? - this question was essentially an experience and behaviour question that sought to provide an insight into individual behaviours and actions.
2. How do you feel about your role within this? – this was a feeling question that sought an adjectival response.
3. How might you review the effectiveness of such a new initiative? – this sought some specific knowledge from the interviewee and also focused on individual experience.
4. Suppose it was my first day on a training programme for this initiative what sort of experience would I have? – This question was deliberately hypothetical in the hope that it would elicit a 'feeling' response when the interviewee might have been reticent to recount their personal experience. As Merriam (2009) suggests this 'depersonalises' the issue and 'the response is almost always the respondent's personal opinion or feeling about the matter' (p.98).
5. What do you feel the value of external educational consultancy is? This was a specific question that hoped to discover the interviewee's feelings in relation to the school's initiatives which were led by external consultancy. It also touched on a consideration of values and opinions.
6. Is there anything else you would like to discuss in relation to the discussion we have had? This was to provide the interviewee an opportunity to elaborate on answers previously given or add something that they feel may have been relevant to the discussion but missed.

Questions 1 to 4 were specifically designed to elicit responses that would relate to the exploration of the conditions of possibility that impact upon the implementation of learning theory within the School. It was hoped that they would help to uncover the ways in which learning theory is appropriated, justified and actively constructed. In turn questions 5 to 6 were designed to uncover broader



issues of the wider educational discourse, performativity and allow the interviewees space to reflect upon any issues not directly covered.

### **3.7 Data transcription and analysis**

An important part of the research process here relates to the transcription and analysis of the data yielded from the interviews. As detailed above the research questions were structured in order to focus expressly upon specific areas of inquiry into the implementation of learning theory in school and wider relevant discourses.

Once the interviews were carried out they were transcribed personally with the express intention of being able to capture verbatim all the utterances and pauses in order to 'preserve the original context' (Jossellen, 2013, p.177). Furthermore, the process of transcription itself was analytical as it acted as an initial scrutinisation of the data. For genealogical inquiry familiarity with the data is essential in order to be able to identify key themes and categories of discourse. Therefore once the interviews were transcribed the initial stage of analysis was to listen to the recordings in tandem with reading the transcripts in order to become fully accustomed with the issues discussed. Inevitably the interviews were structured around the research questions and as such the responses to them provided an initial framework from which to code and categorise the data in so much as the questions focused on specific areas of inquiry.

Wetherall, Taylor and Yates (2001, p.39) acknowledge that data coding is important for analysis of discourse but that it often results in the creation of categories that are not exclusive and overlap. In genealogical study this is certainly the case. However in this research coding was an important first step towards identifying extracts of text that established discursive objects of relevance to the study. From a practical perspective this involved highlighting statements and phrases on the transcripts that had a particular bearing upon the research questions identified earlier on page 7.

For example from research question 1 the names of the initiatives teachers were engaged in were highlighted in the first instance. However there was also a

significant amount of supplementary information that needed to be considered in relation to the initiatives. This information pertained to how teachers felt about the initiative and the degree to which such changes were seen as either problematic or transformative. From these highlighted statements it became apparent that particular discursive objects were emerging. Discursive objects can be thought of those commonalities of thought or idea that appeared in the interview data. As Foucault (1972) suggests;

First we must map the first surfaces of their emergence:  
show where these individual differences ... will be  
accorded status (p.41)

Consequently the discursive objects were considered in relation to where they originated in the specific contexts researched. However a further process of problematisation, as a second wave of analysis was perhaps the most significant phase of this research. Problematisation here was an attempt to;

Critically show the way in which certain practices, beliefs  
and conceptions have become problematic in the history  
of thought due to the contingent intersection of a complex  
set of enabling and disabling conditions (Koopman, 2013,  
p.95).

As such it involved two actions. Firstly the discursive objects were analysed in order to identify that which was problematic. Secondly these constructs were problematised and therefore made problematic. As Foucault (1985) suggested when analysing the process of problematisation it is concerned with;

How and why certain things (behaviour, phenomena, processes) became a  
problem (p.115)

The focus then was concerned with examining the conditions of possibility that allowed for these problems to come into being.

### 3.8 Pilot study findings

It is important now to reiterate the overarching aims of the main research project. It was the intention of this research to explore the ways in which learning theories were constructed and appropriated in English Schools with particular reference to those that were informed by discoveries in neuroscience. In order to do this the conditions of possibility that existed that allowed the proliferation of such approaches were examined. This involved an exploration of discourse, power, performativity and the lived experience of the implementation. The purpose of the pilot study was to trial the use of genealogy informed by Foucault's methodologies as an instrument to explore the above issues. The following observations of the data led me to fine-tune the focus for my main study.

Firstly the analysis of the interviews emphasised the existence of an institutional discourse specific to the school's initiative of the 'creative curriculum'. This was articulated as a range pedagogical strategies designed to deliver the existing curriculum in engaging and imaginative ways. Consequently an examination of the 'discursive conditions' within which such discourses emerged was important for the main study. In particular it necessitated an exploration of institutional discourses in relation to specific interventions in the research schools.

Secondly the ways in which teachers engaged in 'self-regulation' was of interest. A deeper analysis of teacher behaviour in light of this was useful also; especially as a means of exploring the links between increased regulation and external intervention.

Performative agendas that 'prescribe, for state schools, curriculum content, pedagogical approaches, student assessment and the assessment of teachers, all enforced through a punitive school inspection regime' (Busher & Cremin, 2012, p.1) were a key focus for the analysis. Moreover this focus considered the degree to which such agendas precipitated external intervention or contributed to the discursive conditions necessary for it. Furthermore the ways in which teachers were subject to institutional technologies of power as well as those of

the self was crucial in order to understand emergent theories or models of learning.

The pilot study demonstrated that these technologies of power operate subliminally and yet are highly visible in the specific terminology used to mark out the creative curriculum. Indeed the teachers in the pilot study were marked by the degree to which they adopted this terminology but were subtly regulating their engagements by ensuring that they complied with the project. Consequently a focus on terminology specific to learning interventions in the research schools formed a key strand of the study.

Thirdly it was surprised to see the way in which teachers in the pilot school seemed to accept that educational change was something that should be externally driven. This required a greater study of the ways in which teacher's constructed themselves in terms of their professional dispositions in relation to initiatives like the 'creative curriculum'. For example did they see their role as engaging in debates about pedagogy and what was appropriate for their schools or were their perceptions limited in this regard?

It was therefore important that the main study considered the broader educational discourses of performativity, marketisation and commodification and their impact upon schools and teachers. This emphasised the importance of Foucault's (1972) concept of *connaissance* (see page 47 -48) in relation to the body of knowledge that constitutes these new theories of learning (and indeed the wider *connaissance* of the educational marketplace – performativity, external expertise, teachers as consumers) and crucially the *savoir* or specific discursive conditions that exist, or have existed, that have allowed such a *connaissance* to come into being.

From this initial analysis of the responses of the interviewees I had an increased confidence in genealogical enquiry as a suitable research instrument. Whereas I did have concerns about how precise such an approach might be Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine's structure demonstrated that such a method can be used to uncover the underlying discourses that impact upon schools and teachers. However, it was imperative that genealogy was used in a systematic and dispassionate way: Systematic in that analysis was made of all the available data

rather than searching for views that are commensurate with the researchers; dispassionate in that personal positions and prejudices did not drive the whole process. The questions used in the pilot study and the use of interviews were appropriate for the main research as they clearly elicited a range of valuable responses from the participants.

Within the main research project the reach of the 'discourse' analysed was extended. To be able to consider how learning theories were constructed in school individual teacher's personal views were considered along with their interpretations of policy documents, environmental messages (i.e. displays) and institutional practices and beliefs. These were then used as a lens through which to view the appropriation and implementation of learning theory in the research schools through a detailed examination of institutional discourses.

As Foucault, 1970, proposed;

Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers it carries with it (p.227).

The research will then seek to explore and examine the operation of discourse in relation to learning theory and to uncover relationships of knowledge and power.

### **3.9 Ethics**

Finally there are several important practical considerations to regard in relation to the research. Ethical approval was sought and gained for the research project from the University of Leicester.

The British Educational Research Association (B.E.R.A.) offer a comprehensive set of ethical guidelines that 'support educational researchers in conducting research to the highest ethical standards' (2011,p.3). The B.E.R.A guidelines talk of the importance of an 'ethic of respect' within educational research (p.4). In particular they cite the need to respect 'the person, knowledge, democratic values, the quality of educational research and academic freedom'. Reference

was made to these with particular respect to 'voluntary informed consent' and the need to ensure that all research participants were fully apprised of the purposes of the research, why their participation was invited and to whom the research would be reported.

Crucially the participants were also given a letter detailing assurances about anonymity and confidentiality and their right to withdraw from the research at any time (Appendix 1). In order for participants to be in a position to give their informed consent both the interview process and an explanation of how the data generated would be used, were discussed prior to each interview. As Cohen, Manion & Morrison, (2011) state 'the principle of informed consent arises from the subject's right to freedom' (p.52). As such this reinforces the democratic principles that underpin the research.

There was a slight risk that during the interview process interviewees might have found themselves discussing professional issues that were sensitive for them. However any potential stress was minimised due to the voluntary nature of the interview process and interviewees were given the opportunity to ask questions throughout the interviews whilst retaining the right to withdraw their consent at any time.

As per the letter, interviewees were provided with assurances that their responses would be anonymised. Whilst there was a slight risk that interviewees and the institutions' confidentiality might be breached this risk was minimised as Audio files stored on the Dictaphone were kept securely on password protected computers and the Dictaphone was kept in a locked cupboard as was any policy documentation. Also any reference to individual or institutional names both on the recordings or any subsequent analysis was removed and anonymised. The above considerations served to minimise the risk of participants and institutions being identified but it was important to also acknowledge that such assurances were subject to 'limits to confidentiality' (Brooks, te-Riele & Maguire, 2014, p.143) such as interviewees recognising themselves in the research report.

Another important ethical underpinning of any research project is the degree to which the methods are 'fit for the purpose of research they are undertaking' (British Educational Research Association B.E.R.A., 2011, p.9). It has already been articulated that the research tools utilised in this study were deemed to be the most appropriate means of developing an understanding of the research topic. Building on from this it was acknowledged that the integrity of this research was bound to the degree to which its' findings were represented truthfully with their 'intellectual capital' (B.E.R.A., 2012, p.10) intact. Therefore the full range of participants' responses was considered as opposed to a select few in order to triangulate the findings.

### **3.10 Sampling**

Unlike research that asks specific questions such as how much or how often, this study required non-probability sampling. That is a particular population was targeted as 'generalisation in a statistical sense is not a goal of qualitative research' (Merriam, 2009, p.77). Rather the research sought to understand the phenomena of the appropriation and implementation of new theories of learning in school. Consequently schools and the individual interviewees were selected using purposive sampling (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). This afforded a focus on a specific range of institutions to include both State Primary and Secondary Schools and Academy schools and individuals within the institutions with specific responsibilities relating to teaching and learning. Purposive sampling allowed for a focus on those individuals (and institutions) that had in-depth knowledge of the field of study and had the potential to 'lead to a greater depth of information from a smaller number of carefully selected cases' (Teddlie and Yu, 2007, p.7).

The schools were chosen for their engagement with external learning programmes whilst individual teachers were identified for the key roles they played in disseminating new approaches to learning. Access negotiations

involved communicating initially by email with senior members of staff at the schools identified.

Eleven interviews were carried out with teachers across four Primary schools and eight interviews were carried out with teachers across three secondary schools. Of the Primary schools two were Catholic schools and two were non-denominational. Of the Secondary schools two were academies whilst the third was a grammar school. Each individual interview lasted between twenty to thirty minutes and used the same questions as utilised in the pilot study. Consequently the interviews produced a considerable amount of data.

### **3.11 Research Context:**

It is important to consider the context of the individual interviews. Interviewees were identified as key informants, those who had some responsibility for embedding learning initiatives within the school, or auxiliary players who had partial responsibility or those who were charged with classroom implementation.

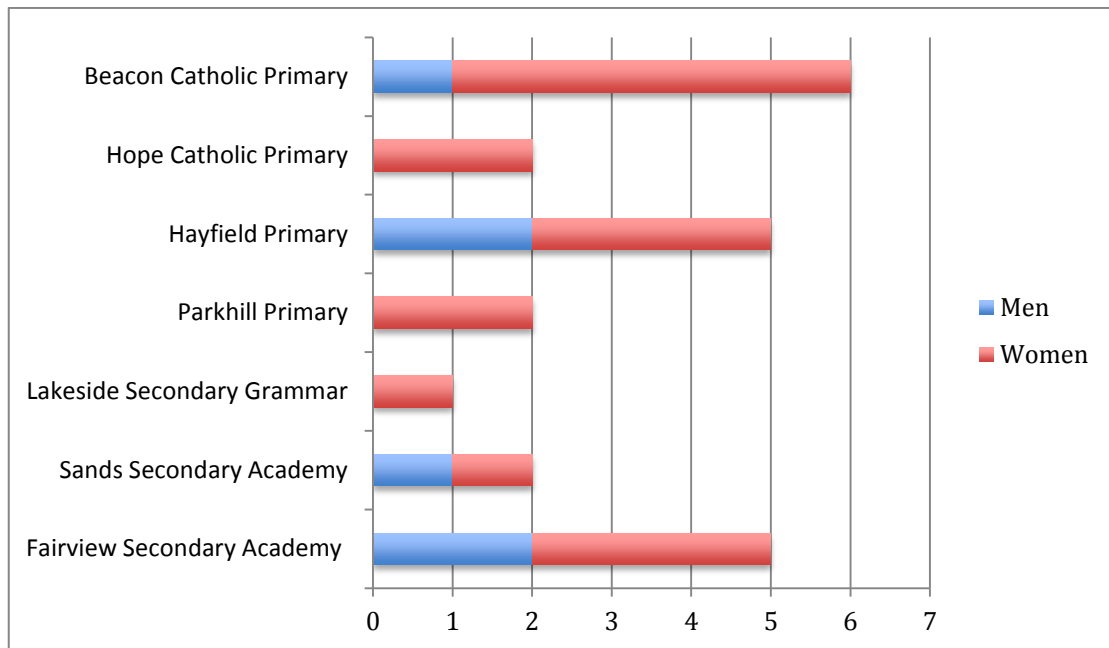


The following tables detail contextual information in relation to the research schools and participants.

**3.12 Schools and context:**

<b><u>Beacon Catholic Primary School</u></b>	Catholic maintained Primary School
<b><u>Hope Catholic Primary School</u></b>	Catholic maintained Primary School
<b><u>Hayfield Primary School</u></b>	State Primary School
<b><u>Parkhill Primary School</u></b>	State Primary School
<b><u>Lakeside Grammar School</u></b>	High performing Grammar School - 100% pupils achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and Maths GCSEs
<b><u>Sands Secondary Academy</u></b>	Forced academisation due to special measures
<b><u>Fairview Secondary Academy</u></b>	Secondary 'converter' academy

### **3.13. Participants**



### 3.14 Participants roles and responsibilities

Research participant responsibilities in school	
Fairview Academy	
Jane	Assistant Principal
Nick	Learning community member/Science
Malcolm	Learning community member/English
Lucy	Learning community member
Joan	Learning community member/Advanced Skills Teacher
Lakeside Grammar	
Hannah	Deputy Head Teacher – teaching and learning.
Hayfield Primary	
Robert	Recently qualified/P.E. co-ordinator
Amanda	Year 6 teacher
Susan	Literacy co-ordinator Key Stage 1
Jennifer	Year 4 teacher
Joe	I.C.T. co-ordinator
Sands Academy	
David	Head of Drama/student placement & member of Transforming Teaching and Learning group
Emily	Geography
Parkhill Primary	
Ruby	Year 6 Mathematics co-ordinator
Kitty	Recently qualified/English specialism
Beacon Catholic Primary School	
Sammy	Year 6 Literacy co-ordinator
Melanie	Year 3 N.Q.T
Sinead	Year 4 N.Q.T.
Maria	Year 5 Science co-ordinator
Jessica	Year 6 experienced teacher
James	Year 4 Mathematics co-ordinator
Hope Catholic Primary	
Maggie	Year 5 teacher & I.C.T. co-ordinator
Alice	Literacy co-ordinator

‘Each interview context is one of interaction and relation; the result is as much a product of this social dynamic as it is a product of accurate accounts and replies’ (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p645). It is imperative that context is at the forefront of analysis and indeed in this research consideration needs to be made of how the research process was carried out. The majority of the interviews were carried out during school hours and were mediated by key contacts at the schools. At Fairview Academy Jane, the Assistant Principal was keen to be involved and after reading the interview questions she identified staff she felt would be well positioned to respond to them. It is significant that Jane, acting as a gatekeeper, had organized a timetable during the school day and a room for the interviews to take place. Furthermore she highlighted prior to the interview, that the teachers involved would be able to discuss initiatives in relation to the school’s Teaching and Learning focus. This could be viewed as affording a certain status to the process of research or alternatively stage managing and controlling proceedings. Miller and Bell (2012) highlight the concern that ethical research assumes that consent is voluntary and that coercion has not occurred (p.63). Whilst the interviewees were eager to participate what could not be seen was the process by which these teachers had been selected and indeed why other teachers may have been disregarded. Clearly Jane’s role in this manifested itself as an extension to her professional responsibility for Teaching and Learning in the school and consequently it is important to consider her role here as a gatekeeper. Whilst the interviewees had to give their consent for participation in the study it was evident that they had been directed, in part, to participate by Jane. This coupled with the development of ‘a bond of loyalty’ between the researcher and the researched which casts them more as ‘subjects’ than ‘partners’ reinforces what Homan (2000) referred to as ‘the myth of voluntariness’ (p.336). Whilst consent was forthcoming it cannot be divorced from the potential sense of obligation that interviewees may have felt. Certainly the dynamic between senior leaders who had endorsed the research and the interviewees who had been encouraged to participate may be significant. Similarly, interviews at Hayfield Primary were timetabled during school hours and the Head Teacher, who was not interviewed, also identified and directed the participants suggesting that ‘they will be able to answer the questions’. At Lakeside Grammar, the Deputy Head Teacher made it clear that she would be

the only interviewee as staff were busy with examinations whilst at Sands Academy two interviews were scheduled during staff Preparation, Planning and Assessment (P.P.A.) sessions.

Seidman (2013) suggests that it is important to gain research access through interviewees' peers rather than gatekeepers who have a hierarchical relationship to them, however for the most part, as has been identified, this was difficult as access was inevitably negotiated through staff with specific managerial and leadership responsibility. It is therefore worth considering in these instances, the degree to which the interviewees had complete freedom to respond (Birch, Miller, Mauthner & Jessop, 2012, pp.62-67). This contrasted greatly with the experience at Parkfield Primary and Hope and Beacon Catholic Primary schools. In these instances access to the school, whilst obviously sanctioned by the Head Teachers, was left to individual interviewees who were happy to give of their time after school hours. Furthermore, in the case of Hope Catholic Primary, after the two interviews that were planned had been carried out, the interviewees asked two of their colleagues if they would like to be involved and they obliged.

As detailed the interviews produced a significant amount of data. The next chapter will seek to analyse the interview data collected utilising the methodological tools detailed above.

### **3.15 Research limitations**

The interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed before being analysed using Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine's (2008) framework (p.46). This framework focused on the identification and problematising of discursive objects. It is worth reiterating at this point that the purpose of this pilot was to trial the research instrument of CDA (informed by Foucault's methodologies) with a view to determining their efficacy for the future research project. However I feel it is

necessary to outline some initial reservations regarding the process as Foucault's work has divided opinion in the social sciences. As Foucault himself said;

He goes on to extend his analysis to the 'mechanisms' and 'procedures' that society has in place to sanction its conception of truth. Hence part of the purpose of the pilot study was to better understand the 'regime of 'truth' that exists within the school and the structures that impact upon the regulation of these 'truths'. Mills, (1997), suggests that, for Foucault, the 'rule – governed nature of discourse' (p.6) is of greater interest than the individual utterances produced in any setting. However it is through an examination of 'individual utterances' that we may shed light upon these structures. It is, however, important to sound a word of caution here as Graham (2005) explains;

It appears that many scholars using discourse analysis within a Foucaultian framework have adopted a 'Foucaultianistic' reticence to declare method, fearful perhaps of the charge of being prescriptive (p.2).

He goes on to suggest that others simply assume that by referring to core themes of Foucault's work, such as discourse, power and panopticism, they are engaged in Foucaultian Discourse Analysis (F.D.A) also. His uncomfortable conclusion is that perhaps F.D.A., because of this lack of a coherent approach, 'does not exist'.

In a sense Graham has alighted upon the paradox at the heart of Foucault's work – a personal resistance to labels and a lack of articulation of a clear methodology seemingly at odds with his popularity in the social sciences. Hence, as well as a tool for assessing the worth of this particular research instrument, the pilot study also had to consider Foucault's wider conceptions of discourse and power whilst resisting the temptation to focus on one or two of his concepts. Scheurich and McKenzie, 2005, warned when discussing educational applications of Foucault that '..a very high percentage of this work engages....at only a superficial level' and that 'the most popular use, or abuse, is to cherry pick one concept, such as

“panopticon” or “disciplinary society,” and then use that one concept within a more traditional critical framework’ (p.859). Hence I resisted such a limited approach to analysis whilst also being mindful of Gee’s, (2004), concern that it can sometimes ‘amount to proselytizing for one’s own politics in the absence of any close study of oral or written language’ (p.20).

Drawing upon Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine’s (2008) guidelines the ‘corpus of statements’ were taken from the interviews carried out in the pilot and as such provided the ‘discursive object/s’. As Foucault (1972) said

When one describes the formation of the objects of a discourse, one tries to locate the relations that characterise a discursive practice, one determines neither a lexical organization, nor the scansion of a semantic field (p.48).

Hence the focus was on the identification of key discursive formations and the ways in which they became legitimised. Consequently this led to a consideration of the conditions of possibility for the said ‘discursive object/s’. This entailed exploring the discursive object as a response to a specific set of conditions.

## Chapter 4

### Analysis and Problematisation

We must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies. (Foucault, 1979, p. 100)

Foucault's suggestion above represents a challenge for the analysis of the data in this research. It acknowledges the complex nature of discourse and resists the interpretation of a simple binary of power relations where dominant forces subjugate weaker ones. Instead, it recognises that discourse is messy and complicated. Hence the purpose of the analysis that follows is to make sense of the data by following lines of a genealogical enquiry in order to make 'visible a singularity at places where there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant' (Foucault, 1991, p76).

Hence the express aim was to problematise and deconstruct the underlying discourses that at once govern and maintain the construction and appropriation of learning theory in school. This process involved identifying discursive objects of significance for the study, as detailed in the methodology, and exposing the relations of power and knowledge immanent within them through a process of problematisation (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine, 2008, p.99.) These discursive objects were constituted from samples of text derived from the interviews that had especial relevance for the study. To reiterate, the interview questions focused upon the ways in which teachers implemented and evaluated new learning initiatives, the values they attached to external educational consultancy and the perceptions they held of the impact of neuroscientific findings upon educational practice. I was interested in how these ideas, and their related discursive constructs, were framed in the interviews that were carried out.



Whilst the discursive objects were governed inevitably, *a priori*, by the focus of the interview questions, ultimately they emerged *a posteriori* as a result of both the interviewees' responses and the inductive process of the researcher (Wellington, 2000, p.142). In particular the focus here was to consider how these discursive objects were talked about and individually understood by the interviewees before delving further into their construction through a process of problematisation. Arribas and Walkerdine, 2008, suggest that problematisation asks;

Under what circumstances and by whom are aspects of human being rendered problematic, according to what moral domains or judgement are these concerns allowed to circulate? (p.101).

