The Impact of a New National Curriculum on Subject Leaders in Primary and Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This interpretivist case-study research aimed to investigate the impact of a new National Curriculum on the work of subject lead teachers in a secondary school and in one of its 'feeder' primary schools from which it recruits some of its students. The cross-phase aspect of the research is unusual and raises interesting issues about student transition, school links and differences in curriculum planning within the two school settings. The research was carried out using semi-structured interviews in a pragmatic sample of subject lead teachers in the two geographically linked case study schools. Analysis of the interviews was through a thematic analysis approach based on the work of Braun and Clarke (2006), leading to inductively developed themes that were then deductively analysed using Bernstein's 'Pedagogic Device' (2000) as a conceptual lens. The analysis particularly focused on the 'recontextualising' and 'evaluative' rules of Bernstein's Pedagogic Device. The initial findings of this small-scale case study research suggest that state influence over the work of teachers through a National Curriculum may vary considerably depending on the curriculum subject and age phase and that assessment of the curriculum is a powerful influence on curriculum planning. This highlights the importance of the evaluative rules and field of reproduction in Bernstein's Pedagogic Device and suggests that further conceptual development of the role of assessment has some value. The research contributes to understanding of Bernstein's evaluative rules and of how the state might influence the curriculum development work of subject leaders.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents who taught me the value of hard work and who always believed in me. Thank you both, with love.

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I would like to express my sincere thanks to all of the teachers who kindly agreed to take part in this research.

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List of Abbreviations

KS
: Key Stage – an age phase of the National Curriculum. There are four usually applicable to English schools: KS 1 and 2 within Primary schools, KS 3 and 4 within Secondary schools

OFSTED
: Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills – a non-ministerial department of the UK Government responsible for inspections and monitoring of education in England

ORF
: Official Recontextualising Field – part of Bernstein's pedagogic device theory where agents of Government recontextualise academic knowledge

PGCE
: Post-graduate Certificate in Education. The most common qualification for those seeking to become Secondary school teachers in the United Kingdom. It is also a qualification taken by many who become Primary school teachers. The course is usually one year long.

PISA
: Programme for International Student Assessment – an international comparison of school and educational performance organised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

PRF
: Pedagogic Recontextualising Field – part of Bernstein's pedagogic device theory where pedagogic agents recontextualise academic knowledge into school knowledge

SATS
: Standard Attainment Tests – National tests applied to English and Maths at the end of KS2 in English Primary schools in Year 6

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Chapter 1: Introduction

'Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts.'

(Gradgrind, in 'Hard Times', Dickens, 1854, 1)

1.1 Rationale for the research

What should we teach in our schools, and who should decide? These two questions have garnered debate for many years. This research investigates these questions by engaging with subject leaders in two English schools, a Primary and a Secondary, and exploring with them those factors affecting their decision making when mediating a new National Curriculum into their own curriculum plans.

The research was initially inspired by two factors. Working in education, I was aware of the introduction of a new National Curriculum in 2014 and was interested to explore the extent to which this would impact on the work of teachers, and how they might manage this impact? The second factor was a conversation I had with a Secondary Science teacher in the first year of implementation of the new curriculum, and her belief that curriculum content had been 'moved down' through the school years. Interestingly, she felt the same was true of upper Primary school content and that Primary Science teachers now had to deal with content and material previously embedded within the Secondary curriculum. I was interested to see how far this was true and the levels to which it had impacted on the relevant teachers. This research therefore focusses on the two relevant Key Stages either side of

the Primary/Secondary school divide: KS2 (covering years 4-6 in Primary schools); and KS3 (covering years 7-9 in Secondary schools). Key Stages 1 (lower Primary) and 4 (upper Secondary, usually involving GCSE exams) are also included where relevant to the discussion.

The National Curriculum currently applies to relevant schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland with Scotland having its own 'Curriculum for Excellence'. As the curricula for Wales and Northern Ireland also differ slightly from that in England (as do their school and inspection structures), this paper purposefully refers to 'England' throughout as the discussion and findings of the study are only directly pertinent to this nation.

I have researched the potential impact of a new National Curriculum on teachers in two ways. The National Curriculum itself may be seen as a policy document and so its adoption and implementation may be analysed and considered in the light of literature on the generation and enactment of policy.

The National Curriculum may also be analysed at a more theoretical level where it is a physical iteration of how a society wishes to reproduce itself and ensure that the 'correct' socio-cultural knowledge is being 'passed on' to the next generation. To consider the National Curriculum in these terms, a helpful conceptual tool is that of Bernstein's theory of the 'pedagogic device' (2000), aimed at theorising how 'thinkable' knowledge is generated and transformed into school knowledge and pedagogic practice. As Loughland and Sripakash identified, 'many scholars have drawn on the pedagogic device to examine the politics of curriculum' (2016, 232) and this has been done in various ways

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and with varying conclusions. I have drawn on this body of work on curriculum research and have also considered how the theoretical aspects of Bernstein's work may be further developed where relevant.

As most commentary on social research suggests, the researcher should be reflexive about their own position regarding the research and accept the fact that they are part of the narrative and unable to 'stand outside' the world on which they are commenting (Charmaz, 2006; Schostak, 2006; Robson, 2011; Braun and Clarke, 2013). In this spirit, it is important to clarify my own position and background with regards to this research, particularly in terms of the initial interest and development of the research.

I have worked in education for just over thirty years, initially as a Geography teacher and subject leader in Secondary education. For the last twenty years I have been working in Initial Teacher Education at the Secondary level, based in an Institute of Higher Education in England. The main focus of my work has been in Secondary Geography and this has allowed me the fascinating and privileged position of working with hundreds of teachers in a range of school settings within my region.

I have always maintained an interest in the nature and content of the Geography curriculum, increasingly from a social realist perspective (Young, 2008; Wheelahan, 2010; Firth 2013). More recently, I have become increasingly interested in the nature and content of the whole school subject curriculum and particularly the impact caused by recent Governmental-led revisions to the National Curriculum in 2014. While my main interest has

remained at the Secondary level, comments made to me by relevant teachers also suggested the possible impact of these recent changes to the National Curriculum on the Primary school Curriculum and Primary school teachers, an aspect that I would also need to consider in the research. This interest led to the development of the current research and, in the words of Pring, the desire to go 'out and have a look' (2000) to explore the impact of the new National Curriculum on subject leaders in different age-phase school settings.