Consequently this allowed for a consideration of the conditions of possibility for each of the discursive objects in order to scrutinise their origins and emergence.

Careful analysis, coding and problematisation of the transcript data revealed seven key discursive objects that emerged through this process:

'initiatives', 'bringing in', 'school to school transmission', 'concretion of a language to learn', 'neuroscience', 'Consultancy, consultants and commodity' and 'reviewing effectiveness'. These discursive objects then provided the foundation for further problematisation and the establishment of linked nominative problematisations that identified 'material practices wherein being was rendered thinkable, manageable and governable' (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008, p.101). These practices were identified as the 'normalisation of external intervention', 'inter and intra-regulatory performative practices', 'marketisation and neuro-fascination', 'consultation as teacher marginalisation' and 'evaluation and displaced professionalities'.

The discursive objects and nominative problematisations were linked in the following way:

4.1 DISCURSIVE OBJECTS	LINKED NOMINATIVE PROBLEMATISATIONS
'Initiatives' & 'Bringing in'	Normalisation of external intervention
'School to school transmission'	Inter and Intra regulatory performative practice
'Concretion of a language to learn' & 'Neuroscience'	Marketisation and Neuro-fascination
'Consultants, consultancy and commodity'	Consultation as teacher marginalisation
'Evaluation'	Displaced professionalities

Consequently this chapter will present an amalgamation of both the discursive objects and the linked nominative problematisations that derive from them.

The concept of problematisation is a consistent theme in Foucault's work and it is important to determine its relevance for this research. As Foucault himself suggests;

Problematisation doesn't mean the representation of a pre-existent object, nor the creation through discourse of an object that doesn't exist. It's the set of discursive or non-discursive practices that makes something enter into the play of the true and false, and constitutes it as an object for thought (whether under the form of moral reflection, scientific knowledge, political analysis, Etc) (1984)

It is necessary therefore, to consider the discursive objects and problematisations identified above in light of how they are constituted by practices that affirm or deny their truth. In essence then they must be seen as responses to particular conditions of possibility. To better understand the genesis of these objects problematisation is necessary. As Koopman (2013) reflects;

A problematisation is a base out of which we elaborate the institutions, functions and objects constitutive of our practices (p.98)

Furthermore, he suggests that for Foucault problematisation can be thought of in two ways - as an active 'act of critical inquiry' and as a 'nominal object of inquiry' (p.98).

This process is an attempt to expose relationships of knowledge and power and to alight upon the technologies of power and the self that arise as a result of them. Foucault's (1988b) explanations of these technologies can be found in the methodology, but in essence they relate to how teachers are shaped by power relations, both those that exist externally to them and those by which they regulate themselves. Here self-regulation is seen as a limiting force that corresponds with the institutional demands of power.

The discursive objects identified individually provide a 'point of departure for genealogical analysis' and 'a focus on the ways in which objects are constructed' (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008, p.101). Genealogy then requires a different kind of thinking – one in which the researcher becomes the research tool (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) responding to the data in search of meaning.

Furthermore it necessitates a consideration of the 'complex, social functions' (Foucault, 1975, p.23) that these objects uncover in order to see what has been produced.

As Scheurich and McKenzie (2005) explain 'power does not just exclude or repress; power also produces' (p.854). For example, whilst performative pressures in school may restrict or repress certain teacher behaviours others, as a direct consequence of power relations, are normalised and produced.

Consequently genealogy needs to take account not only of the ways in which power limits and restrains but also the ways in which it is productive.

One consequence of this is that these productions become a means of perpetuating and expanding power bases. That is, in and of themselves, they proliferate and embellish these relations without the need for further human direction. Another important consideration is the degree to which the discursive objects being studied are specific to the field of study or whether or not they arise from a common epistemological foundation.

In other words are there wider observations to be drawn from the ways in which learning theory is constructed and appropriated within schools? Furthermore, do these objects suggest that, aside from operating along parallel lines, they derive from a common point of formation? Finally, when considering genealogy Foucault was interested in the ways in which 'the body itself is invested in power relations' (1977, p.24). Here, through an understanding of technologies of power and the self, the impact of power upon teachers becomes clearer. The focus then shifts from the ways in which teachers' behaviours are regulated to contemplate how power relations transform their very being.

The discursive objects and linked nominative problematisations will now be examined in turn.

#### **4.2 Initiatives**

Initiative is drawn from the Latin 'initium' meaning 'beginning'. For the purposes of this research 'initiative' refers to any educational programme, either internally or externally driven, undertaken at the research sites. Recent educational history is awash with the idea of initiatives. A simple search on the Times Educational Supplement website (2014) yields four thousand eight hundred and eighty two hits alone for the word. The word at a semantic level is suggestive of enterprise, first steps and personal agency; however it came to be representative of broader discursive constructs within the interview data. Whilst it is important to note that the word was directly used in the first interview question, it was striking that in all of the interviews teachers were able to readily name and discuss initiatives that they had been involved in. For example at Fairview Academy it was evident early on during all six interviews, that there was one key enterprise that the staff were involved in – Dylan Williams' (2007) 'Teacher Learning Communities' or L.C. Indeed, L.C. became commonly used as shorthand for the initiative in all of the interviews at the school. Teacher Learning Communities are based on groups of teachers meeting regularly, carrying out peer observations and supporting one another to embed formative assessment techniques within their teaching. Clearly a great deal of importance was attached to this. Indeed, Jane, the Assistant Principal, who wished to be interviewed before the other participants, responded

enthusiastically that the school was involved in 'lots' of 'initiatives' and that 'Learning Communities' was 'one of the things that I implemented first'. She spoke at length regarding her role as an 'implementer' and how, when the school wanted to address independent learning, she 'went down to a course in London...found out some stuff about that' prior to delivering it to school. That Jane wished to be interviewed first underlines her role as gatekeeper as previously discussed, demonstrating her desire to be in control of the process and to manage the other interviewees' participation.

There was also a certain amount of personal kudos and pride attached to the idea of an enterprising school being engaged in several LC projects and the implied personal agency linked to the Learning Communities project is significant. It identifies Jane as the architect of the project and also has implications for the other five interviewees' positions in relation to it as they are in effect delivering an initiative that she has mandated. Indeed throughout her interview she readily used the personal pronoun when describing the practical application of the project and the need to adapt the CPD (Continuing Professional Development) calendar around it, for example;

I had to alter our CPD calendar, that's a rolling programme that I have put together, I just put staff together and I gave all staff the resources at the outset.

The programme was clearly driven hierarchically and Jane's ownership of it appeared to be closely tied to her professional role. A great deal of discussion centred on the administration of the initiative as well as the evaluative procedures that the school undertook to judge its efficacy.

Teachers' ownership of initiatives was evident elsewhere also. For example Mary at Hope Catholic Primary School stated that 'I implemented Every Child A Writer', Amanda at Hayfield Primary, whilst also referring to Every Child A Writer, explained how she 'implemented those principles' and Sammy at Beacon Catholic Primary School described her role in 'picking up initiatives all the time'.

At Fairview the TLC 'initiative' is seen as being synonymous with dynamism as is the idea of being involved with 'lots of initiatives'. This casts the teachers as 'initiates' who have been admitted to membership of the TLC group. This was particularly evident in the prevalence of discussion of initiatives by all the interviewees. It was significant not only because of the congruence between the interviewees when they were asked to discuss an initiative they were involved in, but also because of the speed of their responses. Nick suggested 'LC has been quite a strong thing in the school' whilst Malcolm also asked the question 'I don't know if anyone has mentioned this before?'

It was interesting to note that Joan also asked whether I had 'heard of this off someone else?' This checking of previous interviewees' responses is telling in that it represents teachers in classroom roles seeking affirmation that mentioning LC is appropriate, not only for the purposes of research focussing on such initiatives, but also to satisfy Jane's eagerness as senior leader. Indeed all the interviewees were aware that Jane, the Assistant Principal had been interviewed first and given her clear enthusiasm for LC - 'I thought it was such a good idea' they were seemingly keen to endorse the approach. It is important here to consider the relationship between Jane, the key player in the LC initiative and the other interviewees who were in effect auxiliary to her and within her line manager remit. Joan stated that 'I was involved as an AST (Advanced Skills Teacher) ...and I have been designing some of the resources for it', Nick had 'been delivering training on it' whilst Malcolm had to 'research the different areas that came under independent learning' for the group. It was also evident that the LC project was tied to the interviewees' own performance management as directed by Jane. However, whilst they had been given clear responsibility for the development and expansion of LC within the school, this privilege is illusory. As Allan (2013) suggests 'where we might think we have greater freedom, we are, in reality, more tightly constrained than ever before' (p.24). The initiative here was hierarchically driven and therefore cannot be divorced from performative processes within the school such as target setting, appraisal, lesson observations, measures of attendance and comparisons between staff. As Ball (2013) explains these operate as 'policy technologies' that 'involve the calculated deployment of forms of organisation and procedures, and disciplines or bodies of

knowledge, to organise human forces and capabilities into functioning systems' (Ball, 2013, p.41). He goes on to suggest that such a process involves relationship building and motivational strategies alongside more mechanistic, systematised change strategies. The teacher here therefore is constructed simultaneously as having both a stake in the system and being highly accountable to it.

Furthermore the auxiliary players are positioned as components of machinery that assumes a 'one size fits all' approach to educational transformation. LC is a solution to the schools' need to develop and embed, as Jane suggested, 'assessment for learning'. It is significant that this initiative, like many others, is perceived as a packaged system with its own rules, procedures and materials. However Joan alluded to some degree of adaptation on behalf of the school as she felt that some of the TLC materials 'were a bit thin' and there was a need to 'develop some of our own purposely produced...customised resources'. Despite this the TLC initiative is identified within the school as a commodity that is saleable and easily recognisable. Where once teacher collaboration was presupposed as being indicative of professional practice here it is envisioned as a programme, to be followed and disseminated as Nick explained;

I've been community leader so that's just sort of delivering like the whole school initiative...ensuring all teachers have their partners...and that they are testing out one of the ideas so we get a pack...it might be a range of activities or lessons that we can perhaps trial.

The idea of delivery of a pack further highlights the manifestation of the initiative as a commodity where educational practice has been rendered into a 'form of commodity fetishism.' (Luke, 2006) Here the success of 'educational policy, the practice of teaching, and particular versions of student outcomes' are dependent upon 'product use' LC therefore represents a methodology that is reduced into a set of behaviours that are envisaged as being indicative of 'optimal educational practice and experience' (Luke, 2006, p.128).

Whilst at Fairview Academy educational 'initiatives' were viewed as being transformative they held negative connotations for Hannah, Deputy Head teacher at Lakeside Grammar School. In response to my initial question regarding initiatives Hannah was keen to emphasise in relation to her schools' focus on Guy Claxton's Building Learning Power programme (2002) that;

we don't really see it as an initiative we would say this is probably going to take 5-10 years before it is really embedded in the school....

There was a sense that the idea of initiatives were somehow problematic and that the school was keen to distance itself from being involved in what might be seen as short term educational interventions. It is difficult to say whether this is an anxiety that stems from a wider concern with initiatives that are imported into schools or whether it is illustrative of the way the school operates CPD Easen (1985) suggests that innovation in schools is often doomed to failure as it is sometimes 'approached in the form of an organ transplant' (p.132) when what is needed is a consideration of context specific issues. Easen goes on to argue for more of a focus on schools 'negotiating *their* own values and agendas for action' (p137). This more measured approach may well reflect Hannah's priorities in relation to her responsibility for teaching and learning, assessment and CPD. Indeed the school had invested significantly in Guy Claxton's (2002) Building Learning Power (BLP) in order to 'underpin a lot of the work we are doing as a school in terms of learning and providing students with a language framework to talk about learning'. BLP is still representative of a model of learning being transplanted into the school but there was an acknowledgement that BLP was complex and that it would take a long time to embed within lessons. Interestingly, and drawing comparisons with Fairview School, the process was mediated through staff training and 'teacher learning communities (TLCs)...to enable professional learning conversations between colleagues about BLP'

Furthermore, Hannah stated that 'we also have, I don't like the term 'working party', but we have a working party that works on BLP as well'. The 'working party' group consisted of 10 members of staff rising to 12 in the new term. What is significant here is the process by which BLP is being implemented both



through TLCs and a working party that will involve a significant number of staff from the school. There is a sense that a critical mass of teachers is needed to be able to ensure a consensus and guarantee both success and legitimacy. Also, Hannah expressed some concern that ‘in one sense it is a kind off-the-shelf product and I think you have got to make it fit your school’. This represents the issue of commercialisation of educational programmes and Ball’s (2004a) wider concerns of commodification as discussed in the literature review. There is perhaps, as was also seen at Fairview Academy, a reticence to adopt programmes without adapting them for the context of the school. As Hannah stated ‘we are at the point with it now that we want to Lakeside it’. Evidently Hannah’s role involved the careful vetting of school initiatives in order to ensure that they reflected the schools core principles. She emphasised at every turn that this was about creating ‘Lakeside’ learners and the need to ‘develop a profile of what an effective ‘Lakeside’ learner would be’.

Hannah’s suggestion to distil learning into a profile with sets of desirable characteristics positions the student as a consumer of a collection of educational goods. It represents a change in the social relations between teacher and pupil where value is no longer seen as a consequence of human interaction, rather it is envisioned as the quantification of sets of desirable characteristics. Hannah’s desire to ‘Lakeside’ the initiative is imagined as a means of remaining true to the schools ethos and beliefs. However it can also be seen as replicating a market response to compartmentalise and reduce the desirable into a commodity that is readily transferable.

At Hayfield Primary staff were involved in several initiatives such as Irresistible Learning, Every Child a Writer and the Alan Peat Literacy programme (Peat, 2011) Robert clearly linked this to the inspection agenda;

There were a lot of initiatives and things that came up this year because of preparing us for Ofsted...it’s just kind of...maybe tightening the belt.

Similarly Amanda suggested that the driver for the implementation of these initiatives was 'our standards'. They both demonstrated visible enthusiasm for these outside initiatives. The suggestion here that programmes such as these and others like them can be used as valuable preparation for inspection clearly elevates them to a status somewhere above that of internal staff capacity to improve the school. Indeed Amanda explained that;

'because we weren't unfortunately in the position where we could make changes at a gradual pace, where we hadn't got external influences for example Ofsted knocking... at our doors any moment, so we did have to make changes and implement it quicker!'

Ofsted forms one part here of a 'regulatory system' that aims to ensure standards through the careful monitoring of curricula and examination (Jones, 2003, p.161). That the school is looking towards Ofsted for approval prior to inspection also presents the danger that pedagogy is responsive only to narrowly constrained interpretations of inspection criteria. Despite Ofsted's protestations that inspectors do 'not favour any particular teaching style' (2015, p.57) the pressures are such that teachers and schools are eager to adopt models that are often promoted as being indicative of a good or outstanding Ofsted lesson. Indeed Alan Peat, whose materials are used at Amanda's school, has given his latest book the title 'Teaching Outstanding Persuasive Writing' (2015). Consequently, it is difficult to see how the word 'outstanding' can be used in the promotion of pedagogical material to schools without raising the spectre of inspection. It is a term that has become indiscernible, from a practical perspective, of anything other than that, which would satisfy the performative, standardised agenda of school improvement (Sahlberg, 2011). From the teacher's viewpoint to purchase such materials is to seek to understand in what ways will I be measured? It also contains the promise and allure of understanding the alchemy of 'outstanding practice' – something that is elusive and prone to change and revision by successive governments and ministers.

In essence Amanda was suggesting that in the absence of external performative pressures the school might have been able to adopt a more measured approach to change. In a sense there is also an anxiety here that other schools may have

the answers and that in order to compete external intervention is needed. This contrasts to some degree with the Sands Academy experience. As a school forced to convert to an Academy after going into special measures, they had developed what David referred to as a 'transforming teaching and learning group' which involved identifying those staff considered to be outstanding and giving them the opportunity to support other teachers. Emily reinforced this by explaining that despite them focussing on established theoretical models such as Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy; there had been 'more kind of in-house training' in response to their changing circumstances. Emily went on to explain that this did to some degree mirror the wider ethos of the Excalibur Academy chain to which they belonged;

Now that we are an Excalibur Academy it is more in house and kept within the Academy and provided by Excalibur I believe.

This may relate to the idea of quality assurance – ensuring that training is consistent across the chain's schools but it can also be seen as developing a distinctive brand in relation to pedagogical practice and ensuring that Excalibur Academies are distinct. Furthermore it emphasises the degree to which training is externally controlled within these institutions. Individual academies and the chains to which they belong are, after all, highly marketised and they are afforded greater curricular control than state schools (Hatcher, 2006, p.329).

Parkhill Primary, resonating with the experience at Hayfield, was involved in lots of initiatives with a particular focus on Alan Peat Literacy and a synthetic phonics programme. Sammy, an experienced teacher near retirement, at Beacon Catholic Primary felt that they were involved in too many initiatives;

We are picking up initiatives all the time and I think it's such a fast pace education at the moment it is not even a case like the old days where you would bring in an initiative with the whole staff and it was ... you know so embedded – it's kind of picking up the selection of strategies.

She went on to suggest that Michael Gove, the then Secretary of State for Education was responsible;

He is pushing down new initiative after new initiative after new initiative in order to raise standards and my philosophy is that pigs do not weigh any heavier by putting them on the scales each week.

She then explained that this felt like 'spinning plates constantly'. Melanie also expressed concern at the effects this was having on the children;

They go into a frenzy and actually we are frenzied and it's a nonsense!

Furthermore Sammy was able to chart this process historically suggesting that despite strategies such as the Literacy and Numeracy initiatives standards had not gone up;

What happens is that teachers have been thrown another book to learn, another initiative to learn and another strategy and if you just left it as it was, how on earth did we all get educated? It is just a total nonsense and ... you have to stop all these new initiatives, you have to ... trust teachers to teach children ...and prioritise really, for our children ... we are not the same as the school up the road, we're for here – knowing our children.

This statement is important on two levels. Firstly it reinforces the concern that many of these initiatives represent a 'one size fits all' approach to school improvement as seen earlier in relation to Fairview Academy. Such an approach potentially fails to take any significant account of the context specific issues of individual schools. Secondly it identifies state mandated educational interventions, such as the Literacy and Numeracy strategies, as the antecedents of these more recent, often commercial, initiatives. One legacy of this history is that schools and teachers have become habituated to the idea of the educational initiative or intervention.

At Hope Catholic Primary School Maggie reinforced this. When referring to initiatives that were mandated at a senior leadership level, she stated that;

We've got new initiatives coming in left, right and centre ... some which work very well, some which don't.

It was interesting there was no discussion about how these initiatives might come to be disregarded. However she then alluded to her role as ICT co-ordinator stating that 'I've brought in quite a lot of new initiatives'. There was a sense here that as a teacher with a management responsibility part of the role involved an engagement with such interventions. For Maggie 'bringing in' and 'taking in loads of...initiatives' has become synonymous with the dispensation of her managerial duties. She acknowledged that this process has allowed her to 'streamline the direction of ICT in school'.

The school had also 'adopted' a new synthetic phonics programme as Alice explained whilst Mary described how in her role as literacy co-ordinator she had 'implement(ed) Every Child a Writer'. Almost without exception in this research the development of specific curricula and broader pedagogical initiatives originate not with individual teachers but outside of the schools. Thus school improvement is envisaged as being exterior to the teacher. Instead they become the means by which approved 'good practice' is 'brought in', transmitted and exchanged echoing Balerin and Lauder's (2010) concept of a State Approved Theory of learning.

#### **4.3 'Bringing in':**

As has been illustrated, all the schools were significantly involved in the implementation of a variety of 'initiatives' with a view to improving their schools' performance. What also stood out however, was the language of 'bringing in' they used to describe the process. At Fairview Academy Jane, the Assistant Principal, described how the TLC project came to light. She attended an external course and 'brought the idea back to the SLT'. At Sands Academy Emily

explained how since the change of leadership at the school ‘two full initiatives have come in’ whilst Ruby at Parkhill Primary spoke extensively of trainers visiting the school saying that ‘two externals have come in (from) the biggest outside initiatives’.

Susan at Hayfield Primary spoke of Irresistible Learning being ‘brought on board’ as did Jennifer. Maggie at Hope Catholic Primary said that she had ‘brought in’ several initiatives and that the school as a whole had ‘taken in loads ... brought in a lot’. Hannah at Lakeside Grammar explained that ‘we had an external trainer come in from TLO (The Learning Organisation)’.

The idea of ‘bringing in’ what is perceived of as good practice belies what is effectively an exteriorization of expertise and pedagogical knowledge and a deficit model of teachers’ individual capacity to solve the educational issues they face. As Lyotard (1984) suggested;

We may thus expect a thorough exteriorization of knowledge with regard to the “knower,” at whatever point he or she may occupy in the knowledge process. The old principle that the acquisition of knowledge is indissociable from training (Bildung) of minds, or even of individuals, is becoming obsolete (p.4 ).

Lyotard’s use of Bildung here relates to the cultivation and ‘unfolding of certain potentialities’ within the individual and the liberation of the mind (Schmidt, 1996, p.630). However the danger here is that knowledge is no longer viewed in terms of its worthiness rather it is the degree to which it can be readily passed on and externally legitimised. This *modus operandi* has become internalised and normalised (Jeffrey & Troman, 2012, p.454.). It is reflective of a performative technology of power that makes the teacher visible as a subject whose purpose is delivery above development and whose role is defined in relation to a commodification of pedagogy rather than meaningful educational research. Furthermore teachers such as Jane, Maggie and Hannah readily, and seemingly willingly, identify their professional roles as being indistinguishable from this process. Indeed Jane explained that her role in relation to the schools’ TLC

initiative was 'introducing it, then leading it, organising it and then reviewing it'. It is of note that Jane refers first to introducing an initiative rather than developing one. It suggests that the initiative is already fully formed and only requires supervision in order for it to be implemented.

This amounts to a 'technology of the self' (Foucault, 1975) that demonstrates teachers acceptance of pedagogy as commodity and their role as technician. Jane's response suggests therefore that teachers are self-regulating their behaviour and recasting themselves as deliverers of pedagogy.

As Leaton-Gray (2007) suggested that the 1988 Education Reform Act led to greater accountability of teachers' whilst paradoxically they were less responsible for pedagogical design. Moreover Apple (2011) warned of the technification of teaching and in particular how this was preceded by the 'rapid growth of pre-packaged curriculum materials' (p130-131).

Foucault (1982) suggested that power relations have become 'progressively governmentalised', in other words centralised and controlled at an institutional level. It is evident from the research schools that these centralised prescriptions of pedagogy are commonplace. Predominately these prescriptions are commercial packages that offer both teacher and school what amount to unitary, homogenous prescriptions that afford little scope for contextualisation. This was especially evident in those schools that implemented rigid synthetic phonic programmes. As Ruby at Parkhill Primary explained this meant that pupils in year six who 'didn't need it' still had to undertake training. Whilst Alice at Hope Catholic Primary suggested that their phonics scheme undertaking 'was part of a government thing...because... autonomy as teachers...and responsibility has been taken off us'. Furthermore she alluded to a current mind-set where teachers feel the need to 'get people in because they're more experienced than us when actually there is so much experience in school'. She explained that;

Sometimes we buy in these schemes that actually confuse staff, confuse the children – because schools haven't

really sat down and thought who or what we are with respect to that – do we really need this?

She advocated schools exploring their own internal capacity and looking for what they 'can actually use and adapt without bringing these specialists in!' This resistance, albeit verbal, is significant. Alice is acknowledging that whilst this process of 'bringing in' is problematic it is also representative of a power relationship between internal teacher proficiency and the spectre of external expertise. In order for such a relationship to exist resistance is necessary in that it sets the boundaries and limits of what is acceptable. One affirms the other. It is only when stable structures and systems replace 'the free play of antagonistic reactions' (Foucault, 1982, p.794) that victory is assured. In other words victory occurs when the discourse becomes naturalised and is accepted. The possibility therefore for reclamation of teacher pedagogical agency exists but it is positioned in relation to an increasing normalisation of external intervention.

The existence of external models of learning and practice do not therefore preclude the opportunity for teachers to utilise their professional experience and judgement in order to adapt, or even disregard, these models of practice. This was exemplified by what Jane, the Assistant Principal at Fairview Academy School stated;

We have got the expertise here, we can go on a course, find some information, bring it back and then tailor it for ourselves so that it works better for us – it's more of a starting point rather than an end in itself.

Whilst this still envisages an external locus of expertise there is very much an acknowledgement, from the senior management perspective, that teacher experience and expertise in 'tailoring' are important. This embodies the struggle between internal capacity and external intervention. Furthermore, in relation to a whole school ICT training day Jane stated that;

We provided a series of workshops...it was all our own staff, we didn't buy anyone in, we did it in-house and all the staff decided what they wanted to go to.



Similarly Hannah at Lakeside Grammar emphasised the importance of ‘staff thinking time’ and even the development of a ‘student research team’. The school’s most able year eleven pupils carried out action research on the BLP initiative and made recommendations about ‘what they wanted to see, where they wanted to see it going’. This was coupled with staff research opportunities where each year two teachers share ten days cover in order to be able to carry out a research project to improve their practice. Despite these positive steps Hannah acknowledged that;

Sometimes you do need somebody who is a voice, a different voice, to reinforce the message you are trying to give.

This was reinforced by Amanda at Hayfield Primary who saw external consultancy as a means of reinforcing difficult messages about changes to the schools’ literacy approach; ‘I’ll say the hard messages ...but if it hasn’t worked then somebody outside can say them again’. The implication here was that external consultants act almost as enforcers for senior leaders ensuring that resistance to change is nullified. Furthermore Amanda stated that it allowed her to have;

Someone standing next to me saying *yes you’re right...keep going this is how it is going to be done and this is the direction you are going in.*

Here ‘bringing in’ external expertise becomes an instrument that adds leverage to senior leadership teams’ proposals as Hannah explained;

Sometimes an external voice can have the power of saying this is bigger than your school, this is what’s going on in the real world, outside of the gates.

The suggestion that the school sits outside that which is ‘real’ underlines how individual teachers voices are seen as being out of touch. The ‘real world’ referred to here is the highly marketised, commodified ideal of the private sector where consultants provide the steer for school change. As Amanda explained;

You need somebody to kind of co-ordinate everything as there are so many initiatives out there you can't be expected to upskill yourself on every one!

Here Amanda is looking 'out there' for solutions whilst also acknowledging that this process needs to be mediated by a consultant. Essentially Amanda is also positioning herself as being unqualified or incapable of making the right decisions in relation to commercial pedagogies. Furthermore an external voice reinforces that;

This isn't just the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) saying this, this is coming from outside and sometimes that can be of real value actually because it can give a legitimacy to something.

Here ideas that originate outside the school context are equated with having greater validity whilst the 'legitimacy' that they engender provides the SLT with a power to implement that is externalised, mystified and difficult to challenge.

#### **4.4 Nominative problematisation 1:**

##### **Normalisation of external intervention**

The above discursive objects, 'initiatives' and 'bringing in', underline the degree to which external intervention in schools has become normalised. This normalisation shall now be considered further.

Initiative here is constructed as an intervention that carries with it the prospect of improvement. This suggests that initiatives are largely seen as being positive enterprises that represent a certain value - a value that holds the promise of assuaging the performative demands placed upon the school by outside agencies. Furthermore they are, in essence, pedagogical artifacts that are fully formed, packaged, compartmentalised and bounded by language as discussed on p.111.

Moreover these educational initiatives imply that change is required, necessary, justified and even obligatory and that that which went before, or that which exists concurrently to the initiative, is inferior, inessential and obsolete. Therefore the external initiative transcends the internal. The initiative then becomes a technology that acts to multiply its power base through a process of naturalisation. The paradox here is that initiatives that originate externally from the school, through their emergence in this way, effectively act to position incumbent practices as being exterior to the school's aims of improvement. It is a process of reversal where the initiative acts as a colonial, oppositional force that imprints itself within the milieu of the school and pushes out that which existed prior to its emergence.

In this way initiatives become naturalised and normalised as a 'universal prescription for all' (Foucault, 1974-1975, p.50) – one that legitimises the power relations between the internal practices of the school and the external promises of improvement and pressures of performativity.

Such a process therefore not only locates the initiative as the norm, but this norm then becomes a normalising force that 'links the increase of capacities and expansion of possibilities to an increase and expansion of power' where 'subjects become highly efficient at performing a narrowly defined range of practices' (Taylor, 2009, P.47).

Consequently TLC, BLP and others are normalised through the repetition of behaviours, utilisations of language and institutional practices that gradually infer upon them a status that is unquestioned and relatively immune from critical analysis. This was exemplified by Susan discussing the arrival of Irresistible learning at Hayfield Primary School when she acknowledged that she was unsure as to where the initiative had come from stating 'we probably got told but I can't remember!' This indifference demonstrates an acceptance, from the teachers' perspective, that the worth of such initiatives is axiomatic. Furthermore, as these initiatives arrive at the school fully formed, they crucially position the very idea of critical reflection and analysis as being unnatural and unnecessary. Part of this formation therefore acts as a warrant that imbues the

initiative with legitimacy that is in an 'always-already' given state (Derrida, 1976) – it is uncontested.

Such legitimacy derives from the assumption that the emergence of the initiative as an educational product can be traced back to some form of quality assurance as Susan demonstrates above – it came from somewhere and therefore must have been open to scrutiny.

It therefore becomes more difficult to consider an alternative history where pedagogy and learning theory emerge from within, where teachers build from reflection upon practice and an understanding of the child. (Pollard 2002, Stenhouse, 1975).

Here, teacher autonomy can be seen as being limited by the introduction of external initiatives. However it is the power of the production of the external, educational intervention as an educational panacea that further serves to limit internal teacher agency. It is presumed, therefore, that change and improvement naturally occur as a result of external intervention.

The normalisation of external intervention also serves to perpetuate the performative demands placed upon teachers by government. Consequently the externally derived authority of the educational initiative is further legitimised by the drive towards measurement of performance potentially rendering internal solutions as unnecessary.

Hope Catholic Primary School who responded to Ofsted concerns about children's independence by considering 'getting a scheme in' exemplified this. That external schemes are envisaged as being a suitable way of responding to the demands of Ofsted and the performative requirements of government serves to reinforce the marginalisation of the teacher as a quasi-professional (Etzioni, 1969). This chimes with Leaton Gray's, (2007), concerns of the failure of the educational system to take into account 'the prior experiential knowledge that teachers might usefully bring to bear on any analysis of children's progress' (p.194). When this is coupled with a shift in government thinking to imagine

teacher 'training' as being the responsibility of the school (DFE, 2015) it runs the risk of positioning teachers as semi-professionals.

As Hargreaves (2010) warned;

The effect of this is to return teaching to an amateur, de-professionalized, almost pre-modern craft, where existing skills and knowledge are passed on practically from expert to novice, but where practice can only be reproduced, not improved (p.168).

In this problematised analysis the external consultants are positioned as experts, the teachers as novices, and the educational product, whether it be BLP or Irresistible Learning, is that which is transmitted and reproduced.

Furthermore one productive effect of the normalisation of external intervention is that teachers are directed to look outward for assistance whilst focusing on the administrative processes of external intervention.

As Foucault (1996) suggested 'the body is the inscribed surface of events' (p.83). Teachers in positions of responsibility in this research have manifestly alluded to their roles as coordinators, deliverers, acquirers and implementers of external initiatives.

As the responses from the research participants illustrate teachers here are in effect being created as subjects within the wider discourse of a marketised, commodified educational landscape where pedagogy is passed on and exchanged for the promise of future learning gains. This process of subjectivisation subtly constitutes the teacher, not as a constructor or arbiter of new learning approaches, but as a conduit for the distribution of pre-determined, packaged models of learning and pedagogical approaches, whether or not these derive from government directives or commercial providers.

That the teachers here strongly identify themselves in this way, demonstrates the degree to which their roles as 'passive implementers of externally driven changes' (Wood, 2004, p.371) have become normalised.

Ofsted, increased assessment and testing procedures and performance management measures have further served to control teacher behaviours through the external, regulatory power relations that they promote. Furthermore, teachers' direct responses and behaviours to this have become deeply engrained. These responses can no longer be described as being representative of a set of norms that serve to legitimise specific teacher behaviours through their exercise of power (Foucault, 1974). Rather they have become normal and, as a consequence 'inevitable, and therefore immune to critical analysis' (Taylor, 2009, p.47).

Here when Teacher Learning Communities, BLP, Irresistible Learning, Every Child a Writer and others are appropriated within school, the focus is on practical issues of implementation. That the instrumental aspects of implementation are the focus for these schools further underpins their tacit acceptance of the warrant of educational improvement that these products arrive with. Their worth is largely unquestioned. Where amendments are made, such as Hannah's desire at Lakeside Academy to 'Lakeside' BLP by adjusting the terminology of the materials, these too reflect an obsession with the practical considerations of ensuring smooth implementation rather than critical analysis.

These initiatives have crossed 'a threshold of scientificity' (Foucault, 1972, p.187) as discussed in the methodology chapter (p.48). That is they have become accepted beyond reason, as has the idea of external intervention. What is critical here is how this has come to be?

Historically, external intervention in schools, either those driven by government or, as in this case, the result of the creation of an educational, pedagogical marketplace, can be traced back to the performative agendas that emerged from the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA). In the context of wider market imperatives this has given rise to the possibility that pedagogy can be bought and sold, that external intervention is 'normal' and that the idea of a teacher as an autonomous professional can be transformed, or *reformed*, into deliverer of pre-determined pedagogical models.

Whilst one impact of the ERA was the emergence of a quasi-educational marketplace and greater school autonomy, it was also 'substantive and symbolic in centralising power ... including granting 451 new powers to the Secretary of State' (Whitty, 2008, p. 169). The National Curriculum, along with its concurrent testing and systems of assessment, operated, and still operates, as a 'pre-discursive practice' that 'establishes and implies norms, controls and exclusions' (Jeffery and Troman, 2012, p.173). As such external curricular control and external intervention are seen as normal, whilst the possibility of teacher autonomy in the design of the curriculum is excluded.

Furthermore in 1998, with the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies, intervention in teachers' work intensified. As Moss (2004) explained 'the Strategy has, almost from the outset, incorporated a steady stream of further materials and initiatives, stemming from the centre' (p.127). This in effect normalised the idea that pedagogy and effective practice derive from external intervention (Moss 2004).

Furthermore, teachers' effectiveness was directly tied on one level, through performance management and inspection, to the degree to which they successfully delivered and implemented these external directives. As Hope Catholic Primary demonstrated, adopting commercial, external initiatives can be imagined as a legitimate response to inspection and the pressures that it brings to bear. Furthermore they are also frequently envisioned as a suitable means of school improvement under the auspices of senior leaders like Jane at Fairview Academy. When referring to TLC she explained that she was impressed by it and consequently presented it to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) as she felt that it was 'something that we could implement here'. Consequently, those models of metacognition (like BLP) or models of professional practice (like TLC) are, as a matter of course, implemented, delivered and distributed by teachers in ways that are seen as being normal. This is a response that is both institutionalised and indicative of routine, professional 'normalised' practice. From Foucault's perspective this process of normalisation acts as a 'narrowing and impoverishment of human possibilities' (Bernauer & Mahon, 2003, p.151). Consequently the teachers here are limited in so much as they are blind to

alternate possibilities and different ways of being in relation to these pressures. Normalisation here acts on and through them as their behaviours in relation to external pedagogic models and external intervention in schools 'come to be seen not as produced at all but simply natural and necessary' (Taylor, 2009, p.52).

The teachers in the research schools have been designated specific roles and identities that are constructed both politically and socially. These are consistent with the wider performative, discourse of market intervention and standardisation in schools which;

de-emphasises the construction of local knowledge in and by school communities, and de-emphasises the role of the teacher as decision maker and change agent' (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999, p.22).

By virtue of this 'de-emphasis' a greater focus on external knowledge and authority is inevitably produced. Moreover this normalisation of external expertise is compounded by the ways in which teachers in this research were regulated by technologies of the self. As Foucault (1988) observed these are technologies;

Which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being (Foucault, 1988, p.16)

This self-regulation was manifested most clearly by the discursive object of 'bringing in' as an effect, or indeed a production of, the wider discourse of external intervention in schools. As detailed above (p.84) teachers spoke of 'bringing in', of initiatives that have 'come in', 'been brought in' and 'brought on board'. In all of the cases detailed teachers were referring to educational models of learning, such as BLP, or particular exemplars and programmes of practice like Teacher Learning Communities. This specific use of language is significant precisely because of that which it does not allude to – the teacher as a reflective, practitioner who develops and maintains 'professional expertise' (Pollard, 2002, p.4).



Within this dynamic the teachers here are more closely engaged in what Dewey (1933) referred to as 'routine actions' and as 'beings without capacity for thought' (p.14). Rather, they are displaying instinctual responses to the external pressures and demands placed on them through self-regulation.

This contrasts dramatically from Dewey's (1933) concept of 'reflective action' where individuals are able to 'weigh, ponder and deliberate' (p.57). For Dewey (1933) reflection 'implies that something is believed in (or disbelieved in), not on its own direct account, but through something else which stands as witness, evidence, proof, voucher, warrant; that is, as *ground* of belief' (p.8).

The issue in this research is that the 'direct accounts' of Building Learning Power, Irresistible Learning, Alan Peat Literacy, Read Write Inc. and others, prevail as legitimate and worthy without the need for recourse to evidence. As Hannah, at Lakeside Grammar School, stated 'we are using Building Learning Power at the moment' and 'the way we looked at it initially we said well – this is something we really believe in'.

Moreover, this belief is derived directly from the claims that the materials themselves provide. Claims that require critical analysis but often go unquestioned (See section on Neuroscience p.11)

For example, Claxton (2002) exclaims in the introduction of Building Learning Power that 'BLP is for anyone who wants to know how to get better results and contribute to the development of real life-long learners' (p.3). Furthermore he goes on to state that 'BLP is firmly grounded in both solid science and practical experience' (p.3).

Similarly Peat (2011), on his commercial website, with reference to his literacy materials, speaks of how they are 'packed full of tried-and-tested effective strategies for teaching' whilst the publishers of Miskin's (2015) Read, Write, Inc. programme state that 'It is used by more than a quarter of the UK's primary

schools and is designed to create fluent readers, confident speakers and willing writers'. These are powerful claims and are clearly compelling to teachers. The warrant that they provide derives legitimacy from external sources, whether they are cast as 'solid science' or the 'practical experience' of other schools whose success the BLP book revels in, or the statement that they are already in use by a critical mass of schools. These all serve to promote justify and validate the materials whilst encouraging teachers to adopt them and 'bring them in'.

It is important to note that it is not that these ideas arrive in schools devoid of any evidence as a form of warrant for their worth, to the contrary as seen above, they clearly do. Rather it is that the senior leaders and teachers who are engaged in the implementation and appropriation of these initiatives do not seem to require it, or they accept the claims, or as seen in the last section (p.138) they concern themselves with practical considerations that have little to do with the initiatives' claim to knowledge.

Instead the senior leaders and teachers here are at the nexus between knowledge and power and are subject to it. Consequently it is through them, their actions, their thoughts and their behaviours that external models of learning and programmes of practice are constructed as worthy, legitimate, valid and absolute. These responses are conditioned in deference to the pressures of performativity, envisioned as a willingness for and a preoccupation with measurements of excellence, and the promises of new knowledge constructed inevitably as external to the school.

When the value of any initiative is accepted as a given what then becomes important, is how effectively the initiative can be implemented and adopted. The machinery of appropriation then becomes the main focus for the senior leaders and teachers involved. Nowhere was this more evident than with Jane, the Assistant Principal at Fairview Academy and Hannah, the Deputy Head Teacher at Lakeside Grammar School. Jane spoke of 'embedding' Teacher Learning Communities in the school, 'slotting' in meetings as part of a rolling programme of Continuing Professional Development and how she had 'rearranged' groups to

‘freshen them up’ all with a view towards the implementation of Teacher Learning Communities.

Furthermore she explained the need to do a ‘further round of Learning Community meetings because we had an Ofsted inspection’.

Similarly, Hannah at Lakeside spoke of how her role in relationship to Building Learning Power was ‘the launch of it, the initial staff training, training any new members of staff that come in ... also structuring and planning ... professional learning conversations between colleagues about BLP’

Firstly, it is significant that as senior leaders both Jane and Hannah are cast as both the appropriators and implementers of initiatives. Whilst this is to be expected given their respective roles, it has to be viewed in terms of the power that they hold within the institutions where they work.

As guardians of these new enterprises, as well as part of their institutions machinery of surveillance through performance management procedures, teachers were hard pressed to resist their directives. Also Hannah’s description of ‘launching’ BLP further underpins the implication that BLP is fully formed, ‘watertight’ and ‘seaworthy’ – equipped well enough to traverse the stormy waters of school improvement. Hannah and Jane are not engaged in the construction or manufacture of their initiatives – instead they see themselves as the captains who steer and guide them whilst conscripting their staff.

This subtle repositioning of their professional roles casts them as the brokers of educational knowledge. They are, in effect, intermediaries between the school and state approved theories of learning and newer, commercially approved models of pedagogy and professional practice.

Furthermore, where teachers in this research have used the language of ‘bringing in’ and ‘bringing on board’, it has to be seen in light of wider connotations related to the teacher’s position within the process. By referring to themselves in self-referential ways such as ‘I brought in ... ’ and ‘we brought on board’ teachers are attempting to highlight their own agency within the process.

They are identifying themselves as being active, agentic individuals who are responsible for taking charge of the pedagogic process.

Additionally they perceive that they are not only seeking out new models of practice, but that through this process they are actually engaged in the production of new ways of working. It is easy to understand the appeal that perceptions such as these hold for the teacher. They enable them to identify strongly with a model of professionalism that envisages the teacher as being in possession of what Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) refer to as 'decisional capital' or 'the ability to make discretionary judgements' (P.93).

However, in engaging directly with commercial providers of learning materials they are placing their faith in the ability of an educational marketplace to provide the answers that they need. Additionally, with increased competition between schools, and the devolution of funds from local authorities to schools, such teacher responses are representative of a managerial professionalism where legitimacy is gained 'through the promulgation of policies and the allocation of funds associated with those policies' (Sachs, 2001, p.152).

This differs radically from Hargreaves's and Fullan's (2012) conception of teachers possessing 'professional capital' as a concept that 'brings together and defines the critical elements of what it takes to create high quality and high performance ... teaching' (p.102).

Rather teachers here are responding to a conception of professionalism that is governed by systems and apparatus of state and commercial control. As such the professional roles they create for themselves are representative of a range of bureaucratic responses to policy as opposed to a democratic conception of teacher professionalism (Young, 1990).

This can be seen as a subtle, less visible self-regulation masked as a professionalising of the teacher. It serves, not to enhance the autonomy of the teacher, but to impose upon them a restricted repertoire of approved possible behaviours.

#### **4.5 School to school transmission**

A significant trend within many of the interviews was the role that other schools played in the adoption of several of these initiatives. At Parkhill Primary School Ruby recounted how the Alan Peat Literacy initiative originated from recommendations from other schools – ‘we’d heard from other schools have you had this guy in?’ Furthermore she qualified this by saying that he;

Had been to similar schools, same intake, same cluster and it’s working for them – we saw their books and we thought God we’ve got to get him in...it looks like fun really!

This process of school to school transmission of commercial pedagogy was actively encouraged by the head teacher at the school as Ruby explained;

She’s very keen for us to just ring up other schools – she said the other day about how heads used to keep all their info to themselves and how now it’s not like that there are little cluster networks – teachers are always meeting other teachers from other schools...looking at other people’s books and saying oh gosh they do that! That’s a good idea. She’s very open to it... it’s not pinching it’s just sharing!

Schools are clustering together to support one another is, of course, not new. Indeed there is a great deal of literature relating to Network and Professional Learning Communities (Chapman and Aspin, D. 2003; Jackson 2005; NCSL ,2002; Stoll et al 2006 ) and as Fullan (2001) explained ‘schools are beginning to discover that new ideas, knowledge creation, inquiry and sharing are essential to solving learning problems in a rapidly changing society’ (xi). However the role that such assemblages play in the promotion of commercial educational products is a relatively recent phenomenon as exemplified by David at Sands Academy. He explained how Jim Smith’s ‘Lazy Way To Teaching’ arrived in the school;

When we booked Jim we'd already been on a course that he had done with another school so we knew very much what it was going to be about. I think more and more that if you are going to get someone in, do your homework, get someone in you know is tried and tested and knows what they are doing, what they are talking about.

Here for a programme to be 'tried and tested' all that is required, seemingly, is the knowledge that another school has employed it and is willing to recommend it. Even recommendations from teachers within school had a similar effect as Sinead at Beacon Catholic Primary suggested when referring to Claxton's BLP;

It's an initiative I've seen working with the school really, really well. That's not to say you come in and enforce it but if you start to introduce that in your lessons and then someone says well that works ... I like the idea of that and then someone else says well that works ... you can then develop something whole school.

At Hayfield Primary Susan alluded to a similar process in relation to how Irresistible Learning was adopted at her school;

We went on an external course... we listened to other schools who had already piloted it and then we got to look at their topic books and all the actual titles of Irresistible learning – the new Head was on board by then – it was something he had seen at his last school and so he wanted to bring it here!

At Fairview Academy Nick explained that;

I really like it when you get to speak to other schools and see what they're doing ... we can go to a different school and shadow someone.

Amanda at Hayfield Primary also valued this experience;

It was really good to be able to go outside and see what was happening in other classrooms...you just went into one room and teachers had brought presentations and

things to share so you could say ooh that was good or ooh actually I'll do that!

What these engagements have in common is that they represent teachers' enthusiasm for fleeting, impermanent strategies in a quest for quick fixes. Hargreaves (2010) referred to this phenomenon, in relation to his work with secondary schools, as 'a new kind of presentism that was addictive' where 'teachers hurriedly and excitedly swapped successful short-term strategies with their mentors and each other in order to deliver the government's narrowly defined targets and purposes measured by test scores and examination results'. Furthermore Hargreaves paints schools as 'addictive organisations, on successive "highs" concerned with meeting targets, raising performance standards, and adjusting strategies right down to continuous, just in time interventions with every child' (p.150). That they are readily seeking the latest trends by looking towards the experiences of other schools rather than searching within exemplifies the expectation that change should be immediate rather than as the result of the careful, internal gestation of professional experience and ideas. Successful commercial educational products can spread quickly in this manner with school-to-school contact being all the facilitation that is required. The picture at Fairview Academy was slightly different however. With reference to Building Learning Power Jane recalled attending a course where Guy Claxton;

Had a good woman from a school down south...talking about how they've implemented that and how successful that was within their school, brilliant – absolutely brilliant!