Given my background experience as discussed above, I do not feel that this was fully 'insider' research (Cohen and Manion, 1994) as I do not work at either school. However, given my work within education, I may be considered as a partial insider researcher in relation to my research with the teachers in the schools, and this situation gives rise to possible tensions that I needed to consider. This consideration is important in order to try and maintain a reasonably neutral stance when conducting the research and later, coding the data and generating themes during the qualitative analysis. Given the desire to be reflexive and as neutral as possible, I now outline my own educational beliefs and relevant stance.

A key belief is that I feel there is a tension around the professional autonomy and agency of teachers. As a teacher educator and teacher of many years' experience, I am aware of the reduction in the professional status and autonomy of teachers (Ball, 2008; Biesta, 2009, 2015) and the National Curriculum itself is one part of this possible top-down control of teachers.

There is also a tension around teachers' confidence in their curriculum subject knowledge which is a particular issue in primary schools in England where most teachers teach across many subjects of the National Curriculum. As a secondary specialist Geography educator I have some personal experience with the subject curriculum and am aware of the confidence and development of expertise this experience provides to a teacher. I therefore tend to place emphasis and value on teachers' curriculum subject knowledge.

In summary, during the research process, data generation and analysis I needed to maintain good levels of self-awareness, including these potential tensions concerning teacher autonomy and levels of curriculum subject knowledge.

1.2 The National Curriculum as policy

A National Curriculum is a clear example of a Government policy aiming to change practice in schools and, as such, the introduction of the original National Curriculum in 1988 was a critical moment for education in England. From this point onwards, central Government became a key driver in the debate over content and assessment of the school curriculum. Subsequently, a raft of further Government educational policies have been implemented,

generating a range of research in the area of policy enactment in educational settings (for example, Ball, 1990; Bowe et al, 1992; Ball, 1994; Ozga, 2000; Hall, 2001; Trowler, 2003; Hill, 2006; Fanghanel, 2007; Braun et al, 2010; Ball et al, 2011a and 2011b; Briant and Doherty, 2012; Priestley and Biesta, 2013; Saunders and Sin, 2015; Puttick, 2015).

Policy texts, such as a National Curriculum document, must be 'decoded' and 'enacted' by those in school, and, cognisant of this, the writers or 'encoders' of the texts attempt to exert some control to ensure a 'correct reading' (noted by Reynolds and Saunders, 1987; Codd, 1988; Bowe et al, 1992; Ball, 1994; Ozga, 2000; Trowler, 2003; Braun et al, 2010; Briant and Doherty, 2012; Saunders and Sin, 2015). However, this 'correct reading' is not always realised as 'individuals on the ground, such as teachers, interpret the policy message in the context of their own culture, ideology, history and resources' (Trowler, 2003, 130), meaning that practice in school is 'remarkably persistent' in the face of policy innovation (Priestley, 2011a). Policy is often 'read', 'distorted' and 'refracted' as it is implemented (Trowler, 2003, 128; Supovitz, 2008) usually by those on the ground at the bottom of a policy 'implementation staircase' (Reynolds and Saunders, 1987), where teachers may act as 'street level bureaucrats' (Lipsky, 1980).

Since the introduction of the original National Curriculum in England there have been regular revisions to its structure and content, possibly due to a lack of clarity around its initial purpose (Kelly, 1990; Ball, 1990; Chitty, 1993). My research concerns the fourth major revision that was implemented in England

in September 2014. This amount of change is not necessarily positive. For example, Chitty has commented that 'it is both extraordinary and…a major source of shame and embarrassment that the National Curriculum...has found itself subjected by successive governments .... to so many radical and destabilising changes in the course of its short history' (2009; 145). White held a similar view, noting that 'the short history of the National Curriculum has been a lesson in how not to organise an educational system' (2005b, 2). It would make sense therefore that with the political will and effort involved in developing a new curriculum, any revision must have a clear purpose and aim to achieve a particular result in schools.

However, the mere existence of a National Curriculum does not guarantee its aims and content will be fully implemented, and that issue is a core theme of this research. To what extent does a new National Curriculum actually impact on teachers in school, and to what degree do they adopt, dilute or resist it? Key players in the application of such policy into school are the managers and subject leaders as it is their personal educational philosophy and interpretation of the policy that will be of importance. Therefore, subject leaders in the two research schools form the basic unit of analysis for the primary research in this study.

1.3 The Pedagogic Device

Bernstein's 'pedagogic device' (2000) provides a useful conceptual framework with which to consider how a subject discipline in the 'academy' becomes part of a school subject curriculum. In Bernsteinian terms this knowledge has been

developed, recontextualised and then evaluated (2000). There is a wide body of literature that draws on Bernstein's conceptual work as an analytical framework to explore the nature of the curriculum (Cause, 2010; Wright and Froehlich, 2012; Ensor, 2015; Puttick, 2015; Lim, 2016; Wong, 2017 and Gibbons, 2018) and this study has built on and developed that work. My research particularly focusses on the 'Recontextualising' and 'Evaluative' Rules of the pedagogic device, where subject knowledge is transformed ('recontextualised') into school knowledge and the success of this transformation (or 'relay') is evaluated. Bernstein theorised two further elements to the Recontextualising Field, the 'official recontextualising field' (ORF), which includes the production of the National Curriculum document, and the 'pedagogic recontextualising field' (PRF), which includes the school setting and teachers who work with the curriculum (Bernstein, 2000; Puttick, 2015). The workings of the PRF in particular forms a key aspect of my research.

While some similar research has previously been undertaken, with Bowe, Ball and Gold's 1992 study of the enactment of the original National Curriculum being a key work, there is limited recent research output (for temporal reasons) on the 2014 version of the new National Curriculum and limited work using the pedagogic device to analyse the recontextualization and evaluation of this new curriculum in England. While there are examples of curriculum research looking at single subjects (such as Lambert, 2011 and Puttick, 2015), there is limited output on the impacts of the new curriculum across a range of subjects. It is also unusual to consider the subjects across the

Primary/Secondary school divide in England and by doing so my research provides a contribution to the field.

Researching in both a Primary and a Secondary school also allows for a more detailed exploration of Bernstein's concept of the evaluation rules and reproduction field within his theory of the pedagogic device (2000). This is because the testing and monitoring of what is taught in the current National Curriculum differs greatly across these two key stages. The evaluation rules of the pedagogic device have been critiqued by some (such as Wong, 2017 and Gibbons, 2018) for lack of detail and clarity, and this research critically examines and develops this aspect of Bernstein's theory.

1.4 Research questions

Based on the discussion above, the following research questions were devised for this study:

1. How had subject leaders responded to the new National Curriculum in their curriculum work in school and what were their views on the new Curriculum?
2. What factors affected the work of teachers when working with a new National Curriculum as an example of educational policy?
3. To what extent does the theoretical lens of Bernstein's pedagogic device assist in analysing the aims and intent of the new National Curriculum and subject leader responses?