Interestingly though, and at variance from the other schools in the study, she explained how they decided not to implement the programme because it 'didn't quite fit into what we're doing'. As a successful, convertor Academy Fairview placed an emphasis on cross curricular groups of staff being involved in Teacher Learning Communities whereby they carefully considered each intervention within the school. Jane explained that;

The whole programme is designed to be a long term thing, it is not designed to be a quick fix, it was always going to run for a number of years.

Nick emphasised that staff at the school were encouraged to work together, observe one another and research their own practice. He also explained, with reference to the schools internal processes of development, that the 'in school training is ... really high here'. Staff members are given opportunities to go on training courses but they are equally told that they will 'shadow someone' with more experience within school. What is striking here is that expertise is discussed as being within the institution with teachers relying on their colleagues for development before looking elsewhere. This institutional confidence was especially evident through the adaptation of the Teacher Learning Community project. Whilst it had been the initial impetus for teacher collaboration the teachers had made 'some of our own purposely produced resources, customised resources', as Joan explained. Furthermore whilst the TLC project had provided a framework, the school had adapted it to encompass a much wider range of educational developments beyond the intended focus of Assessment for Learning. Malcolm explained his role within this as investigating;

The different areas that come under independent learning...I had to go away, research it and then actually plan sessions for the staff.

Joan similarly explained that she was involved in designing the materials and that through teachers;

Talking about their own practice and talking about teaching and learning...sharing ideas and experiences the programme had a 'positive impact'.

However it is important to consider that whilst teachers were enthusiastic about the schools ability to develop itself through making use of internal expertise, much of this was initiated, at least in the first instance, externally. For example Malcolm identified his role as researching 'the different areas that came under



independent learning'. He stated that the 'internet was our first port of call' and that;

We went on several sort of CPD courses outside of school, so external courses that were put on, and reading as well, lots of books which (Jane) purchased for us and divvied up between us.

However, later on in the interview, and somewhat contradictorily, when asked about the value of external educational consultancy he added a note of caution;

I think that is quite a tricky one because we do a lot of our own CPD within school now and one thing we have realised is that actually we have got the experts in school and it's knowing how to use them properly. I mean in terms of when I've been out I think the main thing is when you meet a so called expert, as long as they are an expert in that field, you can learn a lot from them.

On one level this underlines an institutional confidence about internal capacity as staff are charged with developing their own solutions to school issues.

Alternatively the fact that initial searches across various websites and CPD courses were undertaken may suggest a level of anxiety or uncertainty in relation to the schools' internal capacity to solve the independent learning issue. Also it was not clear by what means Malcolm adjudged someone to be an 'expert in their field'. He did explain that it was useful to meet staff from other schools and;

Exchange email addresses and keep a rapport going...so I can find out what they do, sort of you know steal ideas and I think that for me it's that cross sort of talking to other schools...I find more useful often than the actual course itself.

This was echoed by James at Beacon Catholic Primary School who felt that;

The best training we have been given has been delivered by teachers in other schools as they know at ground level what is practical what is working.

This underlines the phenomenon of cross fertilisation of ideas between schools and the potentially ad hoc manner in which ideas spread whether it is between schools, internally within schools or via external advisors. Indeed, the need for an infrastructure to enable smoother transfer of educational ideas was suggested by Hargreaves as long ago as 2003. He believed that ‘practitioner champions’ who had ‘devised and successfully applied innovation’ (p.50), were the best means of spreading good educational practice. However in this research the ideas that have been spread have been drawn exclusively from external sources via school networks – they have not been devised within. It is now important to problematise the means by which this spread occurs.

#### **4.6 Nominative problematisation 2**

##### **Inter and intra-regulatory performative practices:**

In order for educational initiatives such as Building Learning Power, Teacher Learning Communities, Alan Peat literacy, Read Write Inc. and others to operate there need to be structures that facilitate their dispersal. The schools themselves, and indeed the teacher connections that emerge from them, provide opportunities for this to occur readily. In the problematisation of these structures it is important to consider the conditions that have allowed schools to become complicit in the active promotion and delivery of commercial educational products that demand significant financial investment.

It is also important here, as was the case earlier, to consider the lasting legacy and impact of the Educational Reform Act. It has transformed teachers’ work, their values and behaviours. As Jones (2003) explained;

Before 1988, the pattern of educational initiative had been at least partly shaped by teachers – hence its diversity, its occasional radicalism, its counter tendencies towards inertia. After 1988 a variety of forces – the national curriculum, Ofsted, a league table based system of accountability – had removed from teachers much of this capacity (p.161).

This created on one hand a workforce in schools constrained by ever more rigorous means of control – control of what is taught, control of what passes as acceptable practice and control through comparison with those schools that most reflected the governments vision of effectiveness. As Jones (2003) suggests teachers had become ‘operationally central but strategically marginal; ... accustomed to government generated innovation’ (p.162). Having already considered the normalisation of external intervention in the research schools the focus now turns to the facilitation and spread of external intervention.

One problematisation of the cultural shift of teacher behaviour in this research uncovered a desire to look to the ‘other’. The data demonstrated that teachers looked to one another in their own schools and to other schools and teachers, in search of what ‘works’ and is acceptable, normal and desirable. This appeared to be a default position of the teachers in the research schools.

This can be explained in terms of the obsession, at a governmental level, of knowledge envisioned as being scientific and rational. Barker (2012) explained how ‘policy makers believe research into school effectiveness and improvement has identified ‘best practice’ recommendations that can be applied in any setting or context to improve performance and results’ (p.78). However, such a preoccupation with ‘best practice’ and ‘what works’ fails to take into account the complex socio-cultural factors and the vagaries of interpretation that impact upon the implementation of these exemplars.

Through this discursive analysis it became transparent that an awareness of what other schools were using, what other teachers deemed to be of use was envisaged as being critical. Furthermore a focus on internal practice also was significant as David at Sands Academy explained;

A number of colleagues have become what is called a *transforming teaching and learning group*. The initiative is basically staff that are considered good or outstanding or regularly good teachers or outstanding teachers were given opportunities to group together and look at ways of learning to support staff ...like buddying up with staff!

As a school that has just emerged from a critical inspection that had placed them in special measures, teachers at Sands Academy were encouraged to look for excellence amongst their ranks – howsoever excellence is defined. However this in itself is a form of looking outwards, away from the individuals' sense of self, towards an idealised other. Furthermore this operates as a form of;

normalising judgement ... used, according to Foucault, to justify correction and coercion in teaching and to promote standardisation and homogeneity' where 'individuals can be measured in terms of their distance from their norm (Allan, 2013, p.25).

That the teachers in this research were willing to subject themselves to such comparisons is significant. Their behaviour is a direct product of the performative cultures adopted since the ERA

More specifically it is symptomatic of a 'performative regulation' where 'groups of people submit themselves to the authority of an institution, internalise its values and enact them through mutual surveillance in an inmate culture' and, furthermore 'the disciplinary gaze is not merely transmitted but reticulated: dispersed and refracted through an agentic network' (Scott, 2010, p.221).

In this instance internal regulation towards an ideal model and construction of the teacher is formalised through the 'Transforming Teaching and Learning Group'. Teachers are positioned as 'agents' that monitor conduct – both each other's and their own. They regulate themselves through their reinvention towards an archetype; an archetype whose shape and form is a direct product of the performative regulatory procedures of inspection and standardisation. This was exemplified by Emily at Sands Academy who explained that the 'Transforming Teaching and Learning Group' (TTL Group) was focused on 'spreading good practice amongst staff *by* staff that have been doing that ... more successfully'.

Significantly she explained that she was directly involved because of her 'success in Ofsted observations'. As a consequence of this Emily's task became about the dissemination and transmission of 'good practice' according to Ofsted

criteria (See Balerin & Lauder, p.27). She explained further that some of the 'new initiatives really for me were probably not too much of a revelation ... I was doing them already' however she acknowledged that other staff had difficulties and it was her remit to 'do Continuing Professional Development CPD' with them. The staff that were the objects of this TTL Group were identified as being in need of improvement and sitting outside of a conception of the 'outstanding teacher'. Here 'performativity becomes the mechanism through which schools (*and teachers*) demonstrate, through documentation and pedagogy that they have been normalised' (Jeffrey and Troman, 2012, p.47). Normal in these instances is defined narrowly in relation to idealised practice.

Whilst the above problematisation demonstrates what can be considered *intra-performative regulatory* practice born from inspection, there also exists *inter-performative regulatory* practice that occurs between schools. Such practice, whilst it sits in direct relation to the pressures of Ofsted and standardisation, is more nuanced and subtle. Here teachers are looking toward one another (and each other's schools) for practice that is deemed outstanding. In turn they are measuring themselves against one another.

Consequently considerations need to be made of the ways in which schools observe one another in these ways.

Ruby, at Park Hill Primary School was passionate about looking to other schools for ideas. It was in this way that Alan Peat literacy had emerged in her school and she explained that it was necessary for it to have 'worked in a school similar to ours' and that 'testing from other places' was very important. Similarly Alice at Hope Catholic Primary School recognised that what regularly happens is that;

Schools hear that another school has taken something on and it's like a domino effect – it's like ooh I've heard that's good and lots of other schools (*use it*) which isn't the right way to be honest and I think that as a school we tend to be a bit reactive ... we probably take on something when we don't actually evaluate what we are already doing!

Despite acknowledging the lack of critical evaluation and criticality Alice was clear that such responses were commonplace within her school.

Also Amanda at Hayfield Primary spoke of how visiting other schools allowed her 'back in school to say this is how this school is doing it!' She valued the assurance that this provided. However the epistemological origins of these initiatives seemed less of a concern as Susan demonstrated;

We got told but I can't remember. I think it was a school down south. I think it was an initiative down south somewhere because I'm sure the ladies came up on the day from down south somewhere!

Whilst the evidence base for the initiative appears to be less of a worry, frequently gazing towards the 'other' needs to be explained in terms of the pressure that it places upon the school and the individual teachers to regulate and measure themselves in this way.

This obsession with what is perceived to work at other schools in the search for improvement belies an insecurity born of regulatory procedure. The individual here works within the boundaries that are permissible given the demands of standardisation and performativity.

As such for teachers, to reject this gaze towards the other, this desire to replicate and build on others success, however narrowly defined, is to reject the very principles of what Sahlberg (2011) refers to as 'the Global Educational Reform Movement (GERM)' (p.99). As Hargreaves (2001) explains GERM has become 'a new official (*educational*) orthodoxy' (p. 1) that promotes standardisation, testing, accountability measures and increased engagement with consultancy. Here *inter – performative regulatory* practice becomes a means of perpetuating a narrow vision of schooling. As Ball (2004a) suggested;

What is created is a new form of social relations between schools and a new relationship of schools to knowledge, a relationship which is no longer articulated in terms of the public good, and certainly not in terms of knowledge for its

own sake, but rather a relationship to knowledge as a commodity (p.12).

The social relations between schools here are predicated upon the borrowing, replicating and transference of commodified models of practice.

As Amanda at Hayfield Primary confirmed 'there wasn't anybody in this establishment who could give me that knowledge ... so I had to go out ... and ... be made aware'.

Similarly Ruby at Parkhill stated that 'we are quite lucky – lots of people get sent on lots of courses where you get to meet lots of people from other schools ... you can hear people talking about something that's worked really well! ' Such engagements lead readily to the transfer of pedagogies from one school to another.

As a means of distribution it is not only efficient but also profitable for the architects of commercial pedagogical models. Furthermore it also underpins Sahlberg's (2011) concerns that 'education has become a commodity where the efficiency of service delivery ultimately determines performance' (p.100).

The rapid transfer of initiatives between schools and teachers is a powerful and efficient means of reinforcing the central tenets of governmental education policy in the guise of 'what works' towards school improvement and its measurement via inspection. Whether the practices, ideas and behaviours that are transferred from one school to another are imagined as new and powerful means of improving learners, such as Building Learning Power, or whether they are constructed as solutions that meet the demands of inspection, they both serve to reinforce the idea that expertise exists outside the institution. It is something to be brought in, to be replicated or indeed to be inoculated with. In this research both *intra* and *inter-performative* regulatory practices acted as architecture for the spread of pedagogical ideas and external interventions. Moreover teacher recommendations drawn from experiences and observation effectively became a surrogate for educational research. Teachers therefore placed a great deal of value and trust in the judgments of colleagues from other schools. However this represents a dichotomy between thought and action. Hence whilst placing faith in

fellow teachers rather than external agents can be seen as a resistive practice it nonetheless allows for the ready dispersal of externally designed products. Attention shall be now turned to the role that language plays in the initial dispersal of these ideas.

#### **4.7 Concretion of a 'language to learn'**

As with any commercial product language is important. What many of these external commercial initiatives have in common is that they set themselves apart from one another by their adoption of jargon. At Fairview Academy the teachers readily spoke of Teacher Learning Communities (TLC). This was often reduced to Learning Communities or LC for short as Jane referred to it. Jane also spoke of Costa and Callick's (2009) 'Habits of Mind' and its 'sixteen habits'. Susan at Hayfield Primary spoke of 'Irresistible learning' and 'stunning starts...marvellous middles...fabulous finishes' and also referenced VAK (Visual Auditory Kinaesthetic learning). David at Sands Academy referenced Jim Smith's (2010) Lazy Way to Teaching with its 'BHAGS – Big Hairy Audacious Goals whilst Mary at Hope Catholic Primary spoke of the three principles of Every Child a Writer. Building Learning Power (BLP) as used at Hayfield Primary and Lakeside Grammar School is predicated upon what are described as the four 'R's of learning power (Resilience, Resourcefulness, Reciprocity and Reflectiveness). These collectively contain 17 'capacities' or qualities needed to become an 'effective learner'.

These terminologies act on two levels; firstly they represent commercial trademarks that differentiate a product from their competitors through the adoption of simplistic semantic devices that are prevalent in the world of marketing and advertising.

There are dangers inherent within this as in the same way that Hoover as a brand name became synonymous with vacuum cleaners thus BLP, Irresistible Learning, Habits of Mind and many others may become indistinguishable with the learning benefits that they purport to bring. As Amanda at Hayfield Primary stated 'we have Building Learning Power in school!' and it works because 'the children



are using the words more, they are using resilience and reciprocity...that's really good!'

The implication of this is that it is assumed that the pupils' response in terms of adopting the language automatically equates to their greater metacognitive understanding. Clearly this need not be the case. Consequently the focus is increasingly placed upon that which is the signifier of the educational product before any meaningful discussion of pupil learning takes place. Secondly having programme specific terminology acts as a means of embedding a product firmly within the school environment. A striking example of this is Building Learning Power at Lakeside Grammar and Hayfield Primary. As Susan at Hayfield Primary explained in relation to the four 'r's of learning power 'we celebrate the children who have shown real flair (for it)'. These children were given a leaf off the Hayfield Primary Learning Power tree in recognition of their achievement thus reinforcing the language of BLP. Each leaf on the tree is representative of one of the four 'r's of learning power. The specific language used in the BLP materials acts as a trademark – one that differentiates it from other initiatives. The fact that Lakeside Grammar wanted to adapt some of the language – 'we have taken out some of Claxton's words and added some we thought actually should be there...' can be seen as being indicative of the need to take account of context specific issues such as ensuring that the language is appropriate for the pupils. Alternatively the fact that teachers are personally investing time in adapting the language used in BLP may act as a tactic to ensure a smoother implementation of the initiative over time. As they readily reference the language in their everyday vocabulary, they are helping to embed and normalise the initiative. Furthermore Hannah declared that the school did 'use Claxton's visuals but we are just in the process of producing our own new visuals so it very much feels our product now!' This was little more than an exercise in the institution, as a Grammar School with an academic reputation to uphold, ensuring that its own branding replaced the products generic ones.

Within the context of an educational marketplace the word product is of particular significance as it marks out the boundaries of the initiative. It suggests that it can be considered in isolation, mirroring the experience of the TLC at Fairview

Academy, divorced from broader contextual factors, such as the unique makeup of the student population, that may have a bearing on its efficacy. This in turn has an impact on the degree to which its success can confidently be asserted as it can be seen as being analogous to a pill, singular and clearly labelled with its unique terminology, being administered to a patient. Any improvement in the school's condition can be easily attributed to the programme prescribed. This gives the school confidence in the return on its investment, both financial and in terms of staff time, and any improvement provides a warrant for any claims made by the products authors. The idea though that any pedagogical programme and evidence of its worth can be compartmentalised in this way makes gross assumptions about education and learning.

As Biesta (2007) explains, 'being a student is not an illness, just as teaching is not a cure'. Teaching and learning is not akin to the more physical engagements and processes of the medical community rather it is a process of 'symbolically mediated interaction' (p.8). Whilst Biesta is concerned with critiquing the increasingly prevalent argument that education should be predicated upon a model of evidence based practice (Davies, 1999), his arguments also resonate with concerns of the rise of commercial models within education and the degree to which their claims stand up to scrutiny. Interestingly, when Hannah at Lakeside Grammar was asked about how the efficacy of BLP might be evaluated and measured, she did demonstrate some uncertainty;

I am not sure it is that tangible a measure but ultimately if it is not improving results you would want to ask a question about whether you wanted to do it or not...logically if they are getting better at learning they (the results) should be getting better!

This vagueness was further exemplified by her suggestion that BLPs' success might be seen in the number of future first class and high second class degree classifications the students hold. As to how this might reasonably be determined and attributed to the initiative though Hannah was unclear. It is axiomatic that Hannah's uncertainty relates to the perennial educational problem of evidence and the degree to which educational products such as BLP can lay claim to

improvements in pupil learning. The promotional material for BLP (2014) suggests that it makes 'much' use of the findings from the 'learning sciences' and that 'it particularly appeals to those who want more than sound-bites and quick fixes' (p.1). However as Pirrie (2001) rightfully warned, 'it would be a matter of regret if educational research were to be narrowly construed as producing toolkits for teachers' (p.133). Instead she advocated the case for a stronger focus on context specific issues even if they do not result in hypotheses that can be tested towards an understanding of what does and does not work (p.134). A further concern highlighted by the interviews was that such initiatives are often tied to appraisal procedures as in the case of Hayfield Primary where Amanda explained that BLP was, 'built into our performance management'. The coupling of the delivery of an educational product to measures of performance further complicates the role of the teacher and limits classroom practice to transmission of approved models of learning. At Hayfield Primary this was explicit as the degree to which BLP was embedded within teacher's everyday practice was seen as '*success criteria*' for their performance.

Whilst Giroux (2003) warned that 'neither democracy nor schooling should become synonymous with the language of capital, oppression, control, surveillance, and privatization' (P.14) these models of learning readily appropriate a vocabulary that speaks more of the principles of the market and commodity than those of democratic educational practice.

As Ruby at Parkhill Primary explained with reference to the school's synthetic phonics programme, 'Ruth Miskin has been running for three years now!' That 'Ruth Miskin' has become shorthand for synthetic phonics is unsurprising given the widespread success of her Read, Write Inc. company. However, the idea that she has been 'running' within the school is more suggestive of the employment of a new computer operating system than a careful pedagogical solution to enhance pupils' language skills and understanding. Again the commercial signifier becomes synonymic with its purported educational benefits. It implies to the schools stakeholders and beyond, that the school has engaged directly with the governmental flagship policy of synthetic phonics and therefore that they are at the forefront of pedagogical practice. Furthermore, it can be used to satisfy

Ofsted's inspection agenda. Indeed, to this end, many schools make an active point of referencing the educational products they use on their websites as is the case with Parkhill Primary School directly referring to Ruth Miskin's scheme. One key theme of the research was to consider the degree to which these initiatives in school were based on Neuroscientific ideas from research and to assess teachers understanding of them. I shall now discuss these ideas in relation to the data drawn from the research.

#### **4.8 Neuroscience**

When considering the impact and value of neuroscience upon pedagogy several of the teachers at Fairview made links to their experiences of 'Brain Gym' and Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic (VAK) learning. Jane, referring to her initial knowledge of brain based learning, stated that there was a lot of it 'back then' but that 'at the moment we haven't been out on anything, we haven't got anything, I haven't got any information on that to then bring in'. What is striking here is the implication that, again, there is a need to 'go out' away from the school and to then 'bring in' in order to become better informed. Despite suggesting that learning styles was a thing of the past she did also state that;

If you've got a class full of visual learners you still need to be thinking about doing auditory and kinaesthetic activities.

Malcolm echoed this saying 'we've done a lot on learning styles' and that it is important to make 'sure there's...variety and balance so that if you have got a dominant learning style it is not dominating how you teach'. However, he did go on to say that 'I don't like the labelling of it'. Joe also acknowledged the need 'to have elements of all learning styles for all students to learn' within lessons, whilst Nick said that 'we had a little bit of that when we were doing our PGCE!' He went on to say that the school definitely tries to accommodate Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic styles of learning in lessons but that it is not 'one size fits all!' This demonstrates the degree to which the notion of VAK learning styles, despite the lack of a robust evidential basis (Willingham, 2010) has become deeply

embedded within the teaching professions' consciousness. Even when the teachers acknowledge that there is some difficulty with the theory the basic premise that pupils possess a learning style seems to be a given as Joe states;

If you are talking about VAK then if you combine all three, obviously not within one lesson but over a series of lessons, then it enables them to develop in more ways than one.

The implication here is that Joe may indeed teach a lesson catering for one style of sensory input. In a sense the discourse of learning styles has endured despite many teachers concerns and the concerns of educational researchers (Geake, 2008).

Amanda at Hayfield Primary discussed her experience stating that;

Brain Gym we used to do, which was very much about how the brain works and getting both sides of the brain to work and about crossing the midline...some people are ...for that and some are ...against.

Despite her acknowledgement of the controversial nature of Brain Gym she did later explain that;

We still do aspects of it – we could certainly see the benefit of it in terms of getting the children to be active and wake them up and you can see with certain classes that they do find the exercises very difficult which obviously is helping them the more times that you practice.

Here, there is a passive acceptance of the validity of an educational product that has been widely discredited (Witcher, 2001, Hyatt, 2007). Furthermore it demonstrates the enduring nature of Brain Gym and how practices become embedded within school. Amanda also was keen to explain that she felt a knowledge of learning styles was helpful for her teaching and in particular detailed how the school assessed pupils styles;

We have a questionnaire ... for the children to do when they come in September and it asks lots of different

questions to ascertain whether...they tick yes or no, and then depending on which ones you answer yes to, you tick boxes, then you add up the boxes and it says whether you are a visual, auditory or kinaesthetic learner.

She then explained how the school would utilise the results of the test to plan for children's individual needs. Furthermore the school also used a questionnaire to assess pupils' 'multiple intelligences';

We've also got 'how you are clever' as to whether you are kind of numerically clever, or creatively clever...or, so that's the kind of multiple intelligences just for the children to be aware that ... you know they find things in school tricky but everybody is good at something, it might just be they haven't actually found what they are good at yet.

This was used alongside the Building Learning Power initiative. This ready application of contested models of pedagogy contrasts with the more measured, sceptical approach of Hannah at Lakeside Grammar School who said the following;

I think the whole VAK movement came with a sort of pseudo-science...and we never embraced it here. I am very pleased we didn't. This notion well, I shall stamp your head as visual and therefore the only time I shall ever learn is with a picture in front of me...I think there is a danger when something is presented like that which then seems to be the answer to every possible problem in the classroom. Why won't that student learn? Oh because he is a kinaesthetic learner.

It would be easy to assume that a grammar school would inevitably be wary of such ideas, as they do not conform to their traditional approaches to curriculum and teaching (Hargreaves, 2012). However, as already mentioned, the school did employ BLP as a means of enhancing pupils' metacognitive awareness. Here their reticence is more a result of the school's engagement with a measured approach to professional development as exemplified by their utilisation of Teacher Learning Communities. What was especially interesting was Hannah's

explanation of her wariness with regard to the application of VAK and Brain Gym in schools;

I think it is perhaps that sort of dilution of it, if you dilute it too much to make it something that a very busy professional can pick up and do something with, the danger is then it becomes label them with this, this and this and off you go!