Every recent change in Government in the United Kingdom has led to a new version of the National Curriculum and each revision impacts on the work of teachers in school. Do teachers take the new content on board as directed, or do they pragmatically mediate or even resist it so that their own vision for their subject and pupils remains intact? In short, what is the capacity of the State 'to reach into the school'? (Bowe et al, 1992, 9). This is a key question for this research.

1.5 Research approaches

It was clear to address these questions I would need to interview practising teachers to obtain insights into the effects of the new curriculum on their work. As it would be impossible in a study of this size to interview a vast number of teachers, I adopted a case study approach whereby two 'typical' state schools would form the bounded locations for the research and the case study (Yin, 2003). As the research considered both KS2 and KS3 it was necessary to conduct research in both Primary and Secondary schools and two schools from the same urban area in North West England with relatively similar pupil intakes agreed to take part. Being local to each-other, the Primary school was a feeder to the Secondary and so discussions about potential cross-phase issues would have more relevance.

While it may be the case that it is difficult to make generalisations based on case study findings (Denscombe, 2007), theorising and exploring the results of a case study can make it relevant to a wider audience (Deem and Brehony, 1994; Bryman, 2012). I also believe my research is innovative in its use of a

case study of two schools in different age phases to consider the impact of a curriculum change across a range of subjects.

The research methods employed were semi-structured interviews with a brief content analysis of the document itself. Analysis of the data was undertaken using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2018). The main theoretical lens used for deductive analysis was Bernstein's 'pedagogic device', (2000), which allowed for a deeper analysis of the journey of an education policy from generation through recontextualization, enactment and evaluation in school.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

The next chapter provides relevant background to the recent changes to the National Curriculum and the possible rationale for change. It is followed by a critical review of relevant theoretical approaches and the next chapter outlines the research methodology, methods and analytical framework. There follows a presentation of findings from the interviews based on the key themes generated from the research data. This leads to an analysis of findings with reference to relevant literature and to the theoretical lens of Bernstein's 'pedagogic device' through a deductive analysis of the themes. Finally, a concluding chapter draws together key elements of the discussion and considers limitations and possible future directions for research in this field.

I have been appreciative of views from the literature such as 'there is no hope of doing perfect research' (Griffiths, 1998, 97) and that the initial interests and

motivations for the research 'will be refined or even transformed' during the work (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, 3). I have reflected on these comments during the long and fascinating journey discussed in this work and I hope I have done justice to the comments and insights from those interviewed. Without their engagement this study would not exist and without their hard work and enthusiasm no curriculum will be effective, whatever the content.

Chapter 2: Background to the 2014 National Curriculum

'We have long been familiar with the importance of education in the achievement of political goals' (Kelly, 2009, 19).

The original National Curriculum in England resulted from the Education Reform Act of 1988, a key educational policy of the Conservative Government of the time. Having been subsequently regularly revised, a new review of the National Curriculum was launched by the Coalition Government in 2011, with the resulting draft Curriculum published in February 2013. This new National Curriculum was implemented across all applicable schools in England in September 2014. Therefore, at the time of my primary research in 2016, the new Curriculum had been in operation for approximately two years.

The history of the National Curriculum has been well documented elsewhere (for example, S Tomlinson, 2005; Kelly, 2009; Oates, 2011) but it is helpful to highlight key dates connected to its development. In the immediate post Second World War period there was no National Curriculum for schools in England and the very idea was largely opposed by most politicians (Chitty, 2009). However, during the 1970s there were increasing concerns over economic effectiveness and social cohesion, and so the success or otherwise of schools and teachers increasingly became an area of interest for successive Governments (Ball, 1994, 2008; Chitty, 2009). Even so, it was not until a third successive neo-liberal Conservative Government was elected in

1987 that the legislation required for a National Curriculum was able to succeed in 1988 (Ball, 1994, 2008).

It soon became evident that the original curriculum was too unwieldy (Priestley and Biesta, 2013, 2) and following the Dearing Review of 1995, a revised version of the curriculum was introduced. With a change of Government in 1997, a new National Curriculum was introduced by New Labour in 2000 which was itself later revised in 2008. Curriculum review by Government is not uncommon but the apparent ongoing 'politicisation' of the curriculum change process in England has been often been critically discussed (Kelly, 2009, 19; Ball, 2008; Maguire, 2014). Indeed, Kelly's concern about Government involvement in curriculum change is suggested by the blank page following his chapter heading of 'What the average politician understands about education' in his book 'The Curriculum' (2009, 213).

Ever since the National Curriculum was introduced the content for Primary and Secondary schools has been organised in the same way with almost the same subjects. This is paradoxical because most Primary schools have rarely taught their curriculum in this way, usually teaching in a topic-based approach mediated by teachers from the subject based National Curriculum. It took time for Governments to recognise this potential issue, leading to the major Rose review of the Primary Curriculum published in 2009. The review was given strict parameters and was specifically asked not to look at assessment, even though there was growing concern about the nature and impact of SATS tests at the time (Baker, 2008).

For example, the Government scrapped the SATS tests at the end of KS3 in 2008, in response to parliamentary and other critiques (Curtis, 2008). Interestingly, the Education Secretary at the time, Ed Balls, insisted 'they were simply responding to mounting evidence that the tests are not useful for schools' (Curtis, 2008), while still retaining SATS at KS2 for Primary schools.

The Rose review suggested a change to the subject based approach meaning the Primary National Curriculum would match more closely what took place in most Primary schools. This vision for the curriculum was published in Spring 2009 and the recommendation for full implementation in 2011 was accepted by the Government at the time (Cole, 2009).

Also, in 2009, the Cambridge Primary Review group published its own report into Primary Education and unlike the Rose review considered the role and impact of assessment. The report found that Primary schools were 'doing a good job' but that the 'narrow curriculum' rarely matched up to the grander aims of primary education and so proposed a new curriculum based on 12 aims rather than subjects (2009, 3).

The Cambridge Review had strong views on assessment, stating that testing and inspection 'distort children's primary schooling for questionable returns' (2009, 2). It also felt that the current system in Primary schools caused 'collateral damage' and so the SATS in literacy and numeracy should be replaced (2009, 3). In conclusion, the Cambridge review proposed that Government involvement in education should be scaled back as 'it is not for government or government agencies to tell teachers how to teach' (2009, 3).

Therefore, in 2009 the New Labour Government had accepted proposals to radically change the Primary curriculum by 2011, and while they had recently scrapped SATS tests at KS3 and at KS2 in Science, they were determined they should stay for English and Maths at KS2, even though strong opposition remained (Curtis, 2009). The stage was set for reform, but the plans were not implemented as New Labour lost power in the General Election of May 2010, and a new Coalition Government was formed, led by the Conservative party under a new Prime Minister, David Cameron.

A review of the National Curriculum was swiftly introduced by the new Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, in a keynote speech in November 2011. He made it clear that the curriculum needed to change so that education could align with the pace of change in business. Gove explained there was a need to provide:

> 'every child a profound level of mathematical and scientific knowledge, as well as deep immersion in the reasoning skills generated by subjects such as history and modern foreign languages.'

Citing a need for 'knowledge' in the curriculum and the retention of a range of traditional subjects, Gove was adamant that the existing National Curriculum was 'badly in need of reform'.

It is not surprising that Gove wished to change the curriculum so soon after coming into power as any National Curriculum is merely a tool to achieve the aims of education in the relevant society (Kelly, 2009). It is therefore an

inherently political policy as it sets out in writing the beliefs, aims and objectives for education of the Government in question, as well as reflecting their general values and interests (Young, 1998, 9). Gove was therefore reflecting the broader aims and ethos of his party, by linking the aims of education to the skills and attitudes necessary for a successful working life and an effective society (Saunders, 2006; Chitty, 2009).

Gove further outlined reasons behind the need for curriculum change, referring to recent 'PISA' data that showed that the U.K. had 'plummeted' in their rankings and was 'falling behind'. He stated this was 'offensive to any notion of social justice' and a 'threat to our economic recovery'. It would appear from these comments that Gove had a strongly functionalist and conservativist view of the aims of education (Saunders, 2006; Wheelahan, 2010) and his linking of the need for educational change to the current and future economic status of the country alongside its socio-cultural health may be seen as both a 'response to and a reaction against the pressures of globalisation' (Gallagher and Wyse, 2013, 39).

Gove further stated that the existing National Curriculum was 'patronising towards teachers and stifles innovation by being far too prescriptive about how to teach'. He considered that the current Curriculum was 'bloated with prescriptive detail', contained 'empty rhetoric', was 'denuded of content' and was 'decidedly thin on actual knowledge', here specifying subjects such as English, Art, Music, History and Geography. Referring again to the PISA rankings, Gove noted that successful countries have curricula that contain

'more core knowledge and less extraneous material' and without this rigour he feared 'our children' will fall 'further and further behind' in the 'global race'. The perceived importance of curriculum knowledge is made very clear in these comments.

In his response to these problems, Gove explained that the new Curriculum would be:

> Slim, clear and authoritative enough for all parents to see what their
> child might be expected to know at every stage in their school career.

In conclusion he stated that 'we've already fallen too far behind' and so 'now we must take this next step on the path to a better education for all of our children.'

The new, draft National Curriculum was published in February 2013 and at Key Stage Three contained the same 12 subjects as the 2008 version of the National Curriculum with some minor name changes. It would appear the 'complete overhaul' to which Gove referred in his speech did not extend to the subjects themselves, or indeed to consider whether a curriculum should be subject based at all, as some have questioned (Claxton, 2008; White, 2004). One change of note was that in the new National Curriculum the subjects had different amounts of guidance and content. For example, Music and Art received little content guidance, while English and Science received several pages. This could clearly have implications for the subjects and the teachers within schools. In summary, Michael Gove clearly set out his rationale for

reviewing the existing National Curriculum and his hopes to raise standards and national competitiveness through the introduction of a new version.

In conclusion, it appears that successive governments feel the need to instigate regular curriculum change, and Bernstein has offered an insight into the possible reasons:

> In all modern societies the school is a crucial device for writing and rewriting national consciousness. It is inevitable under these conditions that education becomes a crucial means and an arena for struggle to produce and reproduce a specific national consciousness (2000, 20).

In these terms, it could be argued that the new Coalition Government were trying to construct a specific version of a national consciousness through the instrument of their new National Curriculum.

Bernstein's pedagogic device theory (2000) provides an analysis of the production and transmission of knowledge through an education system. The status of knowledge in a curriculum and its overall purpose are contested areas that have elicited much research. These areas are considered further in the following chapter on theoretical perspectives.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Perspectives

'What should we teach? What knowledge is important and why is it important?' (Wheelahan, 2010, 1).

3.1 Introduction

There is a wide range of potentially relevant literature in the field of educational research and so it is worth considering whether one can actually construct a traditional 'Literature Review' chapter, however diligent the researcher. For example, Locke et al considered the concept of a *definitive* survey of the literature a 'destructive mythology' (2014, 65) and Wisker felt that the need to provide a demonstrably 'exhaustive' search of the literature to be an 'endless, daunting and ultimately pointless task' (2008, 170). I aim here instead for the approach suggested by Maxwell, where the chapter becomes a review *for* the research rather than simply a review *of* the literature (2006).

Wisker also suggested the chapter should be headed 'theoretical perspectives' rather than 'literature review' as this suggests a more realistic dynamic process rather than merely commenting on 'a finished, dead set of texts and theories' (2008, 170), a view shared by Trafford and Leshem (2008) and Rudestam and Newton (2014). I mention these perspectives as they resonate with my view that it would be impossible to offer a fully definitive review of relevant literature in this field. In adopting Maxwell's approach, this review chapter serves to support the research rather than aiming to build a

vast library of potentially relevant material and I have also adopted Wisker's

suggestion regarding the title of this chapter for similar reasons.

The chapter is organised into three main sections and associated sub-

sections set out in a logical order of scale. It first explores the broader

concepts of the purpose of education and curriculum before considering the

National Curriculum as policy and the role of the state in more detail. The final

section explores my rationale for applying the key theoretical framework within

this research that allows for a synthesis of the first two areas above;

Bernstein's 'pedagogic device' (2000). Many others have drawn on

Bernstein's work to research aspects of education and exploring relevant key

works in this analysis allows me to position my own research within this field.

3.2 The school curriculum, knowledge and the purpose of education

In this section I explore definitions of the key concept of 'curriculum' along

with a consideration of the purpose of education and school knowledge.

3.2.1 What is a curriculum?

As the nature and purpose of the National Curriculum is a key aspect of this

research, it is evident that a clear definition of the term 'curriculum' should be

outlined, based on relevant literature. However, defining the term 'curriculum' is

not as straightforward as it might first appear (Au, 2007; Kelly, 2009, Thijs and

van den Akker, 2009; Lambert and Hopkin, 2014; Young 2014). In fact, Thijs

and van den Akker have commented that 'a well-known complaint found

in…educational literature is that there are as many definitions of the term 'curriculum' as there are authors' (2009, 9).