This is a useful summation of much of the criticism of educational models that draw their inspiration from neuroscientific research.

They are often subject to a reductive process that enables often-misinterpreted findings from neuroscience to be abridged into easily digestible chunks of information. As Pasquinelli (2012) contends, 'This is possibly because the world of education and the world of scientific research are still running parallel binaries, with ideas (but more rarely people) jumping on the others train' (p.92).

Furthermore she goes on to suggest that neuroscientific researchers and educators are not currently working sufficiently closely together to produce theory and practice that is fully appraised of scientific research and coheres with educational objectives. Despite this in many of the schools involved in this research, there was a willingness to engage with research that might better inform their knowledge of pupil learning. For example David at Sands Academy felt that an understanding of neuroscience 'is a good thing' but he was concerned that;

We don't then use it as a way of stopping growth, saying to students and kids and teachers even...they can't do this because of this.

The suggestion here was that many of the purportedly brain-based models of learning, such as VAK, present a risk of pupils being labelling and consequently their potential being limited. Also David was clearly suggesting that these were suitable examples of neuroscientifically informed models of learning – something that many neuroscientists would contest as detailed in the literature review (Blakemore, Frith, 2005). Lucy at Fairview Academy was also excited at the

prospect of engaging with neuroscientific research but clearly equated it with learning styles when she said;

I suppose the difficulty with that is potentially you could have 20 different students learning 20 different ways!

Joan however expressed her belief that;

Understanding of the brain is still very rudimentary...I'm not sure this superficial approach that some people come in with about the brain and what bits do and how you can connect all that is actually very helpful.

Many of these responses do highlight a gulf in understanding between Neuroscientific researchers who are interested in education and teachers who are intrigued by what are often referred to delusively by themselves as brain-based approaches. That one intervention might be referred to as brain-based where another is not is clearly fatuous, teachers engage with pupils brains irrespective of how an intervention might be labelled. Rather this is symptomatic again of the commercial currency such labels provide the consultants who promote neuromyths such as VAK.

Pasquinelli (2012) has suggested that neurophilia, the desire to engage with neuroscience, has grown significantly of late. Its expansion has undoubtedly been supported by the media who have not only disseminated diluted soundbites from neuroscientific research but have in turn helped to mould their claims (Abi-Rached, 2008). The reportage of neuroscientific research in the media inevitably is subject to a distilling of the findings from academic papers in search of soundbites that can be easily transmitted.

There was a sense in several of the interviews with teachers when they were asked about the value of neuroscientific research for education that this was something they felt they should be able to comment on and have an opinion regarding. As has been seen, many expressed some scepticism but then went on to refer to strategies that they have used that were informed by some of these neuromyths. For example Amanda's sense that Brain Gym helps to energise pupils through activity and Joe's belief that catering for all learning styles within



individual lessons is important, may suggest that they are interpreting evidence in ways that are aligned with their personally held beliefs in relation to learning. Nickerson (1998) refers to this as confirmation bias where individuals demonstrate 'unwitting selectivity in the acquisition and use of evidence' (p.175). The historical legacy of the learning styles movement may well be that there is a broad acceptance, reinforced by a partial use of evidence, that learning modalities should be afforded a greater focus in teachers' plans. Furthermore discussions of learning, as exemplified in this research, often turn to considerations of styles and preferences. Nick at Fairview explained how they had had training on different styles of learning and referred to Kinaesthetic learning as the 'learning in action mode' and emphasised the importance of lessons being 'varied'. Ruby at Park Hill Primary suggested 'we try to do everything' and VAK is something that 'you have in the back of your mind'. Worryingly she went on to state, with reference to kinaesthetic learning, that;

If you're being observed you'd be criticised if there wasn't anything hands on going on!

The implication and supposition here is that active learning automatically equates to a deeper engagement for the pupils and conversely that more passive approaches might be less worthy. The suggestion that performative agendas such as appraisal observations might be driving this adoption of particular approaches is worthy of greater consideration. Indeed as detailed previously, Amanda explained how her implementation of BLP is very much a part of her performance management and that it manifests itself as a 'success criteria'. If teachers are utilising only those pedagogies that are approved and legitimised by senior leaders, inspectors, consultants or the state then their autonomy is certainly limited. Moreover it demonstrates that routes to market for commercial providers of learning initiatives are greatly enhanced when one or more of the above administrative levels within schools endorse their products. Furthermore when they bring with them the suggestion that they are endorsed by neuroscience they are made more compelling. Thus commercial pedagogies become approved and are spread through performance management agendas as well as school-to-school networks. The high stakes nature of this process for

teachers may well mean that they seek evidence for these mandated approaches that confirms rather than rejects their claims. It is necessary therefore to critique and problematise this process with specific reference to the use of language and the power that it exerts.

#### **4.9 Nominative problematisation 3**

##### **Marketisation and neuro-fascination:**

An integral component of the neuroscientifically informed external models of learning studied in this research was their utilisation of initiative-specific language (see p.111). This language acted as both commercial trademark to ensure distinctiveness and as a tool that gave the initiatives leverage and traction within school settings. This use of language will now be further problematised in order to explore its significance in relation to the initiatives identified in this research.

Firstly the distillation of the key facets of these initiatives into specific terminologies is a productive act. As already detailed, each initiative utilised specific key words as markers within their materials e.g. Irresistible Learnings 'stunning starts ... marvelous middles ...fabulous finishes' and BLPs 'four R's of learning power'. Whilst these are deliberate attempts by their authors to package materials in an engaging manner, both for the pupils and teachers, they also serve to strengthen the product's identity and claim within the educational setting. It is a process of formation.

From the perspective of Bernstein (1971) they are representative of a collection code curriculum where the boundaries between specific knowledge contents of initiatives are strong. Consequently BLP s content (four R's of learning power and seventeen capacities) sits in a closed, or strongly classified, relationship to other contents within the school.

For example in Hayfield Primary School the terminology of BLP is distinct to that of Irresistible Learning. Despite their shared focus on the learning process they do not possess a common language and therefore they maintain their distance from one another. Furthermore each of these initiatives arrives with a detailed

description of how they should be delivered. Consequently, these approved pedagogies further ensure the separation of learning approaches from one another. To extend Bernstein's analysis the initiatives employed by schools in this research were both strongly classified and framed. Hence they held power over their content and control over their teaching. Rather than empowering teachers they further divested them of their autonomy.

Alongside this the predictability of the terminology made them more easily manageable in terms of their delivery to, and adoption within, school. Products were therefore advertised, in a commercial sense, whilst their position in the institution was reaffirmed through a process of verbal reproduction. Initially teachers and pupils adopted the terminologies related to the initiatives (e.g. BLPs 17 capacities) however this adoption of language impacted in another way also. The analysis reveals the teachers not only adopted specific terminologies but they also adapted and abbreviated them.

For example Teacher Learning Communities, as a singular initiative discussed at Fairview Academy, was reduced to TLC, LC or Learning Communities. Building Learning Power similarly became BLP and Alan Peat Literacy was simply referred to as Alan Peat. This abbreviation produced further effects. It was significant as irrespective of which sobriquet was used; the reductive use of language produced a power beyond the simply nominative. It ensured that the initiatives were viewed as unique and different to those, which existed, already within the schools. They were afforded a superior status that acted to displace existing practices.

As a consequence these educational interventions and their attendant behaviours, pedagogies and values were semantically condensed and partitioned. As Amanda at Hayfield Primary stated 'We have BLP in school' and if children are getting stuck 'we use 'distraction action!'" This focus on specific language codes identified Amanda as a signatory to the BLP reform within the school. She was ratifying the initiative. Therefore if BLP was to be a success it became essential that teachers, and pupils, visibly endorsed it through this demonstrative use of language.

Indeed this is expressly communicated through The Learning Organisation's BLP training materials that suggest teachers should 'introduce an 'R' each week – or term'. Furthermore they make several directive statements such as 'in BLP classrooms teachers ensure that the images and messages reinforce learning power' (2004 p.8-10). Whilst this can be seen as a necessary tactic of implementation for a model of learning practice it also demonstrates how such prescriptions constrain and limit the teacher. Their adoption and adaptation of language becomes a form of self-regulation where they accept and play out the roles of 'implementers, deliverers, coordinators and acquirers' of external pedagogies (p. 136). Thus Amanda's and others enthusiasm and pride can be explained as a self-directed technology of compliance and self-governance. Furthermore school improvement here is constructed as a cycle of delivery where an initiative is introduced, implemented and assessed. This was demonstrated markedly, in relation to synthetic phonics, by Ruby at Park Hill Primary;

Ruth Miskin would come in but then there would be insets throughout the year to make sure everybody's – you know been able to follow it. It's the follow up isn't it? It's being able to make sure it is being done!

At Hayfield Primary Jennifer further explained her role in relation to a similar process;

If somebody else was bringing it on board, usually another member of the Senior Leadership team, as part of the S.L.T. we would talk about it first, talk about how we are going to *put it* across the whole school, I might help in some In Service Training (INSET) or supporting some INSET. In phase meetings I might carry on talking about it then and monitoring it ... very much trying to *get it across* the school and helping the S.L.T. to *drive* the way!

Here 'putting' and 'getting it across', 'making sure it is being done' and 'driving' the way become integral to the mission through the dissemination of information, materials and pedagogical decrees. The initiative specific language is a key component of this as the degree to which it is utilised forms part of the monitoring

process. INSET is often the starting point of this process as Robert at Hayfield Primary explained, with reference to Alan Peat literacy;

It was incredibly useful. It changed my practice and I've got evidence of it changing my practice and how I use it. The book that we bought associated with it is sitting on my desk right now and I flick through it every day really!

Following on from INSET Robert's self-collection of evidence is essential as a means of demonstrating his engagement with, and enthusiasm for, implementing the external initiative. It is a further example of self-regulation where he is conflating the idea of effective pedagogy and teacher practice with the degree to which his collection of evidence is visible and public. Furthermore the presence of the 'book' on his desk signifies, publically, this engagement.

Thus, the overt, outward expression of initiative-specific language acts as a performative device. It calls out and marks its announcer's participation within the discourse of school improvement in a visible and highly public manner.

Moreover such public displays of endorsement for external, or indeed any initiatives, send a clear directive to other teachers in the school. It positions them as either being within or outside of the discourse, aligned with the schools' expressed drive towards improvement or stood in opposition to it. It is therefore difficult to oppose and provides criteria against which teachers are judged and can be influential in shaping success and failure.

How teachers react to this forms part of a governance of the self that can be seen as limiting teachers agency. As Beck (2008) observed there;

does seem to be an endeavor to create a compliant profession that nevertheless, at least in some ways, increasingly 'governs itself' in the desired ways, through acceptance of and involvement in the newly created institutional frameworks that have been bought into being (p.138).

Furthermore the boundaries between Teacher Learning Communities, Building Learning Power, Irresistible Learning, and other externally originated initiatives used in schools, act as an insulating force that others existing practices. Through

their false logic they imply that change is *always* necessary and that teachers and teaching are *always* in need of reform. Consequently the data in this research suggests that the new is seen as being superior to that which already exists and teachers are imagined as conduits rather than mediators of change. Another problematised reading of initiative specific language is that it provides a performative means of measurement whereby effectiveness can be discerned by the degree to which teachers and pupils utilise it explicitly. This desire to measure and take account of teachers and pupils in this way is an essential component of the machinery of 'hyper accountability' that Mansell (2011) suggested is 'founded on the premise that educational success or failure can be pinned down through a set of narrowly defined indicators' (p.300).

Paradoxically, narrowly defined indicators such as learning capacities in BLP enable initiatives to be spread and replicated with greater ease as they are more manageable and homogeneous. They can therefore be transposed onto a range of school settings irrespective of their differing contexts. Without such narrowness, in terms of 'indicators', any initiative shifts from that which is tractable to the more esoteric and necessarily context specific considerations of praxis whereby 'the practitioner makes a wise and prudent practical judgement about how to act in *this* situation' with their inferences being necessarily bound by a 'response to a real historical situation' (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p.191) situated within an individual school that requires a significant degree of understanding and awareness on the part of the practitioner.

The initiatives referred to in the data are not expressly concerned with such understandings nor can they be if they are to be reproduced along commercial, marketised lines. For such interventions to delve into the unique conditions that exist within individual schools would necessitate a much more sustained engagement with staff and pupils than the time and financial constraints of INSET would allow.

In the absence of such engagement the readily transferable use of language becomes a hallmark that imprints itself upon the teacher and the institution and

becomes symbolic of the initiatives claims. As such it acts as a marketing device that can be employed to identify the product and support its spread.

Marketisation in this research must also be discussed in relation to those commercial pedagogical materials that laid claim to neuroscientific foundations.

Furthermore, as detailed earlier (see p.115), several of the teachers involved in this research made reference to practices that were informed by such claims.

I now intend to further problematise these engagements with a specific focus on the ways in which they provide a warrant for commercial pedagogical products and therefore support their spread across schools.

Hayfield Primary was the school in this research that had engaged most widely with different initiatives such as Building Learning Power, Irresistible learning and Every Child a Writer. They were also the school that most readily extolled the virtues of the learning styles movement (through a diagnostic questionnaire) and Brain Gym. For example Robert explained that;

I try to get a complete background of all the pupils in my class, so what kind of learner they are, visual, kinaesthetic, auditory and what kind of learning difficulties there are, what are their strengths, what are their weaknesses, are they gifted and talented? I think neuroscience can only enhance that really because there might be things that I mean, like for example in year six there's a boy who has blue paper because they've found out it helps him process things ten times quicker!

Robert's excitement, enthusiasm and acceptance of these contested ideas is significant in a number of ways. Firstly his responses are indicative of the wider climate of a school that engages readily in prescriptive, packaged approaches to educational change. The school is used to change being mandated from outside in the form of policy directives and is effectively mirroring a similar uncritical approach when employing strategies informed by neuroscience. As Trotman (2007) explains;

The ease with which evolving aspects of contemporary neuroscience have been enthusiastically and uncritically pursued in educational settings in the United Kingdom (under various banners *e.g.*, *accelerated learning*, *VAK*, *neurolinguistic programming*, *brain gym*, *emotional competencies*) is ... attributable to a wave of educational policy imperatives that have progressively blunted and devalued the profession's capacity for practical critical professional judgement (p.163).

Here Robert is readily accepting of the claims made and all that is required is the assurance that 'they've found out'. Whether or not the 'they' he was referring to was the year six teachers or some anonymised, mystified external base of 'evidence' is unclear but it does underline a willingness to accede to the judgements of others. This especially manifested itself in Robert when he demonstrated the degree to which he was enamored with the conception of Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic learning. Whilst acknowledging a need to develop lessons with a variety of activities he did state that;

If you are doing the kinaesthetic side, the auditory learners might not be getting as much as the kinaesthetic learners, but then when you do the auditory side it kind of role reverses. So I think *in terms of* a broad overview of roughly what you've got in your class. If you know that 90% of your class is kinaesthetic then 90% of your lesson needs to be kinaesthetic as well in my mind!

This represents a naïve and simplistic response to what is a naïve and simplistic corruption of Gardner's (1983) Multiple Intelligence Theory (MIT). Indeed Gardner (2013) himself has categorically stated that MIT should not be synonymous with learning styles.

What is most significant here however is not the veracity or indeed the misinterpretation of Gardner's theory but how teachers respond to models of learning that lay claim to such neuroscientific bases of evidence. Teacher responses here are representative of a learned behaviour i.e. the uncritical delivery of that which has been prepared for them. This is symptomatic of the teacher behaviours found in what Hargreaves et al (2003) described as



'performance training sects'. These arose from policy directives such as the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies. As Hargreaves et al explained;

In performance training sects, there is little opportunity for promoting continuous professional learning among reflective teachers who can exercise discretionary judgement. Over time, teachers inducted into performance training sects will lose the capacity or desire to make professional judgements and become more reflective ... their job is to follow not question (p.189).

Hargreaves et al were referring to responses to government mandated policies and the impact of the pressures of standardisation and performativity. However as the problematised discourse in this research reveals the teachers are also responding to the suggestion, implicit in many of the initiatives they are engaged in, that neuroscientific models may provide a remedy for issues of pupil performance in school. The solution to the challenges they face is envisaged as the adoption and delivery of one or more packages in an uncritical manner. Jennifer at Hayfield Primary demonstrated this when referring to a conference on the 'left handed and right handed sides of the brain' she had been on;

It was all about how and why boys don't necessarily want to sit down and do the kinds of things that typically a girl would do like writing and reading. It was all to do with how they use one side of their brain more predominately than the other and about how you've got to try to cross over the midline and things like that ... it was really good and interesting.

The lack of critical engagement here is striking as are the generalisations about gendered behaviours. What is of note though is the casual acceptance of, and deferral to, the 'wisdom' of the other - as Jennifer explained the course was run by 'a professor who was a man'. Here the authority of the external voice displaces and degrades that of the teacher (Apple, 2004). Furthermore, Joe who also teaches at the school, explained how he utilised learning styles;

I think you need to have elements of all learning styles for all students to learn but also to ensure that lessons aren't always the same and so it's not repetitive, so if you've got lots of different activities, a variety of styles ... visual, auditory or kinaesthetic then if you combine all three – obviously not within one lesson but over a series of lessons then it enables them to develop in more ways than one.

Joe is suggesting here, somewhat confusingly, that pupils need a variety of activities within their teaching but also advises that you would not combine all approaches in one lesson. Inadvertently he seems to be promoting teaching to one learning style, which demonstrates a lack of awareness of the criticisms, mentioned previously, of VAK.

However even when teachers acknowledge the weaknesses in models such as VAK there seemed to be a willingness to adopt the next manifestation of such a theory. Jane at Fairview Academy exemplified this in a stark manner. She explained how she had received training about Brain Gym and VAK but that 'the evidence from that is that it doesn't have very much of an impact these days'. There seems to be a suggestion that it was once relevant but has become redundant. However she further explained that the school's focus had now switched to 'active learning';

We had Geoff Petty in. He has written some stuff on ... teacher training stuff and active learning and ten ways to promote children being active learners to then become independent learners and I know he does a lot of stuff on the effect size in terms of the different strategies he uses.

Jane's role as Assistant Head Teacher is concerned with the vetting and dissemination of such materials but her vagueness with regard to the evidence base of these initiatives is concerning. Especially as Petty's (2015) website is equally vague;

Research shows that active learning is much better recalled, enjoyed and understood. Active methods require us to 'make our own meaning', that is, develop our own conceptualisations of what we are learning. During this

process we physically make neural connections in our brain, the process we call learning. Passive methods such as listening do not require us to make these neural connections or conceptualisations.

This is kinaesthetic learning by any other name and the suggestion that passive listening does not lead to the creation of neural connections is a gross simplification and misinterpretation of neuroscientific research (Demonét, 1996, p.373). However such proclamations are compelling to the teacher in need of educational solutions.

There are parallels here with other initiatives such as Building Learning Power which similarly resorts to statements such as 'research shows'. For example Claxton (2002) observes 'Research tells us... High achievers are not necessarily good real life learners' (p.14) without offering a detailed explanation.

There is one page of suggested reading at the back of the book but in this instance, and in the previous example, the advocacy of an 'expert' replaces any requirement of a teacher to understand, qualify or even peruse the evidential basis of an approach they may use in the classroom. This is the productive effect of labelling educational approaches and initiatives with neuroscientific justifications where teachers are produced as consumers and deliverers of packaged research.

Moreover the uncritical acceptance of neuroscientific endorsements of initiatives becomes a technique for their multiplication and dispersal across schools in so much as their facilitation becomes more streamlined. This is manifested through the reduction, compartmentalisation and packaging of decontextualised theoretical ideas that derive from neuroscience.

For example Amanda at Hayfield Primary detailed the use of questionnaires for both learning styles and multiple intelligences in school (see pages.111,116,119). Such tests enable teachers to make snap judgements about pupils' mental ability and learning preferences and feed into a broader approach of adoption of initiatives that are positioned in relation to such research. These techniques facilitate the ready, atheoretical adoption of such initiatives in school as teachers

attention is drawn away from a careful consideration of evidence in relation to contextual factors towards a focus on the everyday practical and functional considerations of delivery. In this way teachers are subtly recast through a process of 'proletarianisation' that 'involves a loss of control over the work process, a loss of definition by the worker of the essential elements of the task' (Ozga & Lawn, 1981, p.143).

As has been suggested there are links here to the normalisation of teacher implementation of external policy directives but what is especially relevant is the position of the teacher within this discourse of policy enactment. This is irrespective of whether they are directed by government in relation to performative pressures of standardisation or whether they are pressured from commercial quarters. As Ball et al (2011) explain;

Teachers are agents in the mediation and enactment of policy but at the same time a great deal of the meaning of teaching and its practice is now made up of policy concepts which have been sedimented over time in the language of teaching and which constitute the contours of professional practice and subjectivity. These concepts form the objects about which they speak – what it means to be a teacher, what is learning, what is good teaching, what is improvement, what is a good lesson. In this sense most teachers are now fluent in policy but are spoken by it (P.622).

The concepts that underpin education and teachings relationship with neuroscience are bound up in the idea that knowledge about the brain, howsoever it is condensed, eclipses teachers' contextual knowledge of pupils and inevitably leads to better teaching. Furthermore the badging of books and products about new pedagogical approaches with distillations of neuroscientific research, necessarily imagine the teacher as subservient to an external, scientific knowledge base that is the domain of the expert, the consultant and the guru. Such badging is a tactic as Apple (2004) suggests;

Given the status of technical knowledge in corporate economies, "experts" are under a considerable amount of pressure to present their findings as scientific information, as

knowledge that has to a significant degree a scientific warrant, and therefore, an inherent plausibility (p.138-139).

The overall impact of this re-imagining of the educational professional is that teaching and teachers are expressed as being on the margins of policy, exterior to the rational, epistemological understandings of policy architects and consultants and yet bound tightly to their proclamations through subjectivised pedagogical and administrative practices. These practices took many forms; from the administration of learning style tests, deferral to proclamations of research in commercial products and the adoption and implementation of multiple initiatives as seen especially at Hayfield and Parkhill Primary Schools.

Thus the role of the teacher is diminished and has moved from that of a professional to an apprentice and from an expert to a neophyte. Crucial to this transformation of the teacher is the emergence and reification of educational consultants and consultancy hence it is now important to further problematise their impact.

#### **4.10 Consultants, Consultancy and Commodity**

As has already been touched upon, many of these initiatives were transmitted in the first instance via school-to-school networks and reinforced by performance management procedures. However they all ultimately made use of consultancy to introduce their ideas to the school. As has been detailed, Hannah at Lakeside Grammar had an external BLP trainer visit the school from TLO (The Learning Organisation) to deliver training.

TLO acts as the commercial arm of BLP and is the sole distributor of BLP products and training. Hannah also explained how she visited Birch Grammar school, who she had been put in touch with through TLO in another part of the country, to view their use of BLP. This again highlights the commercial nature of the engagement with external consultancy and the school-to-school transmission of ideas. There was recognition that this represented a significant investment for

the school, both financially and in terms of time, and that with this there came risks;

I didn't want to start something, as I don't think it is an initiative, but the danger was if you just start something it looks like an initiative and then a year down the line we do something else.