A common definition is that a curriculum is a body of knowledge to be transmitted, and the word is taken from the Latin term 'currere', meaning to run, proceed or a course to be run (Au, 2007, 258; Kelly 2009; Somekh et al, 2011). However, the concept of a curriculum being merely a 'body of knowledge' to be passed on has been contested by some writers, with other perspectives on the curriculum considering it to be also connected to pedagogy and overall school organisation.

For example, Au felt that the term 'curriculum' may be a contested for concept for some, but that he based his definition on the works of Dewey, Vygotsky and others (2011a). Au therefore believed that a curriculum should concern the ways in which knowledge is structured, alongside the ways in which it is communicated to students (2011a, 55). This definition therefore includes the concept of pedagogy as part of the concept of the curriculum, considering both what should be taught alongside how it should be taught. Au also commented that 'all content is pedagogical' (2007, 258) and so considered his definition of curriculum to include the three defining aspects of 'subject matter content knowledge, structure…of curricular knowledge, and pedagogy' (2007, 258). It was this concept of the curriculum that he used throughout his 2007 and 2008 curriculum research based on Bernstein's pedagogic device.

Other writers have made similar points. For example, Hudson commented on the differences in curriculum thinking between the Anglo-American world and parts of continental Europe (2007). He particularly highlighted the 'Didaktik' tradition from Germany, where pedagogy is seen as a vital part of a teacher's thinking, much more so than in the UK, in his view (a view also shared by Lingard, 2013). In the 'Didaktik' tradition the world is the 'subject', of which teachers and pupils are part, not the 'object' as presented in the Anglo-American tradition, where the curriculum is merely presented to students as if they were external to it (2007, 136). In Hudson's view, therefore, pedagogy in the 'Didaktik' tradition is also a key part of the curriculum planning process.

Kelly has also commented that the curriculum may be more complex than it first appears, but for different reasons (2009). As he has stated, 'the first need is the achieve some clarity over what we are to understand by the term curriculum. It is a term which is used with several meanings and a number of different definitions have been offered' (2009, 7). However, Kelly appears to not share Au and Hudson's concerns with the connection to pedagogy, more the overall educational aims and purpose that the curriculum exists to serve. Kelly argued that an educational curriculum must take account of the generally accepted aims of education in a democratic society, and so the term 'curriculum' is not just about subject content, 'it refers to the total programme of an education institution' and should provide an explanation….of the purposes of such transmission' (2009, 9). By suggesting that the curriculum includes the four key elements of 'objectives, content, methods/procedures and evaluation', Kelly

also seems to suggest a link between curriculum content and pedagogy in his definition of the term (2009, 20).

However, there is a range of writers who feel that curriculum and pedagogy should be considered as separate concepts, both conceptually and empirically. Bernstein himself argued that 'formal educational knowledge can be…realised through three message systems: curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation', and that 'curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as a valid transmission of knowledge' (2000, 85). In this definition they are connected but separate concepts, and while Bernstein was clearly interested in both, the pedagogic device (for example) did not concern itself with how content was taught, only how the knowledge was relayed and evaluated (2000).

Rata has also considered a possible conceptual difference between curriculum and pedagogy (2012). Reflecting a common trope from the social realist perspective (Wheelahan, 2010; Young, 2014), Rata has argued for the promotion of a constructivist pedagogy in the classroom, but not a constructivist curriculum, as learners need access to powerful knowledge to allow social mobility. Indeed, Rata felt that 'a recognition of the difference between pedagogy and curriculum would help move the discussion forward in the sociology of education from a constructivist anti-constructivist polarity that leads only into rigid opposing positions' (2012, 120). This conceptual divide between approaches to pedagogy and curriculum is a key aspect of the social realist

debate around the concept of 'powerful knowledge' in the curriculum and is one that has engendered much debate with others such as John White (2018).

The separation of pedagogy from the curriculum has also been discussed outside the Anglophone world. For example, Thijs and van den Akker have argued that 'the core of a curriculum generally concerns the aims and content of learning' (2009, 11). By defining the curriculum as a 'plan for learning', they went on to propose that 'this simple definition does not …..unnecessarily narrow the perspective, but permits all sorts of elaboration for specific curricular levels, contexts and representations' (2009, 9). It is therefore apparent that in curriculum research it is important to set out parameters and definitions from the start, and that in research terms, concentrating on the curriculum, pedagogy or both will assist the focus of the data collection and analysis.

Although the discussion above suggests that the term 'curriculum' may be contested, there is some agreement at least that it is usually seen as a programme of teaching and instruction with a body of content knowledge to be learned (Au, 2007, 258; Kelly 2009; Thijs and van den Akker, 2009; Somekh et al, 2011, Waters, 2013), and that is the definition used throughout this thesis. The pedagogical detail of the classroom delivery sits outside the scope of this particular research, and for the purposes of this study, with its focus on the National Curriculum as a policy document, the emphasis is on curriculum as content. Within the thesis I use the term 'curriculum' to refer to curriculum as

content knowledge, but I remain aware of the significance of pedagogy and wider definitions of the curriculum.

The key focus here is a consideration of the 'body of knowledge' to be delivered, as any school curriculum must be selective in nature. Someone, somewhere must decide what selections are to be made based on all that could possibly be included and these decisions may be contested as they are likely to be ideological and political in nature (Priestley and Humes, 2010, 348; Roberts, 2005; Hopkin, 2013b; Ellis, 2007; Lingard, 2013; Scott, 2014). The delivery of this body of knowledge is also problematic because what is planned (such as a National Curriculum) is not always what is received by the pupils in the classroom (Ellis, 2007; Kelly, 2009; Biddulph, 2013). Kelly felt that differences between these two versions of the curriculum may be conscious or unconscious on the part of the teachers involved and indeed many have highlighted the 'make or break' role that teachers may have in curricular activities (Kelly, 2009, 11; Ellis, 2007; Biddulph, 2013). This key fact of the importance of teachers in the mediation and enactment of a curriculum is considered further below.

3.2.2 What is a curriculum for?

When considering the content of a curriculum, it is important to take a step back and consider its actual purpose. For example, White stated that 'given that the curriculum is a vehicle... intended to reach a certain set of destinations, we have to begin with the destinations themselves' (2004, 6). Others such as Claxton (2008) and Rawding (2013b) have agreed, stating

that a curriculum is simply a means to an end and if one wants to design a curriculum one must first question the aims of education itself. The literature suggests this is not a straightforward question to answer.

There is a range of perspectives on the aims of education, though Reiss and White have summarised the conventional view that there are two fundamental aims: 'to enable each learner to lead a life that is personally flourishing and to help others to do so too, and…to become informed and active citizens of a liberal democratic society' (2014, 79). While apparently an unequivocal view, not all would agree and it appears that the debate over the purpose of education may be distilled into two, possibly dichotomous perspectives: education as a generic preparation for adult life that is useful to the recipient and *possibly* useful to society, or education as a more specific preparation for a working life, useful to both the recipient of the education *and* the society who provided and paid for it (Thomas, 2009). These two perspectives may be respectively termed the 'Liberal Humanist' approach, an ideal with roots stretching back to the ancient Greeks, and the 'Utilitarian' or 'Functionalist' approach, with more recent roots particularly connected to the Industrial Revolution in the United Kingdom (Saunders, 2006).

Saunders suggested that the liberal-humanist narrative on the purpose of education has a long history, stretching back to Platonic ideals of 'learning for its own sake' where the 'educated person will be, de facto, an effective worker' and be autonomous, creative and critical (2006, 10). Saunders noted that this notion of a liberal curriculum was problematic in that it appeared to be

inherently class based and would work well for the middle classes for whom it develops the appropriate levels of cultural capital (2006). Apple (2002), Bernstein (2000) and Au (2008) also commented on this aspect of education in that middle-class pupils tend to 'win' with a traditional curriculum that allows them to draw on the cultural capital of home support and that pupils from poorer socio-economic backgrounds might find school success more difficult.

Others have critiqued the 'traditional' liberal-humanist approach to the curriculum. Claxton, for example, stated that 'traditionalists…believed that school was a kind of magical place where studying difficult things prepared you for anything...they…are quite wrong' (2008, 54). He also argued that a purely functionalist view of education was equally flawed and concluded that education reforms tend to go around in circles when real progress depended on new ways of thinking (2008, 55). In this sense he predicted the conclusions of both the Rose and Cambridge Reviews into the Primary curriculum in 2009, who argued for change from traditional subject formats. Debates over traditional versus more radical approaches to the aims of education have been longstanding and, apparently, ongoing (Claxton, 2008; Thomas, 2013, 89).

3.2.3 What subjects should be in a school curriculum?

Although there are different perspectives on the purpose of education it is interesting that in England the subject structure of the school curriculum has remained remarkably resilient over time, which Thomas saw as 'a product

mainly of habit and tradition' (2013, 93). With all the curriculum changes in England over the last three decades, the suite of subjects included in the curriculum remains unchanged. Why might this be so?

Many have noted the list of subjects in the modern English curriculum is very similar to those contained in the 1904 Regulations for Grammar Schools in Great Britain, with a continued reliance on 'traditional subjects' (Chitty, 2009, 159; Chitty, 1993; S Tomlinson, 2005; Thomas, 2013). Thomas has questioned why this list of subjects was so resistant to change, asking 'is it likely that educators have distilled the essence of good education into these ten subjects (give or take two or three)?' (2013, 93). White (2004), Claxton (2008) and Chitty (2009) have asked the same question. Young also asked whether a school curriculum based on traditional subjects was still useful for young people to make sense of the modern world or was it primarily a 'leftover of past traditions', seen as the only way of organising knowledge? (1998; 5). This may in fact be the case, but educational change can be difficult, and patterns become set over time, especially as the school system is not a 'blank slate', easily restructured (Thomas, 2013; Waters, 2013).

3.2.4 What knowledge should be in the school curriculum?

There has been a plethora of discussion in the literature about the need or otherwise to put 'knowledge back into the curriculum' and to focus on 'powerful knowledge', often from a social realist perspective (Young, 1998; Wheelahan, 2010; Rata, 2012; Firth, 2013). This may imply that knowledge

was absent from previous versions of the curriculum, and that there is an agreed corpus of knowledge that could be included. These are not simple issues. A broad discussion on the nature of knowledge is outside the scope of this research, but relevant aspects are considered here.

Some have agreed to an extent with Young's call to put knowledge back into the curriculum. For example, Biesta has called for a response to what he called the 'learnification' of education where the emphasis in school had moved towards the process rather than the content, with no knowledge being learnt at all as a result (2014). According to Biesta, a 'social realist' perspective to the curriculum would therefore be a sensible alternative to the 'social constructivist' approach in education that had recently been prevalent (2014, 30). Focussing on Geography education, others such as Lambert (2011), Rawding (2013) and Firth (2013) have expressed similar concerns.

The wider debate around the need to 'put knowledge back in the curriculum' has some political overtones as the inclusion of 'knowledge' into a curriculum raises concerns for some over neo-conservative agendas and possible cultural restorationism (Roberts, 2013; White, 2018). For example, Fox commented that the 'Left' have considered knowledge to be connected to 'traditional' power and that under the New Labour Government of 1997-2010, 'the idea of knowledge as an end (was) derided as elitist, irrelevant and old-fashioned' (2004; 23). The debate on the nature of curriculum knowledge has been ongoing but in a defence of the knowledge perspective Young has

stated that 'knowledge is not powerful just because it is defined by the powerful: it is powerful because of the understanding that it offers to those who have access to it' (2011; 269). This is a key statement in the debate for knowledge in the curriculum and while some constructivists may continue to disagree, it is supported by many from the social realist perspective.

3.2.5 Curriculum conclusions

The content of the curriculum is clearly important, and some would argue that effective teaching is only possible with an effective curriculum (Kelly, 2009; Wyse et al, 2013). However, since the National Curriculum was introduced in 1988 it has retained its contested status, with ongoing debates about the amount of subject content, the links to assessment and the need for its continued existence (Wyse et al, 2103, ix). This ongoing debate includes related questions such as who should decide on the content of a National Curriculum, and what is the role of teachers in these decisions? White for example has argued that teachers are no better equipped than anyone else when deciding on a general curriculum framework because these important decisions should be left to the Government, representing wider society (2005b, 92). However, many would argue that teachers play a key role in the curriculum production process in schools, in a variety of ways (Brooks, 2006; Ellis, 2007; Biddulph, 2013).

The debate around how knowledge translates into the school curriculum forms the basis for Bernstein's thinking around the pedagogic device (2000). As Bernstein's work was particularly concerned with how a state reproduces

itself and develops a national consciousness, it would be appropriate to first consider links between the state and the curriculum in more detail.

3.3 The state and the National Curriculum as a policy text

The launch of the original National Curriculum in the United Kingdom may be considered as a 'seminal moment in the history of the school curricular policy' (Priestley and Biesta, 2013, 2). This was because it was the start of unparalleled levels of Government involvement in the content of the school curriculum, and also the start of an ongoing debate between traditionalists and reformers about the content and purpose of a National Curriculum (Pestley and Biesta, 2013, 2).