Again, the anxiety regarding initiatives is telling here and is suggestive of problematic past engagements with educational interventions and an awareness of the pitfalls of short-termism. She also qualified the school's approach by saying that they were mirroring what Birch Grammar did by focusing on one project only. There was a suggestion that this solitary focus, rather than an exploration of a plethora of initiatives, was a more professional response. Indeed Hannah made reference to the Head Teacher of Birch Grammar School stating that 'we don't do anything else, this is what we do ... this is what has made it very powerful!'

The role that TLO played is significant for this study also. Hannah detailed the two and a half days training that the school received as being very much based around a presentation of the ideas before providing classroom based training and a '*clinic*' for staff to attend to discuss progress.

The symbolism of a clinic offering educational care adds further weight to Biesta's (2007) conception of teachers being sick and in need of treatment. This training programme was spread over the school year in order to maintain impetus. Hannah did highlight that she had a concern that some of the staff felt that you could do a 'BLP lesson' that would enable them to cover their discussions of meta-learning in one session. She also said that some staff talked in terms of saying that 'we have done BLP - we did that last year!' In a sense here the staff were compartmentalising BLP as a commodity that could be readily taught in its' entirety.

This resonates with the way in which the set of ideas which encompass BLP are packaged, presented and sold to schools – a series of books, sets of cards,

posters, activity banks, online materials and a 'teacher's pallet' of ideas for delivery. Irrespective of the fact that BLP is presented in the materials as a long term cultural change of learning practices, both on the part of teachers and pupils, some teachers here were inclined to view it as a bounded and packaged system. This chimes further with Maria's acknowledgement that education at Beacon Catholic Primary School, and further afield, is 'prescriptive'. Furthermore she bemoaned the lack of freedom teachers have stating that;

Gone are the days that you would say ... the sun is  
shining, let's just go out and do shadows in science.  
How sad!

There are historical precedents for this institutionalised, rigid educational approach – the legacies of the Literacy and Numeracy hours and their detailed prescriptions of practice are, perhaps, casting their shadows here and more recently the government-endorsed directives of synthetic phonics follow similar lines. Commercial educational products are inevitably subject to such a process of commodification (Ball, 2004a). Pedagogy is sold and bought as a product in the hope that it can be exchanged for learning gains. Not only does such a currency act towards the educational goals of the institution but it is also utilised as a marker of the schools' dynamism – as Susan at Hayfield Primary explained 'We've got Building Learning Power!' and 'we're signing up to Irresistible Learning'.

There is a status afforded to being attached to many of these initiatives that further enhances their spread. They are advertised throughout the schools through the use of displays and some schools make visible reference to them on their websites. Bernstein (2003) suggested that 'a pedagogic practice can be understood as a relay, a cultural relay: a uniquely human device for both the reproduction and the production of culture' (p.63.) The educational products referred to in this research do indeed presuppose a set of desirable learning characteristics that are inevitably bound up in the dominant cultural dispositions of their architects. Furthermore the practices that BLP, for example, promotes and the learning capacities that it purports to develop can be seen as being indicative of what Bernstein referred to as a 'market-orientated visible pedagogy'.

Here such pedagogy promotes 'relevant skills, attitudes and technology' that are easily transposed into performance measures of teachers and pupils alike. Consequently they can be readily packaged and disseminated along lines of a 'behaviourist theory of instruction' (p.212) mirroring models of business based training.

Market-orientated visible pedagogy therefore is characterised by a strongly classified and framed curriculum. In other words the boundaries of the BLP curriculum, and indeed the other commercial pedagogies considered, and the ways in which they are disseminated are relatively rigid and therefore strongly classified. Their specific use of language ensures that they are separate from other pedagogical practices that the schools may be using. Consequently these practices confer upon the child the status of an educational commodity. Therefore for all of BLPs discussion of enhancing the internal learning capacities of pupils, ultimately its success is judged against external performance criteria that separate pupils, in terms of attainment, from one another.

#### **4.11 Nominative problematisation 4**

##### **Consultation as teacher marginalisation**

The data in this research has suggested that consultancy is seen as the employment of expertise where there is an internal deficit. Moreover it has been utilised to as a means of delivering potentially difficult reforms. Despite this it was striking that teachers' perceptions of the value of external educational consultancy were positive overall. Emily, at Sands Academy, was almost evangelical stating that external consultancy was;

Highly, highly valuable because I don't think any of us here would pretend we are the experts at everything. I know in-house training is really good ... but when it is something specific I think it has got to be somebody that actually knows about that coming in!



This statement is significant in several ways. Firstly Emily is explicitly placing consultancy on a pedestal whilst marginalising both herself and her fellow teachers. Furthermore by equating 'specific' ideas or initiatives as automatically requiring external support she is accepting of the compartmentalisation of constituent elements of initiatives as discussed earlier on p.150.

In other words consultants deal in specifics and not in generalisations and as such specificity, in terms of consultancy, always requires precision. Precision in language, in delivery and in the claims that consultants make in the form of 'best-practice' recommendations. Such precision is a necessary element if consultants' ideas are to spread effectively.

Susan at Hayfield also valued external consultancy;

I think you always need *consultancy* because you always have fresh eyes because when you are in the school environment you get very insular ... I had never worked in education before I came here, I came from banking ... so from the perspective of a banker you obviously go on many, many courses for different things to actually be able to do your job ... I think external agencies are important because they come with fresh ideas, new ideas and bring them in.

Again here the discursive object of 'bringing in' is reinforced as is the idea that consultancy is an inevitable and necessary facet of educational practice. Furthermore Susan is suggesting that, like banking, such intervention is imperative in order for teachers and teaching to function effectively. The comparison of banking as a profession, where delivery of courses and regulatory regimes of training are paramount and indispensable and lead to ever-greater profits, is a stark one in relation to education.

However the accreditation that comes with many of these educational initiatives demonstrates that schools do, at times operate along similar lines in that they gain kudos from the visual demonstration of their connections with specific initiatives. Moreover these initiatives provide a competitive edge for schools in their quest for improvement as Robert at Hayfield suggested;

I find external courses are brilliant ... it's to make sure you are up to date in your profession and you are not missing things that other schools are taking on board!

The fear of 'missing out' on the newest and latest educational ideas and running the risk of falling behind competitor schools is something that consultants utilise as a marketing technique, citing on their websites the number of schools (and even countries) their products are used in (Peat, 2015, Claxton, 2015). Volume, in terms of the number of schools employing a particular approach, is seemingly critical for teachers like Robert to feel confident in adopting a new approach. It replaces to some degree any warrant that a research informed evidence base would provide. As such, teachers gaze is turned away from the complexities and challenges of their individual contexts towards the idealised, high-performing other school imagined in the proclamations of consultants. Additionally Robert is also further underlining the impact of the school to school transmission of what is considered best pedagogical practice (see p.96 & p.124). Kitty at Parkhill Primary also demonstrated enthusiasm for consultancy stating that 'outside agencies have more expertise'. Whilst the above examples demonstrate a clear enthusiasm for consultancy Jane at Fairview Academy was more circumspect suggesting that;

We use it as a starting point rather than anything else ... we went out on ... the Habits of Mind course which was ok and gave us some ideas – it wasn't exactly what we wanted. We then had a guy in this year again with the focus of independent learning because the stuff out there is scattered, there is not one thing you can go to. We've been to ... Guy Claxton's Building Learning Power ... listened to him, looking to pick bits here, there and everywhere so it's kind of been a starting point!

Jessica at Beacon Catholic Primary School also had her reservations stating that;

I have all of these courses ... and they talk theory but theory is theory, you need practice don't you, you want to see what is actually done!

Whilst Jane emphasised how discerning she is the school seems to be adopting a scattergun, pick and mix approach to school development and improvement.

Jessica also proposed that it was better to have teachers from other schools delivering training. Again the idea of looking outwards and getting people and ideas in reinforces the construction of expertise being external to the school whilst 'looking to pick bits' of ideas from a 'scattered' marketplace does not suggest a coherent, rational or indeed thoughtful approach to school development. Instead it demonstrates an implicit acceptance that best practice is something that can be commodified, bought and sold and transplanted in a variety of ways and in a variety of combinations. Jessica also suggested that historically external intervention was conducted in a more positive way and yet her description resonates with more recent experience of consultancy. She made particular reference to the head of the Birmingham Catholic Partnership;

We would say ... I would love to learn how to do creative writing or scientific investigations and ... he would go off and find the best speakers and you would be sent on that course! ... a lot of them were teachers. You don't need teachers who did two years of teaching themselves or know it wasn't for them ... and preach to you! You think well you haven't been in a job for the last ten years how can you possibly know!

In order to trace the emergence of this phenomenon we need to look further afield to the role of government.

As Barker (2012) suggested;

Policy makers believe research into school effectiveness and improvement has identified 'best-practice' recommendations that can be applied in any setting or context to improve performance and results (p.78).

Indeed this is the premise that underpins much of the Coalition Government's educational reform with its attempts to replicate what is seen to work in other 'high-performing education jurisdictions' such as Singapore, Hong Kong and Massachusetts (DFE, 2012). However this runs counter to Dewey's (1929) assertion that 'no conclusion of scientific research can be converted into an immediate rule of educational art' (p.19). However if such conclusions offer anything it is merely an allusion to what might be possible, at a particular time within a particular context. And yet several of the teachers within this research

understood such recommendations as verifiable, robust forms of 'best-practice' that promised improvement. This positioned them as quasi-professionals (Etzioni, 1969) intent, unwittingly, more on reproduction rather than improvement of practice (Hargreaves, 2010, p.168). However there were times where teachers rejected external expertise. Referring to one consultant, Jane at Fairview Academy explained the process;

We got his name because two of our second and third year teachers had been out on one of his courses and brought some ideas back in, and so yep, brilliant, we'll get him in and then he also came in to do some, he was going to observe some lessons to see what the teachers were doing but also to do some team teaching, but we found that a lot of the stuff he was saying we were doing anyway ... so I knocked that on the head!

Significantly Jane then went on to describe how they would take these ideas and adapt them with teachers leading different training sessions and then staff trialing the suggestions in their classrooms before being observed by their 'peer/coach/partner'. This exemplifies, on one level, the core principles of Wiliam's (2007) Teacher Learning Communities used in the school, which can be seen as positive and transformative (TES 2009). However in terms of process it is a facsimile of what readily happens when consultants and inspectors visit schools. The teachers here are simulating the initial transmission and then experimentation of a pedagogical approach before being assessed on the effectiveness of their delivery. Furthermore this is done under the guise of democratic and communal learning.

Seemingly they are working for themselves but the modality of their actions mirrors an obsession with prescription and measurement as White (2010) explains;

Providing scripts for what teachers should say, or competency standards for how teachers should measure up, or specifications of how teaching should be performed does not replace teachers' professional judgement or individual pedagogy, and serves to reduce teachers rather than improve teaching (p. 293).

Thus despite Jane's rejection of external consultancy on one level, the employment of a Teacher Learning Communities model serves to multiply the power relations that exist between policy and practice and consultant and teacher. In doing so the teachers engaged in TLC are constrained by its practices. The power relations that exist here demand teachers' deference to sources of knowledge that emanate outside their jurisdiction. Furthermore they necessitate their submission to measurement and examination by their peers. In this way pedagogy is enacted through, not originated within, the teacher. Moreover control of teachers' work, through surveillance, acts as a disciplinary force 'which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer ... exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself' (Foucault, 1980, p.155). As well as directing this gaze internally teachers look towards, and at, one another.

This process of interiorisation operates invisibly as it is masked by institutional Continuing Professional Development practices and a discourse that focuses expressly on the machinery of delivery and a relentless drive towards improvement. Both Jane as Assistant Head Teacher and the teachers charged with the implementation of the TLC initiative form part of this discursive machinery. As Thomson, Hall and Jones (2012) suggest;

It is the leaders and staff who are spoken. It is not a case of discourse being a leadership effect – leaders talk and teachers do. Rather *all* are being spoken by the same situated normative ways of thinking, talking, relating and doing' (p.167).

From the analysis, 'normative' constructions of thought can be summarised here in terms of an externalisation of pedagogy, an obsession with that which is perceived to work elsewhere, the erosion of teacher agency and professionalism and the commodification and marketisation of pedagogical artifacts such as BLP. Whilst these reflect discrete formations they are constituted as part of a wider discursive web that envelops the institution. As such these constructions are perceived as common sense, immutable laws that guide CPD in school. Teachers therefore embody these principles as they 'bring in' external ideas,

responding automatically whilst imagining their actions as being indicative of experienced, innovative professional practice or as Jane explained 'introducing it ... leading it ... organising it ... than reviewing it' (see p.86).

Thus the employment of consultants and consultancy in schools further reinforces and reproduces pedagogy as delivery and teachers as conduits for this delivery.

The epistemological origins of this lie in the wider conception of education as the ceaseless, relentless improvement of those that are incomplete and flawed as Peim (2013) proposes;

We are honour-bound, under the logic of education's remorseless will to improvement, to see ourselves as lacking. Education adjures us always to see ourselves as a never-to-be-completed project of development, ever reaching beyond our present selves towards some mythical educational ideal. Education promotes the myth of perpetual enhancement, a life sentence. (Peim, 2013, p.49)

Consultants and consultancy in school mythologise school improvement similarly as continual advancement, a treadmill and template for 'culture change' and 'lifelong learning' (Claxton, 2015) that necessitates those involved to always look to the horizon, to what comes next. As Joan, at Fairview Academy explained 'it's a rolling programme!'

Furthermore this is coupled with external drivers of performance in the form of targets that demand teachers respond in increasingly restricted ways. It feeds into what Wood (2014) refers to as an 'educational Society of Control' whose purpose is to 'restrict the work of teachers' to a 'requirement to produce, analyse and react to ever more elaborate sets of data' (p.8). In essence, the pressures of improvement in the research schools whether they are in response to performance management targets, the standards agenda or challenges meted out by consultants in school demand that teachers act on themselves.

Hence consultants and consultancy within schools exert a power that creates pedagogical knowledge as a commodity and offers the promise of transmuting the inexperienced teacher into the sage.

Paradoxically the teachers in this research saw this process as emblematic of their professional agency, transforming and improving themselves whilst rejecting the imposition of state approved pedagogies and initiatives as 'damaging children' whilst 'seeking out an initiative ... *is fine!*' (Sammy, Beacon Catholic Primary School). However this rejection of authority cannot be divorced from the effects that external intervention in schools has produced. As Foucault (1979) explains;

Perhaps we should abandon the belief that ... the renunciation of power is one of the conditions of knowledge. We should admit rather that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another (p.27)

Thus the power that consultants yield in the form of the external pedagogical knowledge that they deliver cannot be dissociated from the constructive effects that they have on the teacher and the school.

What the above problematisations of discursive objects in schools imply is the relative positioning of the teacher as being in the shadow of the external, an inferior and a project to be worked on.

However where power relations exist there must also be space for resistance hence it is important to now turn to a consideration of how, in this research, teachers did perceive ways and means of furthering their agency and responding to external pressures. Beginning with a problematisation of procedures used to evaluate the effectiveness of external interventions the chapter will then argue that these forms of professional practice only served to distract teachers from challenging their own marginalisation.

#### **4.12 Evaluation:**

In all the schools where initiatives were utilised teachers explained, in response to direct questioning, the ways and means they used to review and assess the effectiveness of new programmes.

The responses ranged from discussions of monitoring as articulated by Jennifer at Hayfield Primary;

We've done some observations – it's whether we can see an impact on the learning within the lessons ... have the children started their writing up better? Has their reading got better? We can look at the data – see how much progress they're making! Also ... has the quality of teaching got better as well?

Lucy at Fairview Academy however felt that effectiveness could be ascertained by the following;

It would be through discussions with pupils – did they enjoy it? Did they not enjoy it?

Whereas Hannah at Lakeside Grammar School acknowledged the difficulties of evaluation of the Building Learning Power initiative;

The easy answer is you do some sort of audit and say well where is it happening? And I think that has its place and I think you need to know what subjects are doing what and you need to know how that is working but actually it is far more sophisticated than that ... we don't want to measure progress for students in this in terms of levels or awards or ... the notion of ... I am a bronze level reasoner it is just the wrong way to go ... we want to be able to say that they are better at learning! One of the things we are looking at ... is to develop a kind of profile of what an effective Lakeside learner is.

There is to some degree here a rejection of performative modalities of assessment and an acknowledgement that the reviewing and measurement of pupil progress is a limited means of assessing the worth of a particular



pedagogical approach. This contrasted starkly with Ruby's perception, at Parkhill Primary that;

They purely go on results really - tracking and obviously feedback!

Maggie at Hope Catholic Primary similarly suggested that monitoring of levels was crucial;

It is something I do every term to see how our initiatives are impacting on the children's learning because it doesn't really matter how good a programme you bring in if it's not doing anything for their learning it's completely pointless!

Joe at Hayfield Primary School explained that 'learning walks' and 'lesson observations' could be used to assess the degree to which an initiative had affected teaching within the school. Lucy at Fairview in her role as assistant principal provided more detail as follows;

What I do is informal questionnaires – just kind of qualitative statements kind of feedback and then at the end of the year ...we did a formal questionnaire that I could get some statistical data from in terms of what strategies have been used.

This was followed up by formal observations that operated along the lines of the 'new Ofsted framework'. Other members of staff at the school alluded to the opportunities that Teacher Learning Communities provided for them to reflect on how new initiatives were working.

What is significant here is the variance between schools in terms of reviewing effectiveness but also the vagueness of response. It is also worthy of mentioning that of all the discussions that took place within the interviews, teacher responses in relation to the evaluation of initiatives were the most limited.

#### 4.13 Nominative problematisation 5

##### **Evaluation and displaced professionalities:**

In terms of evaluation it is now important to consider the type of evidence that teachers valued to this end. They ranged from the more affective considerations of the levels of pupil enjoyment to the more managerial responses that required the measurement of both pupils and teachers.

In the main, however, the majority of schools moved ultimately towards evaluative procedures that required measurement in forms that could be applied to appraisal and performance management processes. These evaluative procedures ranged from the direct measurement of pupil data as evidence of the warrant of particular initiatives (Parkhill Primary School) to the creation of learner profiles (Lakeside Grammar School) and Ofsted style observations (Fairview Academy).

A point of commonality between them, however, was the desire to search for evidence not only as a means of validating particular pedagogical approaches as a demonstration of their worth but more specifically, as a technology for the public examination of teachers.

For example at Fairview Academy Joe explained how a blog was created 'where staff *could* just upload what they've used and share their views' of what worked. This is indicative of regulatory behaviour where teachers are encouraged to make themselves and their work visible to one another. They are exposing themselves, willingly, to examination under the guise of 'sharing learning'. Nick also at Fairview explained the process as follows;

We evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy we've used. We do a write up and that all gets handed into Jane (the Assistant Principal) who sends that out for everyone to have a look so you do have that time to reflect back on your practice. In terms of the other initiative we started we are going to do things like upload a blog onto our ... system

That these reports are scrutinised by the Assistant Principal, and also that the blog is visible to all staff, means that they form part of an institutional discursive arrangement that wills teachers to submit to Teacher Learning Communities as the schools flagship programme for reform of educational practice. As Jane herself stated in relation to TLC;

We are going to sit down and look through again – are there any areas that we still need to develop ... and what can happen for our TLC meetings? ... If we need to go back to it we can do ... we can hit that again!

This suggests the pushing through of a reform as opposed to a more collegial critique and analysis of what is considered to work within the school. It speaks of the need for development, as a proxy for reformatory work on teachers and teaching and suggests that the whole TLC project can be ensured, in the strongest terms, by 'hitting it again'. This is illustrative, in a broader sense, of pressures for schools to implement reforms; howsoever those reforms are constructed, in an efficient and hasty manner.

There is a discourse of urgency here then; urgency in terms of speed of implementation as an indicator of institutional efficiency, and urgency in terms of militating against the risk to pupils should the school not renew itself in these ways.

The teachers here however were accepting of this pace of change, recognising themselves as being constitutive of an institution, and its internal discourse, that valued such practices as a form of collegial professional empowerment. Many of the interviewees at Fairview Academy were relatively new to the profession having started their careers in the last five to ten years and having been subject to a school system themselves that was in a constant state of flux. Therefore it may be, as Wilkins (2010) has suggested, that we are beginning to see the emergence of a 'post performative' teacher who 'fully embrace(s) the accountability culture of teaching' and is;

Generally comfortable with the wider framework of performative management cultures – so long as they continue to enjoy the ‘micro–autonomy’ of the classroom (p.405).

Furthermore, it is possible that ‘micro–autonomy’ is itself a facet of the wider performative culture within Fairview Academy and indeed other schools. The various roles and responsibilities afforded to them through Teacher Learning Communities such as leading meetings and researching areas for development do allow for a degree of self – governance on the part of the teacher. However these spaces are regulated both from within, by fellow teachers scrutinising each other and each other’s work, and by senior leaders like Jane keeping an eye on proceedings.

This pushing through of initiatives can only occur, however, if there is a strong warrant for their worth. I have already detailed the various ways in which these ideas were popularised via school-to-school networks but it is also important to consider the role that evidence plays in their evaluation and the review of their effectiveness.

It is timely then to return to Biesta’s (2007) concerns of the current moves towards a narrow conception of evidence-based education and the utilisation of randomised control trials as detailed on p.24. The schools here, especially those that expressed a preference for data driven forms of measurement, are accepting of the premise of such a system in so much as they felt the need to relate effectiveness purely in terms of pupil attainment.

Hence there are parallels to be drawn here with their acceptance of the role that other schools play in their adoption of ‘tried and tested’ approaches.

In both cases these demonstrate a willingness to base their utilisation of new approaches on a narrow conception of what educational evidence is. Indeed the evidence base that many of these initiatives provided, especially with regard to neuroscientific underpinnings, was limited. And yet, as has been demonstrated, the search for what were considered to be effective interventions, despite such

narrow interpretations of evidence, went unchecked. Hargreaves (1997) suggested that;

Educational research should and could have much more relevance for, and impact on, the professional practice of teachers than it now has (1997, p.405).

It was not, at the time, an unreasonable request to make and yet it was based on the assumption that educational research can indeed provide useful insights that are readily transferable to a variety of educational contexts. Elliot (2001) has roundly questioned such an assumption suggesting that;

It is an action which, nevertheless, provides an excuse for an unprecedented extension of the operation of political and bureaucratic power to regulate the pedagogical activities teachers engage their students in within classrooms (p.559).

Evidence that can be packaged, neatly as a model of practice conforms to such an assumption and fulfils the requirements of the 'what works' agenda. Whilst Elliot was referring, in the main, to incursions of state pedagogies and powers in the classroom, there are similarities in this research with the ways that commercial pedagogical initiatives regulated teacher behaviour. They also encouraged teachers to conflate effectiveness with a limited conception of pupil and teacher performance. Furthermore they operated under the assumption that teachers and teaching need to be reformed and that their ideas can be readily imprinted upon schools without cause to develop a contextual awareness and understanding.

The analysis has therefore revealed how teachers are constituted as inexpert apprentices by a pervasive discourse of external expertise. Furthermore this has manifested itself through teachers' active appropriation of a range of external educational initiatives, reinforced by consultancy and external policy directives. However powerful this discourse is though ultimately it is not a fixed, inflexible construction; rather it is a facet of a fluid and elastic relationship and a site of contest. As Foucault (1982) explained;

Every power relationship implies, at least *in potentia*, a strategy of struggle, in which the two forces are not super-imposed, do not lose their specific nature, or do not become finally confused (p.794).

Thus it is inevitable that power cannot operate in a vacuum. Power requires opposition, struggle and challenge in order to exist at all. Indeed in this research it was apparent that opposition to consultancy and to the external imposition of pedagogies, existed at several levels in some of the research schools. However the degree to which this opposition effected change was limited.