There has been much written on the National Curriculum since it was introduced into schools (for example, Bowe et al, 1992; Ball, 1993; Ball, 1994; S Tomlinson, 2005; White, 2004; Claxton, 2008; Ball; 2008; Chitty, 2009; Oates, 2011; Young, 2011; Priestley, 2011a and Priestley and Biesta, 2013) and an emergent theme from this work is that planning and ensuring implementation of a complex document such as a National Curriculum is difficult and not always successful. So why do Governments bother?

One answer may be that Governments see state education policy as part of an overall goal of enhanced economic development and global competitiveness (Priestley and Biesta, 2013, 4; Gallagher and Wyse, 2013). If true, Governments see the school curriculum as a means to an end and this perspective may lead to problems with teachers implementing a new

curriculum as they may hold different views to the Government on the purpose of education. This relates to their 'make or break' teacher role mentioned previously (Kelly, 2009) and to possible tensions between the different recontextualising fields of Bernstein's 'pedagogic device', the ORF and PRF (2000, 33).

The possible misalignment of the views of Government and teachers is a key dilemma facing educational policy enactment and researchers have explored these issues. An appreciation of relevant work is therefore helpful.

A key writer in this field over the last four decades, largely from a neo-Marxist perspective, has been Stephen Ball. He felt that the 1988 Education Reform Act embodied key themes of both neo-liberal and neo-conservative policy and that the new National Curriculum was an example of neo-conservative policy that would 'entrench traditional subjects and British cultural heritage over and against "misguided relativism" and multiculturalism' (2008; 80). Traditional subjects and subject knowledge would therefore be key elements of any proposed curriculum 'founded on Victorian myths and inventions of ethnic Englishness and an assertion of tradition…… in the face of "declining standards"', all as part of the dominant Education Department discourse of 'cultural restorationism' (2008; 80, 83).

Ball also stated that 'during the 1970s and 1980s it had become widely accepted within the Conservative Party that the school curriculum was out of control and that "real" knowledge was being replaced by an "ideological curriculum"' (2008; 82). Based on these ongoing concerns, the Government

decided to take 'unprecedented control of the school curriculum' and so introduced the original National Curriculum (S Tomlinson, 2005; 61). This comment on the loss of 'real' knowledge in the school curriculum in the past echoes the discussions advocating a new version of the curriculum for 2014 by the Government.

The survival of the traditional suite of subjects in the revised 2014 National Curriculum is not surprising given the previous comments about the restorationist agenda of neo-liberal Governments. It is also suggested in the comments of a key Government advisor of the time, Tim Oates, who stated that 'in all high-performing systems, the fundamentals of subjects are strongly emphasised (and) have substantial time allocation' (2011, 141). Oates therefore disagreed with those such as Claxton, White, Young and Ball who argued that the retention of traditional subjects was regressive and outmoded (2011, 140).

While arguing for more knowledge in the curriculum, Young was also wary of an apparently restorationist agenda stating that 'Gove's version of (a subject based curriculum) is trapped in its own elitist past and is no basis for a future curriculum' (2011; 267). The new 2014 version of the National Curriculum may therefore be seen as an example of 'cultural restorationism' (Lambert, 2013) or 'Conservativism' (Wheelahan, 2010, 106) with a strengthening of the role of subjects, a stronger role for content knowledge, and a return to basics and social order (Wheelahan, 2010, 106). The nature of the knowledge in the curriculum and who controls it clearly remains a contested area and, as

Wheelahan has argued, this is partly due to the fact that the 'curriculum is always the outcome of struggles about what matters and this is never settled' (2010, 123). As discussed below, this reflects Bernstein's thinking around pedagogic discourse and the nature of the pedagogic device (2000).

In summary, a National Curriculum may be seen as 'a virtual battleground' between competing ideologies who fight to impose their view of society and how it should function (S Tomlinson, 2005, 62; Kassem, Mufti and Robinson, 2006). A curriculum is after all an inherently political document (Young, 2011) and so it appears inevitable that as Governments change in the United Kingdom, so will the aims and content of a National Curriculum. A National Curriculum is an obvious way in which a Government can influence education and is an example of a state produced policy document that must be enacted in schools.

3.3.1 The National Curriculum as enactment of policy

There has been considerable research concerning the enactment of policy in educational settings in the United Kingdom (for example, Ball, 1990; Bowe et al, 1992; Ball, 1994; Ozga, 2000; Hall, 2001; Whitty, 2002; Trowler, 2003; Fanghanel, 2007; Ball, 2008; Braun et al, 2010; Ball et al, 2011a and 2011b; Briant and Doherty, 2012; Priestley 2011a; Maguire, 2014; Puttick, 2015 and Saunders and Sin, 2015). A common theme emanating from this work is that for a variety of reasons policy is rarely enacted on the ground as was originally intended. This section will consider the nature of education policy in

general before discussing the more specific role of teachers and their enactment of policy such as a National Curriculum.

3.3.2 Education policy

Recent education policy has often appeared to focus on trying to solve a 'problem' that appeared in the 1970s, a 'discourse of derision' that developed around teachers specifically and education in general (Ball, 2000; Maguire, 2014). The solution to this discourse appeared to be that teachers needed to be controlled and held more responsible for their work and outcomes, perhaps through a National Curriculum and assessment. Policy discourses may construct their own rationalities, making certain sets of ideas 'obvious, common sense and true' (Ball, 2008, 5). The concept of a National Curriculum therefore became seen as a common sense and inevitable outcome of the discussion on how to 'solve' education and teachers.

The introduction of the National Curriculum must be considered in the light of the 'New Right' political ideology that has been perceived by many to have been a key driver behind many policies of all British Governments of the last 30 years (Furlong et al, 2000; Trowler, 2003; Lawton, 2005; S Tomlinson, 2005; Ball, 2008; Bates et al, 2011; Furlong, 2013 and Maguire, 2014). This ideology combines the two 'inherently contradictory' strands of 'neo-liberalism' and 'neo-conservatism' (Trowler, 2003, 59). Neo-liberal policies have a strong belief in market forces and minimal intervention from the state (Trowler, 2003; Ball, 2008). In contrast, the neo-conservative approach emphasises traditional authority, cultural heritage, moral guidance and national identity (Furlong et al,

2000; Trowler, 2003; Ball, 2008; Wheelahan, 2010). The introduction of the original National Curriculum may be considered an example of a neo-conservative policy, exerting central control over subject content and cultural 'heritage' (Trowler, 2003, 109). This clearly links to Bernstein's concept of a 'national consciousness', that an education policy aims to reproduce through the 'pedagogic device' (2000).