Significantly this opposition manifested itself in various forms of professional practice. Through a process of problematisation it shall now be argued that these forms of professional practice are in fact dislocated from Foucault's (1982) conception of resistance. Despite their potential for enhancing teacher autonomy they ultimately lead to further accommodation of state performativity and external expertise. Hoyle (1974) suggests that professionalism is concerned with the knowledge, skills and procedures employed by teachers in the process of teaching whereas professionalism relates to those strategies and rhetorics employed by members of an occupation in seeking to improve status, salary and conditions. The opposition to consultancy and external directive can be thought of in relation to Hoyle's conception of professionalism above. However it shall be argued that this is a form of *displaced professionalism*.

Fairview School, as has already been mentioned, is a successful, convertor Academy. I have discussed in previous sections the utilisation of Wiliam's (2007) Teacher Learning Communities with its express focus on embedding formative assessment techniques in the school.

As a model of collaborative practice it does actively encourage teachers to take charge of their own learning and practice and disseminate their findings and ideas. Indeed in this school it was extended beyond its' designed purpose of developing formative assessment to develop independent learning for example. Whilst I have raised reservations about how this initiative was implemented, in particular its transmission and measurement (see p.100), it is important to delve

further into the spaces that Teacher Learning Communities at Fairview Academy create for teachers to reclaim personal agency and shape their practice.

All of the teachers interviewed at the school were enthusiastic about their involvement in this initiative and valued the responsibility that they had been given in their various roles. For example Joe explained that he was 'learning more about independent learning and ... we had to become sort of experts so that we could lead everyone else'. He also valued 'working in a group and helping each other to solve things'. Here teachers are building their capacity to respond as a group with and for one another.

Furthermore Nick stated that Teacher Learning Communities allowed him to 'reflect' on his practice and that consultants coming in could be 'hit and miss'.

Malcolm also valued TLC because of the way it developed staff.

Jennifer at Hayfield Primary reiterated this concern with the limited reach, in terms of educational impact, of external courses. She felt that they often seemed like 'money making kind of schemes when you could just use your imagination' back at school without having to venture outside.

Hannah at Lakeside Grammar School also felt that Teacher Learning Communities were preferable to external training days;

One off day courses are quite expensive. When you factor that in plus travel and a day of cover and you think about value for money - are you getting it? It depends on the quality of the course obviously but I think ... it is about the impact when you come back to school ... and often staff will say I feel really fired up, we've had a brilliant day ... loads of ideas and then ... life kicks back in and they don't do anything. Whereas we are finding that Teacher Learning Communities is a constant conversation and dialogue!

Furthermore this was also coupled with a new programme in school that allowed staff to apply for ten days cover to research their own practice and feedback their findings to staff. Hannah explained that this would lead to 'in house courses and training ... sort of teachers as action researchers'.

In these instances both Fairview Academy and Lakeside Grammar Schools were confident about their capacity to develop their own teachers with rolling programmes of internally generated Continuing Professional Development. The 'constant conversation and dialogue' was indicative of this and as Malcolm suggested it had 'been a big *step* forward using our own staff' rather than relying on consultancy. There is a sense here of teachers engaged in informal review of their practice but in the main teachers did not engage in research. Furthermore at Hayfield Primary Joe explained that;

If you do an education masters then you can look at how things work within the classroom but I think because we are actually teaching we can identify what does work, what doesn't but I think it needs to be on a broader sense – a lot of schools combining their ideas together because one rule won't fit all schools.

This illustrates a rather unsystematic approach to reflective practice. Whilst teachers in these schools were developing their agency with regard to how their schools evolve it is important therefore to see the constraints and limits that they operated under.

This entails uncovering power relations in order to 'locate their position and find out their point of application and the methods used' (Foucault, 1982, p.780). Such an analysis therefore may throw light upon relationships of power precisely by considering how and where resistance operates. In a sense then it is only by looking at the depth of the shadows around teacher engagement in these initiatives that one can fully understand the reach of the discourse. To this end then it is necessary to further explore how displaced professionalities, in these instances, came into being.

I have already detailed how the implementation of Teacher Learning Communities has much in common with the application of commercially driven initiatives like Building Learning Power and more direct policy drives such as synthetic phonic directives from government. However, consideration has to be made of how teachers are actively spoken by their engagement with Teacher Learning Communities. This can be thought of as the degree to which their



behaviours are transformed and constructed in various ways by the discourse of Teacher Learning Communities.

Teacher Learning Communities place teachers at the heart of Continuing Professional Development sessions. Indeed Wiliam (2010) imagines them as agents of change 'accountable for developing their practice' however he has also acknowledged that schools struggle with devoting enough time to such Teacher Learning Community endeavours as they are 'inundated with initiatives ... content to "let a thousand flowers bloom" in terms of School Improvement' (p.5). This relentless prioritising of a myriad of school developments is symptomatic of performative practice. Certainly in this research, in several of the schools, it was also the case that teachers were subject to a plethora of initiatives and institutional challenges that impacted upon the delivery of the programme. Fairview Academy was no exception and this certainly affected the ability of Teacher Learning Communities to operate in an unhindered fashion as Nick explained;

It's halted a little bit because we are doing the new curriculum at the moment ... we've got the pressures of getting the new scheme of work set up!

This was confirmed by Jane who explained that;

Initially we did a longer Learning Communities meeting ... it might have been about an hour and a half... *but* ... then we ... had half an hour ... it was about that ... we ... let that run for the remainder of the year! ... The expectation was that staff would work together in pairs or triads! ... Some timetables didn't match up so when people had got free time they couldn't go and see, because there was no ... we hadn't attached any cover to it ... it had got to be done when people had free time so that became a little bit difficult. ... So the second year what we did is we said that the expectation was that people could do a peer observation if they wanted to or they could do some peer planning, so in their own time they could meet together, say after school!

This explicitly demonstrates a lack in terms of the amount of time the school affords teachers to adopt a new way of working. After an initial highly focused

engagement the schools allocation of time to Teacher Learning Communities followed a downward trajectory. The onus and responsibility for the initiative was transferred from the school and senior leaders like Jane, and placed firmly at the feet of teachers with ever-limited resources at their disposal.

Institutionally there was an acknowledgement that teachers needed time but, due to further structural changes (the school was reducing Key Stage 3 to two years and extending Key Stage 4), this was not forthcoming. As Jane explained 'it wasn't that we didn't value them and that they weren't working it was just we had a more urgent need!'

This response to the administration of Teacher Learning Communities further reinforces a commodified approach to school development. A product was delivered and after an initial fanfare, the expectation was that it had impacted, and was impacting, upon practice. Furthermore the responsibility for the maintenance of the project was clearly the teachers.

Indeed it was apparent that teachers like Joe and Nick, identified strongly with Teacher Learning Communities as raising the status of their professional development and standing within the school. Furthermore it provided them with a means for resisting the 'hit and miss' market oriented solutions to school improvement where consultants have products to sell. Indeed Nick suggested that 'training is more effective when it's by another sort of professional ... another teacher!' mirroring the experience of Sammy at Beacon Catholic Primary School (see p.76).

Here there was an allusion to teachers supporting one another and being best placed to provide their own professional development. However, in reality, ever-greater demands were being placed upon them that ultimately did not allow them to act freely as professionals in this way. They were subtly constrained by time and an expectation that they devote their attentions to the latest and most pressing need within the school as Joan, at Fairview, suggested;

Time is the limiting factor always ... you get loads of people in doing loads of different things and it just comes in like a whirlwind and there's no time to embed, develop or reflect on it!

Consequently the focus of their attentions is dispersed and diluted and 'professional development has become an externalised process of enforced change rather than an internal and professional process of growth' (Wood, 2014, p.3).

Paradoxically therefore, whilst schools like Fairview Academy were interested in Teacher Learning Communities as a conception of a professional space for teachers – one where teachers were empowered to develop their 'knowledge base, professionalism, and ability to act on what they learn' (McLaughlin, M.W & Talbert, J, 2006, p.5) they also sought to colonise that space, dictating the terms under which it could operate and defining the boundaries that formed its limits. Giroux (2003) interpreted this tension as an oppressive force and explained that teachers who attempt to affect change have;

To deal with the interrelated and diverse ways in which oppression is shaped and reproduced under the weight of wider institutional contexts which bear down on isolated and often fragmented forms of classroom resistance (p.9).

This oppression takes its shape from those practices in school that relate to performance management procedures. Hence not only is this colonisation governed in relation to the institution's internal priorities it is also reflecting the states' preoccupation with measurement, performance and surveillance. Surveillance, in the form of peer observations, then becomes a technology of compliance whereby teachers govern one another, observing and passing judgement, as is the case with Teacher Learning Communities at Fairview Academy.

Resistance that was envisioned as teacher collaboration and peer development, in this instance then is limited. Rather it is subject to the institutions broader aims of target driven, standardisation and the 'deployment of the resources of the central state to increasingly prescribe the forms that this 'legitimate' professionalism is allowed to take. (Beck, 2008, p.137).

Thus Teacher Learning Communities, BLP and other forms of what might be considered to be professionalising practices i.e. those that place the teacher at the centre of change, all too often become an addendum to the government's reform of teacher's work. Moreover they are legitimated precisely because they adhere to a narrow vision of education - one where the standardised assessment of highly regulated curricula is preeminent as opposed to a more local consideration of pupil need.

Another facet of resistance within this research manifested itself as a vocal disagreement with the relentless employment of initiatives within school.

Sammy at Beacon Catholic Primary School, referring to the wider climate within education, bemoaned this pace of change;

Now it is take that on board, this is new coming in, can you do that! And the children can't take it on board! It's not about children – it's about targets, we are target driven, we are about sub-levels, we are about improving practice of what we are doing except we are damaging children for the future. They are going through this sausage machine and we teach, all of us teach as Catholic teachers about the uniqueness of the most beautiful children we have and what we are doing is that we want this homogenous group of children at the end of the sausage machine. How sad is that?

She was clear that teachers had to find ways to resist this drive towards standardisation where 'testing seems to have become the goal of education ... rather than a means of implementing it' (Reingold, 2015, p.1) and schools are preoccupied with the search for new means of meeting targets;

You have to stand back and you have to look at it from a detached point of view – and be brave enough to stand back from it as well – and be brave enough to speak out – *otherwise* – you crumble.

Despite this Sammy acknowledged that the pressures of this wider performative discourse were impacting negatively upon the profession;

What's happening is that you have a huge amount of teachers now leaving the profession, experienced ... saying no more and saying thank god my children have gone through it! You have new teachers coming in ... having gone through this system so they have been brainwashed, they are robotic ... we have lost creativity – the joy of learning! ... You bring more and more initiatives into a vocation and now it's turned into a job!

These concerns relate to an education system that is increasingly prescriptive, reliant on a narrow conception of what meaningful educational practice is. Furthermore Biesta (2007) suggests that such a system;

Limits the opportunities for educational professionals to exert their judgement about what is educationally desirable in particular situations (p.20).

Teachers' voices can become lost then, subsumed into a range of institutionalised practices, and governed by externally driven directives of policy and commercial pedagogy that implore them to implement, teach then test. The research data demonstrated that many of the teachers were positioned in this way and they actively embodied such a discourse (see Robert at Hayfield Primary, pages 80,124 ). Others however did attempt to resist these pressures.

Sammy, following on from her clear disapproval above, detailed how the phase three teachers created groupings in English and Mathematics based on ability across years five and six as opposed to age in response to the S.A.T. targets they had been set. She explained that they had 'to be brave and do something different' and that it was;

Empowering because it didn't come from anywhere but within the working environment – that is where the skill is – that is where the power is and saying right this is what we need and no paper, no book, no consultancy could have told us what we needed!

She went on to explain how the changes came about after consultation with the Head Teacher, staff, parents and Governors and a rigorous process of

monitoring. Riseborough (1993) suggested that teachers could find a space for resistance by creating;

A range of individual and collective 'contained' or 'disruptive' creative strategies, an empirically rich unofficial under life to official policy intention (p.171).

The above example is indicative of teachers responding collaboratively in an inventive way to address a context specific issue and trying to develop such an 'under life to policy intention'. Their actions cannot be articulated in terms of being disruptive or challenging to the status quo though.

What is significant therefore is that this teacher led change, like Teacher Learning Communities, is also a direct response to the external pressure of the standards agenda. Its imperative is to move pupils through sub levels of attainment - hence it is dancing to the tune of performativity rather than challenging it. The focus therefore is clearly fixed on procedural, practical considerations that may be new or novel but are still firmly directed towards the same endpoint – i.e. satisfying external performance targets. Hence the teachers here, despite congregating around a common point of resistance, have internalised institutional and governmental performative priorities to such a degree that they are constrained and limited by them. An unforeseen consequence of such compliance is that it valorises external consultants and consultancy as a means of promoting professional spaces for teachers in so much that they offer an initial impetus for teachers to act. Within such a complex discursive arrangement it is difficult therefore to imagine alternative responses. Sammy further alluded to this by suggesting that autonomous, professional spaces for teachers are 'harder' to come by now. She recounted how the school had recently been visited by a school improvement partner who was an Ofsted inspector who was encouraging them to;

Stop thinking that Ofsted want this, stop thinking the government want this, stop thinking! Actually ... do what you are good at and do it well.

Here the Ofsted inspector is imploring teachers to unshackle themselves from the belief that there is such a thing as an Ofsted lesson. Indeed, Sir Michael Wilshaw as Head of Ofsted, has suggested that;

Good heads do not spend inordinate amounts of time and resources on game-playing and "Mocksteds". They do not plan endlessly for what may never happen. They concentrate on the basics – the culture of the school, behaviour, and, most importantly, the quality of teaching in the classroom.  
(Guardian, 2014).

Despite what can be seen as valuable and commonsensical advice it is extremely difficult for teachers not to self-regulate themselves in order to satisfy the demands of external forces like Ofsted and government. Sammy acknowledged this stating that;

It is difficult! It shouldn't be difficult. I think it depends where your power comes from. If it is top down and if it is Ofsted trained, if it is new headship criteria – then forget it!

This demonstrates discourse at its most potent and productive. Here teachers are constructed institutionally to embody values that perpetuate their continual engagement with performative technologies such as the testing and assessment regime and the self-regulative pressures that derive from inspection and performance management. Such technologies demand their complete focus on educational outputs, both those of pupil attainment and teacher performance that must not only be maintained but must be continually improved also. Hence they are subtly divested of self-determination as Gewirtz (2002) explained;

The discourse of performativity also undermines teacher autonomy and sociability, and it generates an intensification of the labour process of teaching, a refocusing – and a narrowing – of pedagogic activity, and a concomitant shift in who and what is valued in schools  
(p.89)

Teachers in schools like Fairview Academy that placed emphasis on getting 'our staff to lead' on training, as Jane described it, felt empowered but were tied to the same performative agendas and external pressures. Performative discourse therefore;

Creates teachers as the examined, covertly placed under perpetual uninterrupted scrutiny by parents, colleagues, regulatory authorities and education systems (Bourke, Lidstone & Ryan, 2015, p.96).

Institutionally Teacher Learning Communities at Fairview Academy, and indeed Lakeside Grammar School, represented a different structured map for the professional practice of teachers. Furthermore, teachers at Beacon Catholic Primary School had also created a different professional space although it was less systematised than Teacher Learning Communities.

These practices did resist the conception of the teacher as a technician and a semi-professional as they offered the potential for them to create a series of professional paths that they could navigate collectively and with a degree of autonomy. However they were guided by a compass that willed them, unerringly towards the idealised end point of a performative educational system – the examination and measurement of the individual – both teacher and pupil. It was this discursive undercurrent to teachers' professional lives that bound them. In order to be 'perceived as effective teachers by senior managers and school inspectors alike' they subordinated themselves to procedures of appraisal, surveillance and examination.

Not only was the empirical basis for this hidden it was also duly accepted by teachers, unquestioningly, as a means of surviving within such a school system. As Beck (2008) suggests;

The dominant forces have sought to identify, stigmatise, and marginalise various 'residual' elements, and to empower, legitimise and incentivise certain 'emergent' tendencies and groups (p.123)



Hence whilst resistance in this research necessarily required teachers to coalesce in the spaces afforded by Teacher Learning Communities and other professionalising practices, they were rendered impotent by allowing their responses, however antithetical they were, to be invoked by this performative discourse. As Grosz (1990) Suggests;

To say something is *not* true, valuable or useful, *without posing alternatives* is, paradoxically, to affirm that it *is* true, and so on. Thus, coupled with this negative project, or indistinguishable from it, must be a positive, constructive project creating alternatives (p.59).

Hence the productions of Teacher Learning Communities and other forms of resistance in this research, whilst they spoke out against the imposition of external reforms and consultancy, were reflective of the principles of the Global Educational Reform Movement. They accepted its foundations of standardisation, test based accountability and strategies of reform that minimised risk and limited alternatives (Sahlberg, 2011) and were therefore constructed as displaced professionalities.

This chapter has identified discursive objects and uncovered a range of linked, nominative problematisations that form the findings of the research. These findings pertain to a broader discourse of teacher expertise, or lack of, and external expertise and competency and have significance for the ways in teachers construct and appropriate learning theory in school.

## Chapter 5

### 5.1 Discussion

The following discussion will be structured around a consideration of the research questions, the field of literature and the research findings. The intention here is to employ the original research questions in order to support the analysis and consider theoretical issues raised in relation to what has been found within the schools involved.

*How are new learning approaches popularised in English schools and upon what frameworks are they contingent?*

A key strand of this research focused on the ways in which new approaches to learning were popularised within those schools who participated in the research . The literature review detailed the degree to which neuroscience has been misinterpreted and applied unhelpfully to learning style programmes in the past (Dennison, 1989; Geake, 2008, see page 20). This misinterpretation was strongly linked in the literature to the appeal that brain based models of learning have amongst teachers and the wider populace. In particular the degree to which the inclusion of neuroscientific language and imagery encouraged teachers, and others, to believe unfounded claims was significant (Weisberg et al, 2008 see page 12). Furthermore the emergence of commercial enterprises promoting these models was well documented as was the degree to which they were marketed strenuously (Coffield et al, 2004, Goshwami, 2006, p.2). The research data did revealed the appeal that neuroscience and ‘brain based’ learning products held for the teachers involved (e.g. Jane, Malcolm, Joe, Amanda, Nick, Joe p.115-116). In particular Nick and Joe were accepting of the premise of Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic learning styles without consciously critiquing their origins. Indeed, there was some resonance here with the scientific concept of ‘levels of analysis’ where scientific discoveries taken out of the specific context in which they were made run the risk of being applied inappropriately or in a misleading manner (see review of literature on page 19). For example Nick and Joe’s understanding of VAK for example did not extend to a consideration of the dangers of misinterpreting neuroscientific findings made at

the level of individual brain structures and then applying them to the complex social environment of the classroom. As Willingham (2009) explained neuroscientists concern themselves with 'the mapping of brain structure and activity to cognitive functions' but 'they do not study the entire nervous system' (p.545). For example neuroscientists, at an anatomical level of analysis, may identify that specific structures in the brain deal with visual processing. However such a finding might unhelpfully be applied to the more complex level of analysis of the classroom environment to suggest that some pupils have a preference for a visual learning style. It was evident in this research that teachers did not have a sufficient grasp of this issue or the scientific legitimacy of specific neuroscientific claims in the light of levels of analysis. This does raise the issue of how equipped teachers and indeed educational consultants are to navigate neuroscientific data and findings. This chimes with Morrison and Swora's (1982) concerns of 'interdisciplinarity' and the difficulties of producing and transferring knowledge across disciplines (see p.16). The fields of neuroscience and education are not easily blended and teachers in this research faced significant challenges in synthesising research findings with educational practice.

Despite the presence of critical perspectives, participants were genuinely excited about the prospect of neuroscience transforming their teaching and were seemingly quite willing to accept the validity of initiatives such as Brain Gym and Learning Styles (see Amanda p116). Furthermore, it was significant that the majority of initiatives studied did not make explicit reference to a robust evidence base mirroring Coffield's (2004) concerns of the atheoretical nature of many learning styles initiatives. It was also apparent that teachers were not expressly encouraged to seek out such evidence. Hence it became apparent that the employment and popularisation of learning approaches in this research was not contingent upon careful consideration of evidence or indeed teacher research. What was far more critical for the teachers and schools employing specific approaches such as BLP and Irresistible Learning, was the degree to which other schools and teachers had validated these ideas and methods. The teachers in this research actively looked towards the practice that other schools were engaged in with a view to 'bringing in' new educational ideas (see p.84). This was further linked to the identification of 'school to school transmission' of educational ideas (see p.100).

There was a correspondence here with Fischer's (2009) concerns in the literature (see p.15) of a lack of an effective means of studying teaching and learning to assess effectiveness. In essence teachers and schools in this research bypassed engagement with analysis and evaluation of research findings in favour of the recommendations of other schools and consultants. Therefore the cross fertilisation of educational initiatives between institutions and teachers was a key driver for the appropriation of new learning initiatives in the research schools. It was significant also that the highly marketised nature of many of these initiatives led to teachers engagement with initiative specific language that provided a means by which new approaches could spread through and between schools (see p.111). This 'concretion of language' was best exemplified by BLPs four R's of Learning Power and its correlated seventeen learning capacities which pupils and teachers were encouraged to use in daily classroom talk . Recommendations from other schools were spread and embedded by these means further reinforcing an absence of teachers' careful consideration of research to inform practice.

*How has recent educational discourse shaped and influenced pedagogical implementation of neuroscientific research?*

Within the literature review the work of Balerin and Lauder (see p.28) proposed that there was a link between moves towards decentralisation since the 1988 ERA and increasing levels of prescription within education. This paradoxical discourse of educational freedom set against the state endorsement of specific educational approaches was evident in the findings of this research. Coupled with an absence of theory as detailed above and the competitive, performative educational climate created by the Global Educational Reform Movement (Sahlberg, 2011) the space for teachers to innovate appeared limited. For example research schools engagement with BLP (see Lakeside Grammar p.79) mirrored the imposition of a strategy akin to the government's literacy and numeracy interventions (see p.83). Essentially, schools appeared conditioned to a delivery mode of teaching whereby they sourced and purchased an educational product and their role was reduced to one of implementation. This marks a move away from teaching as a professional activity and its correlated skills of research,

evaluation and judgment towards a more technicist modality of educational practice (Dadds, 1997, Leaton-Grey, 2007).

Ofsted and its associated performative pressures clearly impacted upon this engagement with new learning approaches seen in many of the research schools (e.g. Sands Academy p.106). The schools in this research were subject to a discourse of performativity and marketisation that led to their engagement with educational products such as BLP and Irresistible Learning. The rise of standardised testing and its related pressures helped to support this engagement. It reflected a hegemonic apparatus of intervention in teachers' work which had become naturalised and therefore perceived as normal. As a consequence participants in this research were accustomed to external intervention in their work and reticent about the possibilities of teacher led research. This clearly mirrored Fischer's (2009) concerns (see p.16) of a correlation between standardised testing and a demise of research-informed practice in schools.

With the educational stakes for teachers and schools so high, the space for risk-taking and time for research-based evaluation were lacking in schools such as Fairview Academy and Lakeside Grammar School. Instead a discourse of competition between individual teachers and schools created the conditions within which commercial educational products were able to thrive. This can be thought of in terms of Rizvi's (2007) discursive fields (see p.25); teachers and schools as institutions assume that educational improvement comes as the result of external intervention, or at the very least as the result of the employment of what works elsewhere. The possibility therefore of teachers being engaged in research that might inform practice, or indeed meaningful evaluation of educational research, is delimited by the strength of performative discourses (see p.105). Instead school improvement in this research was tied to performative pressures that encouraged teachers to focus on narrow interpretations of educational success framed by standardisation, as explained earlier (see Scott, (2010), Jeffrey and Troman, (2012) McDougall, (2004) and Bennis, (1969)) (p.26 - p.34).

It was the identification of inter-performative regulatory practice in this research that was particularly significant here (p.105). Teacher's self-regulation and that of each other (e.g. Ruby at Parkhill Primary, Amanda at Hayfield Primary p.108)

served to limit their individual agency as their focus was directed towards external educational solutions and the construction of educational expertise as being independent of individual teachers. Rather expertise and educational improvement was envisaged as a colonial force that needed to be brought in and delivered by teachers. In effect this resulted in the marginalisation of teachers and the valorisation of the educational consultant. Consequently the teachers in this research were conditioned to defer to external directives whether they originated from government mandates and policies, inspection bodies, or from the commodified edicts of educational consultants.

This resulted in reluctance on the part of teachers in the research schools to trust their own professional, contextual insights without deferring to external notions of what works, whether neuroscientifically informed or not. Indeed, it was surprising to some degree that educational neuroscientific findings were not as prevalent in educational initiatives in the research schools as I had at first suspected. Rather the preoccupation was more linked to an agenda of 'what works' elsewhere. Thus teachers' 'self-regulation' (see p.95) resulted in a constant checking of themselves and their schools in relation to what practice was being carried out elsewhere as opposed to deep contextual reflection on their own individual and institutional practices. This 'self-regulation' can be seen as a result of increased standardisation, measurement and marketisation within the educational system.

*How can teacher-led resistance bridge the gap between commercial providers of educational materials and educational communities?*

Whilst the literature review alluded to a lack of theorisation and research-informed pedagogy in schools (Carr 2006, Elliot, 2001, Fischer, 2009) this research did identify educational practice that could be thought of at first glance as addressing this concern. Those involved saw the employment of Teacher Learning Communities (William, 2007) at Fairview Academy and Lakeside Grammar as a form of professionalising practice. Indeed at Lakeside Grammar Hannah was somewhat critical of VAK and Brain Gym (see p.117-118). However

despite the potential that TLC offered teachers in terms of a reflective space in which to evaluate and critique their practice and new educational ideas the reality at Fairview, and indeed Lakeside, was that such practice was still constrained. This 'displaced professionalism' (see p.149) remained tied to constant prioritisation of new initiatives that were largely mandated from senior leaders. Hence a colonisation by senior leaders of these spaces ultimately led to a demonstration of teacher-led resistance that was to some degree an illusion. Evaluation was limited in that the evidential basis of many of the initiatives employed was not questioned. Instead pupil data was used to validate the employment of particular schemes despite it being difficult to make direct causal links in this way. Improvements in pupil attainment were therefore attributed to the initiative thus reinforcing senior leaders sponsoring of particular approaches. Furthermore these schemes were often mediated through external consultancy making it difficult for teachers to resist such intervention or for them to propose alternatives.

This mirrors the lack of criticality and robust evidence base detailed in the literature review (p.20) concerning neuromythologies but was extended in the research data to all forms of initiative whether neuroscientifically informed or not. What was missing in these TLC spaces was the possibility for teachers to personally identify priorities and direct their own research into different pedagogical possibilities to address them. Criticism of school development priorities and their related initiatives at Fairview Academy was not encouraged perhaps because of the financial investment involved. Indeed there was also a lack of awareness as to what productive educational research might look like (see Joe's comments p.151). In particular a lack of time was a significant concern as TLC's were used as a means of addressing school development issues that were constantly changing (see Sammy's comments p.155). Consequently rather than possessing what Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) referred to as 'professional capital' (see p.99) teachers were in a sense instruments of the schools senior leaders and school development priorities. Under such pressures teachers were ill-placed to check the appropriateness and validity of new educational approaches.

*How do schools perceive the role of external educational consultancy and what are the drivers for employing them?*

As has already been discussed teachers in this research looked outwards for ideas to improve their educational practice so that they could be 'brought in' (see p.84). Irrespective of the learning initiatives and approaches identified in this research all were informed by consultancy either directly within the school setting or vicariously through other schools consulted recommendations. Furthermore educational expertise was not constructed as something that necessarily existed within the school. External, educational consultants were therefore perceived as providing a service to the schools in this research. Their employment can be seen as a commercial interaction in which an educational product, such as BLP, was purchased for the benefits it purported to bring in relation to a specific educational issue and subsequently delivered according to its specific guidelines. The majority of consultancy in this research was linked to specific learning interventions such as BLP and Irresistible learning but Teacher Learning Communities also featured. Instead external consultants were seen as being expert and possessing the necessary skills and knowledge capable of transforming educational practice (see p.92). To a large degree consultants expertise was seen as being superior to teachers' practical knowledge as evidenced by Emily's views at Sands Academy on her professions lack of expertise (see p.135). This belied an institutional insecurity that was mirrored in other schools such as Fairview Academy. Furthermore this drive to employ external consultants can be seen as being part of the overload of initiatives in schools that Joan at Fairview academy describes on p.153. These can be understood in relation to the dual pressures of performativity and standardisation within the Global Education Reform Movement as Sahlberg (2010) explained (see p.109 in Analysis and Problematisation). One facet of this is 'teaching with a prescribed curriculum ... searching for safe and low risk ways to teach predetermined learning goals' (p.101). Consultants and their educational products represent such a low risk strategy especially when they come recommended by other schools (see p.100) and their promotional materials suggest that success in examinations is a byproduct of their employment. Consequently the possibility for teachers to experiment and take risks is limited



as what is seen to work elsewhere is prioritised over their own contextual understandings and the possibilities that these might lead to.

*What areas of consultancy are predominantly employed in the research schools and how are these evaluated?*

A range of consultancy was seen in the research schools ranging from interventions that focused on teachers networking and collaborating on educational projects (Teacher Learning Communities) to specific learning programmes (Building Learning Power), subject specific products (Alan Peat Literacy) and thematic approaches (Irresistible Learning). It was significant that links with educational neuroscience were not generally explicit here but an overall lack of theorisation and evidential underpinning was evident. The evaluation of initiatives promoted by consultants was relatively unscientific. Ultimately it was reduced to what was seen to work elsewhere in other schools (see Alice's comments p.108). This highlights an overall difficulty within the research schools as to what passes as appropriate evidence for specific educational interventions. Success was therefore seen as the degree to which a particular approach had coverage within the networks to which the schools belonged (see p.100-101). Also any educational improvement seen within the school was attributed to the initiative without rigorous analysis taking place as was evident with BLP at Hayfield Primary School. Furthermore the measurement of specific initiatives was predicated upon some consideration of pupil data, profiling and Ofsted style observations. These were inextricably linked to measures of teacher performance and could be seen as a means by which schools might reinforce the adoption of specific approaches in tandem with their developmental priorities. This further relates to Biesta's (2007) concerns (see p.113) about evidence based practice and the narrow indicators of educational success that focus predominately upon core subjects, skills and government educational targets. As Sahlberg (2010) proposed accountability is key here and school performance is 'closely tied to processes of accrediting, promoting, inspecting and, ultimately, rewarding or punishing schools and teachers' (p.101). Here the success of educational initiatives was similarly narrowly defined and as a consequence prescriptions of educational practice informed by consultation were prevalent. These led to

predictable educational outcomes that reinforced the belief that chosen educational initiatives were working and transforming teaching and learning. This was especially evident in relation to BLP at Hayfield Primary (see p.112) where evidence of its success was seen as the degree to which pupils employed specific vocabulary. This lack of evaluation also has to be seen in relation to the recasting of teachers roles since the 1988 ERA. Deprofessionalisation and increasing levels of prescription have restricted and constrained teacher autonomy and led to opportunities for consultants to react correspondingly with commodified, generic materials and products that conform to this conception of a delivery model of education. Consultation and the employment of consultants can therefore be seen as a product of performative, global education reform and a phenomenon that has impacted significantly upon remodelling of teachers work.

This chapter has considered the research findings in relation to the original research questions and associated theoretical issues. The intention of the discursive analysis of the research data was to problematise and deconstruct the research findings in order that the appropriation of learning theory in English schools might be better understood. Furthermore this process uncovered issues relating to consultancy and teacher agency in the analysis. The significance of these findings and their implications for schools and teachers will now be examined.

## **Chapter 6**

### **6.1 Conclusion**

This research aimed from the outset to explore, examine and problematise English schools engagement with new learning approaches, external expertise and consultancy. The analysis of the data revealed an array of discourses that have an important bearing upon the field of enquiry. It will be argued that these discourses are significant and that they potentially represent a set of challenges and implications for the professional practice of teachers.

The research findings indicated the subtle ways in which new learning approaches were popularised in schools through the adoption of initiative specific language, the emergence of school-to-school networks and the casual acceptance of their evidential claims. These acted as an apparatus for the dispersal of initiatives with word of mouth recommendation from practicing colleagues effectively replacing reflection upon evidence and legitimating a range of commercial pedagogical approaches. These findings corroborated the concerns of Geake and Cooper (2003) and Bruer (2008) in the literature review (p.11).

In the research schools the widespread employment of product and initiative specific language added to the ease with which these educational products were marketed. The reduction of pedagogical approaches to specific terminologies served both commercial and distributive purposes and has to be seen in terms of a commodification of learning. The terminologies therefore became representative of the products' claims and were a means of measurement, display and self-regulation; measurement in terms of teacher performance, display as a visible acceptance of and submission to the initiative and self-regulation through adherence to its directions.

Furthermore, teachers willing engagement with compartmentalised, abridged fragments of research findings, some of which pertained to neuroscience, demonstrated an absence of criticality. Such findings were packaged by consultants in compact 'research tells us' vignettes abstracted from their initial origins and made palatable to teachers by carrying with them the promise of

improved educational outcomes, narrowly defined by measures of external accountability. Consequently there was a strong desire from teachers in this research to draw upon such findings as knowledge about the brain, and knowledge that derived from research, carried with it an authority that was perceived to eclipse and devalue their own contextually bound understandings. This authority therefore acted as an advocacy and a warrant for particular approaches further reinforcing the construction of the external expert and the marginalised teacher.

Therefore a discourse of external expertise was central to the research findings. Within the data it was equated with educational transformation, excellence, initiative, school improvement and consultancy. However, most significantly it had an impact on the teachers in the research schools. They were constrained and placed as being outside of the discourse. That is they held a subordinate position in relation to external expertise.

Through their direct engagements with initiatives and their enthusiasm for bringing in external pedagogies not only were they accepting of this subordination, they were actively complicit in its construction.

Teachers were engaged in self-regulation transforming themselves towards an ideal state; the compliant, directed, teacher technician delivering external educational products along pre-determined pedagogical lines.

Through inter and intra-regulatory performative practices teachers looked towards one another in their own settings and outside to other schools in search of personal approval and 'othered' expertise. This reinforced the normalisation of external expertise whilst inhibiting teacher autonomy and agency.

Within this arrangement consultation can be seen as an extension and a reinforcement of this normalisation of external expertise. The research data demonstrated teachers' deferral to consultants' expertise and the knowledge that they represented. This deferral manifested within teachers a devaluation of their own contextually rich knowledge bases and pools of experience. This was in effect a marginalisation of their own professionalism as it required them to

concede intellectual ground to the consultant. Additionally, consultancy constituted the teachers within the schools as inexperienced aspirants, striving to acquire the knowledge that might transform their practice and indeed their school.

As such educational initiatives, regardless of their origins, can be seen as colonial, pedagogical artifacts, constructed by broader market forces that exert power in a variety of ways. Correspondingly they encourage teachers to divert their gaze away from contextual interpretations and understandings towards idealised, external conceptions of expertise whilst positioning them as little more than the conduits of externally mandated change.

Paradoxically, despite the institutional freedoms that allow schools to choose pedagogical approaches such as those identified in this study, this represents an attenuation of internal teacher capacity and a limiting of teacher professionalism. Moreover consultants in the research schools had a significant impact upon this dynamic. The services that they provided the schools were representative of the administering of educational treatment and providing accreditation that equated to a market advantage. This was achieved through the transplantation of educational ideas that were perceived to have worked elsewhere. Additionally they were used as a technology for change, mediating difficult messages on behalf of leadership teams and making external interventions cosmetically more palatable. All of this was done with disregard for contextual understandings and the bodies of situated knowledge that teachers already possessed.

Effectiveness was equated to the ease with which initiatives were implemented through the incorporation of a products' specific language within the school. As such, links were forged to performance management agendas and further served as a mechanism for implementation. Evaluations of the effectiveness of initiatives in this research were tied to performance management agendas and acted as technologies of examination directed towards teachers. Teachers' engagements in new initiatives were consequently highly visible and represented a performative constraint upon their practice. As a consequence of this, resistance against the reification of the external expert at the expense of the teacher was

constrained. Furthermore, it was limited to systematised programmes like Teacher Learning Communities and looser, teacher alliances as seen in other settings. However, as has been discussed, they coalesced around compliant forms of practice that were directed by a range of performative pressures. What was significant however was that the teacher's gaze and attention focused far more on administrative procedures that related to the implementation of initiatives rather than a questioning of their evidential basis.

Even professional practices that created spaces for teachers to take greater charge of pedagogical approaches concerned themselves more with the bureaucracy and pace of institutional change. Teachers' attention, consequently, was concentrated more on the delivery and dissemination of information and measurement of these processes rather than the construction of meaningful understandings. This ultimately created the conditions for a colonisation of the professional spaces of teachers by the performative practices of the state. As Giroux (1985) explained;

Teachers and students alike are 'situated' within curricula approaches and instructional management schemes that reduce their roles to either implementing or receiving the goals and directives of publishers, outside experts, and others far removed from the specificities of daily classroom life (p.8)

The above findings must be seen in light of how external expertise and external intervention in the work of teachers and schools has been made normal by attempts from successive governments, Ofsted and indeed the media to impact upon teachers' practice.

They are also constitutive of a more pervasive educational policy context that incorporates teachers into a discourse of continual improvement, performance and examination. This discourse is indicative of Michael Gove's (2010) attempts as Secretary of State for Education, at the beginning of the last parliament, to create an 'aspiration nation' that placed expertise and the pursuance of excellence to the fore. At the time of writing this conclusion, with a new

Conservative government in place, it is hard to see the power of this discourse abating. Whilst such goals are clearly not incompatible with teachers' professional roles, it is the institutional effects that they produce that must be questioned. Increasing scrutiny of their work, of their proficiency and constant external debate as to the effectiveness of their pedagogies has created the conditions within which external consultancy has thrived. Concurrent to this, teachers' professionalism and effectiveness has been increasingly aligned with the delivery of approved educational products and their observance of approved pedagogies.

In this research whilst resistive spaces were identified in schools, they failed for the most part to propose alternatives that would ultimately change, or simply challenge, the dynamic of expertise being constructed externally to teachers and the school. Nor did they change or challenge the ways in which narrow interpretations of assessment and attainment data became the only necessary measurement of the effectiveness of new pedagogical approaches.

## **6.2 Areas for reflection and consideration:**

### **6.3 Reflections on methodology.**

This research employed a set of discursive, methodological tools that were informed by Foucault's genealogical approach.

Within this research genealogy was interpreted in terms of the ways in which teachers were constituted by discourse and its epistemic foundations.

Consequently a better understanding of the contingent factors affecting teachers' responses to the appropriation and construction of learning models in their schools was important. Furthermore, it was the intention that this would throw light upon the underpinning episteme that informed such constructions. Engaging with the set of discursive tools employed in this research has been compelling but challenging. Genealogy is complex, demanding and as Allen observes 'refuses to speak to the future, seeking instead to destabilise the present' (2014, p.246).

This represents a significant challenge for the educational researcher in that Foucault's genealogical method sought ultimately to critique whilst resisting any

allusion to the actual means of change. Furthermore, as Allen subsequently explains, if genealogical enquiry did indeed 'speak to the future' it would 'have to develop normative statements that would retroactively jeopardise the project in which it is engaged' (p.246). Therefore such impositions would run the risk of imposing their own power relations on the subjects of the research. However genealogy uncovers the contingencies upon which our modern understandings are based. Power relations are exposed and social orders are disrupted enabling new ways of thinking and seeing that can then disrupt the power structures we are subject to.

Consequently it was the intention here to destabilise and to excavate the foundations upon which external learning products are built. To this end problematisation has enabled a deeper probing of this discursive infrastructure. It has uncovered the conditions underpinning teachers' acceptance of external expertise and their positioning as inexperienced, implementers of pre-packaged materials. Attention was directed towards a process of deconstruction and examination of discursive objects as opposed to mere identification and description. These tools therefore provided a useful means of engaging with what were complex issues.

#### **6.4 Implications for schools and teachers**

In order that teachers might challenge the external construction of expertise identified in this research there needs to be a recasting of the relationship between the teacher, as a professional and the role that the state and commercial providers of educational materials play.

The teachers in this research were entrenched between governmental performative pressures that demanded their adherence to a narrow standards agenda, institutional discourses that ascribed to them roles and responsibilities that were concomitant with such an agenda and a discourse of external expertise where consultants compelled them to look for a truth that was 'out there'. Any resistive spaces identified within this research (such as the use of Teacher learning Communities) cohered, ultimately to these narrow agendas.



Instead perhaps what is needed is the creation of interstitial professional and pedagogical spaces that fall between, rather than within, the boundaries of the constructs detailed above. Such spaces, if free from interference, might offer teachers the scope to be autonomous, and develop an 'activist, professional identity' that builds the capacity for 'collaborative cultures' (Sachs, 2010, p.159) to be forged, rejecting the wisdom of the teacher as inexperienced and maladroit. These collaborative cultures would offer the potential for teachers to develop collegial practices that allow them to negotiate their own responses to institutional challenges. Furthermore these spaces might function to offset the colonisation of teachers' lifeworlds by external agents and spurious atheoretical practices.

Sachs was arguing, in essence, for communities of practice to be developed (Wenger, 1998). However, as has been identified within this research with regard to Teacher Learning Communities, such formations run the risk of becoming incorporated into governmental discourses that constrain and steer them in conformist directions.

Instead, interstitial professional and pedagogical spaces could allow teachers and leaders to;

Mobilise and be skeptical of policy and their own discourses  
at the same time (Thomson, Hall & Jones, 2013, p.168).

Hence they would require them to deconstruct the ways in which they are constituted, both internally and externally, by discourse; Discourses of governmentality that seek at their heart teacher self-regulation (Foucault, 2008), discourses of external expertise that weaken their professional identities and internal, institutional discourses that are formed reactively in relation to the first two. Such deconstruction would allow them to challenge directly the image of the teacher as quasi-professional technician intent on delivery and devoid of agency (Etzioni, 1969, Dadds, 1997, Leaton – Gray, 2007).

However, it is important to recognise that this process of deconstruction requires freedoms that are hard to come by in the strictly regulated, prescriptive,

standardised, market-oriented and highly accountable educational system that we have in England (Sahlberg, 2011, p.103). It was the case in this research that teachers in Fairview Academy, Lakeside Grammar School and Beacon Catholic Primary School engaged in what could be described as autonomous, professional and even activist practices. To some degree this represented an epistemological shift away from a more directed modality of teacher practice. It does therefore offer the potential for change.

However these manoeuvres were carried out in the shadow, and under the influence, of the pressures that Sahlberg refers to above. Furthermore this research identified a normalising of performative practices in school and the acclimatisation to, and even championing of, such practices by recently qualified teachers. This represents a significant challenge to the possibility of reform and resistance. The implication of this research for professional practice then is that teachers have ceded too much professional ground and decisional capital to external agents. Moreover they have been complicit at times in this process.

One means of addressing this issue could be facilitated effectively by teachers' own engagement with genealogical enquiry that actively deconstructs their professional work. Furthermore such activity could usefully be employed as a means of evaluating and assessing the worth of new educational initiatives. This would involve teachers acknowledging that such initiatives are contingent upon their own acceptance of an evidence base that is often obscured or abstracted unhelpfully. To this end the practice of problematisation becomes an essential component of teachers' professional, critical consciousness.

Teachers would therefore problematise, not only the professional challenges that they face but also the educational solutions and initiatives that purport to address them. We might therefore see teachers themselves identifying institutional priorities and their associated contextual underpinnings before looking for pedagogical answers. Furthermore this process of problematisation should not assume that educational improvement has to be mediated by external agents. Rather teachers themselves should be encouraged to draw on their own expertise before consulting further afield if at all. As Smyth (2011) suggests this

requires a reconceptualization of teachers' work 'as a form of intellectual labour' that can then 'engage with and transform dominant theoretical traditions' (p.16). Developing professional criticality in this way and considering the local, contextual implications of new educational programmes, whether internally or externally generated, would ensure that teachers maintain a greater degree of professional autonomy. Teacher learning Communities could provide a structure for this but only if they allow teachers to be freed from the performative discourses that dictate much of their working lives. Such freedom would have to be facilitated by senior leaders in schools through the creation of interstitial pedagogical spaces that allow teachers to respond proactively to educational reforms without being constructed by them. As White (2010) proposes senior leaders should 'speak over' performative reforms rather than speaking back to them. In order for this to be possible White went on to suggest that;

Instead of railing against performativity, which bears some relation to head banging, acting in the interests of teachers instead constitutes powerful action. By deflecting accountability demands away from teachers, as much as possible, and by articulating respect and trust in them, the principal can act locally to sustain teachers (p.292).

Therefore senior leaders need to develop what Bottery (2004) refers to as an 'ecological and political awareness' that allows them to be 'aware of the factors beyond their institutions which constrain, steer or facilitate their practice' (p.189). Such awareness and consciousness of their own profession and its associated pressures could then free them to protect teachers' independence rather than limit it through endless directives. This then might enable teachers both intellectually and practically to gain a greater degree of control of their profession through a rejection of external imposition. Rather than being the implementers and deliverers of external educational reforms they might instead become the producers of new pedagogies and educational insights.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that this research has been carried out from a position of privilege. It has emerged, evolved and been developed within a discursive, critical, reflexive and relatively autonomous space. As such this space has allowed for an examination of discourse and practice from a distance, free

from the institutional limitations and restraints identified in this research. It is exactly this sort of space that teachers require if they are to develop, reclaim, rebuild and reinvent their professionalism and to transform themselves. Or to paraphrase Foucault (2004);

To become again what *they* should have been but never were (p.95).

It is hoped then that this research offers a contribution to ongoing debates that surround teacher judgement, expertise and self-determination. Moreover, building on the accounts of the research participants featured in this thesis, it is an attempt to construct an alternative discourse that places their experiences, knowledges and agencies to the fore and resists the creep of consultation and the outsourcing of expertise.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1**

#### **Research Interview Letter**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thankyou for agreeing to participate in a research study exploring the construction and implementation of learning theory in school. The research interview will last between 10 and 30 minutes approximately and will involve a series of open-ended questions being asked with opportunities for discussion around the research topic.

Your comments and conversations will be recorded on a Dictaphone and will be used solely by the researcher. All names, including that of the school, will be made anonymous and any material that I intend to use in a future publication will only be undertaken with the agreement of the school and yourself.

Should you wish to withdraw from the research at any time during the interview (or post interview) the interview will be suspended and the data destroyed.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require clarification of any aspect of the research.

Please fill in the consent form below:

I, (please print name and sign) \_\_\_\_\_ consent to my participation in the above interview process and understand that my confidentiality will be upheld at all times and that I may withdraw from the interview process at any time. I agree that my confidential responses may be used anonymously for submission in a doctoral thesis and any subsequent publications.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Many thanks

Stephen Griffin B.Ed, M.Ed, F.H.E.A.

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