The implementation or revision of a National Curriculum by a Government is clearly a 'top down' approach to policy (Trowler, 2003). However, this does not mean that the policy is enacted on the ground as originally planned and many have commented on this issue. For example, commenting on education policy, Trowler stated that 'policy becomes refracted as it is implemented….it becomes distorted and less coherent as it is interpreted and put into practice by ground-level actors, such as teachers' (2003, 128). This key aspect of education policy has been noted by many others (for example, Reynolds and Saunders, 1987; Codd, 1988; Bowe et al, 1992; Ball, 1994; Vulliamy et al, 1997; Ozga, 2000; Trowler, 2003; Supovitz, 2008; Braun et al, 2010; Briant and Doherty, 2012; Saunders and Sin, 2015) and suggests that policy is rarely enacted directly as originally planned. This is because policy is 'read' and implemented on the ground by teachers acting responding to their own contexts and philosophies (Trowler, 2003; Brooks, 2006). This difference may be considered to be part of an 'implementation gap', as outlined by Reynolds and Saunders in their 'implementation staircase' concept where policy is refracted during its trajectory up and down the staircase (1987, 3).

Research into education policy outside the British context has reached similar conclusions. For example, Cuban analysed school reforms in the USA and argued that 'fidelity' was rarely retained in large scale reforms as schools are so different, and, 'schools change reforms as much as reforms change schools' (1998, 453). Also in the USA, Supovitz suggested that many studies indicated what actually happens in school is often a pale imitation of what was intended at the outset, naming the concept of a policy changing as it is being implemented 'iterative refraction' (2008, 152). He explained this happened because 'an external reform is likely to change repeatedly as it filters through the multiple layers of the education system' (2008, 153).

It is clear that those researching policy enactment suggest it rarely takes place on the ground as intended and as Governments must be aware of this, how might it affect their production of curriculum policy? The writers of policy are aware that it might be decoded in various ways, and so they will try to assert their control to ensure a 'correct' reading (Ball, 1994). However, any policy text will contain spaces, and so the reader will be able to unpick the text and impose upon it their own interpretations (Ball, 1994, 16; Hall, 2001). This problem of trying to ensure a 'correct' reading and enactment of policy may lead to Governments 'trying to 'teacher proof' the classroom' so that teachers 'become mere 'delivery technicians' rather than 'partners' in education (Maguire, 2014, 6) although even when policies are considered to be 'teacher- proof', they still do not always turn out as planned (Supovitz and Weinbaum, 2008, 1). As teachers will always continue to read, mediate and enact policy, they will undoubtedly continue to have a vital role in the policy

enactment process (Brooks, 2006; Kelly, 2009, 13). The example of the

National Curriculum as policy will now be discussed in more detail.

3.3.3 Teachers and policy – the National Curriculum

Research into the implementation of the original National Curriculum in

England was undertaken by Bowe et al (1992), who argued that owing to the

way policy was interpreted at the national, local and school levels the National

Curriculum was `not so much being 'implemented' in schools as being

'recreated', not so much 'reproduced' as 'produced' (1992, 114). Therefore,

while a National Curriculum may be seen as an attempt by the Government to

try and control what happens in schools, the outcomes may be mediated and

reframed by the teachers into something quite different on the ground. This

point was also made by Vulliamy and Webb (1995), who suggested that it was

over-simplistic to suggest that the state can control the school curriculum

through legislation.

In 1992, Bowe et al conducted case study research on four different

secondary schools to examine the enactment of policy by teachers. They

suggested that change in schools may show the different 'capacities' and

'contingencies' in the institutions themselves with low commitment and little

history of innovation leading to a reliance on policy texts by teachers.

Conversely, high commitment and a history of innovation may lead to greater

autonomy in the decoding of policy texts (1992, 118). They also found that the

dispositions of individual teachers would affect the adoption and enactment of

new policy. While of relevance to this research, their work considered Secondary schools only.

A later study by Webb & Vulliamy compared the approach to curriculum change in schools in Finland and England and found that the school's prior experiences with policy alongside the ethos of individual teachers 'were powerful determinants of policy interpretation' (1999, 117). It is clear from the research that the individual teacher plays a key role in the enactment of curriculum policy, displaying an element of agency in their work (Brooks, 2006). Teachers may therefore be considered as active 'policy actors' in the school, interpreting and translating policy, not just implementing what has been imposed from above (Braun et al, 2010). However, Webb and Vulliamy also noted there could be 'change without commitment' where teachers felt de-motivated or disenfranchised and implemented policy without adaptation (1999, 117) a point also made by Priestley et al in their research on curriculum change in Scotland (2013). Previous research suggests therefore that individual teachers, school leaders and their departments are all key aspects of the educational policy process and will impact on any policy enactment.

3.3.4 Policy irony?

Some researchers have noted the somewhat paradoxical position that teachers play in the enactment of school policy (Kelly, 2009; Priestley, 2011a). This is because for most school-based policies teachers play a key role in the enactment process and must be 'won round' to engage with the policy and

ensure it takes place as planned. It might appear that teachers are not really trusted by Governments and so the policies they are being asked to enact are 'teacher-proofed' (Maguire, 2014). As Priestley has stated, 'teachers have been systematically positioned as barriers to the change via discourses of derision...(and) such a view tends to construct curriculum change as a matter of the simple implementation of teacher proof curricula' (2011a, 2). He noted that teachers must be seen as agents of policy change and so are often put in the conflicting position of not being trusted and then given a 'teacher-proof' policy that they are then entrusted to enact as planned. This is policy irony.

However, they are controlled or directed, teachers must be considered as curriculum makers as well as deliverers as they have to interpret and enact official curriculum documents (Brooks, 2006; Ellis, 2007; Kelly, 2009; Puttick 2012; Biddulph, 2013). Ellis has suggested that teachers in fact have 'autonomous professionalism' as they convert the given subject knowledge into the 'teacher knowledge' that is taught in classrooms (2007; 448). Teachers are therefore key players in the production of school knowledge whatever the curriculum content (Ellis, 2007), although for some this curricular freedom may give them 'unnerving autonomy' (Rawding, 2013b; 286). It may be that curricular freedom is not the aspiration for many teachers and some may welcome the guidance a national curriculum document provides.

It is evident that teachers play a significant role in mediating policy such as a National Curriculum and developing an effective school curriculum. Lingard

supported this position, stating that the curriculum in England is 'put into practice by well-informed professional teachers who rework the formal curriculum by taking account of their students, their school and their community' (2013, 6). These three factors are clearly important in the mediation of the National Curriculum. Whatever is included in a National Curriculum document will always need interpreting by teachers, and it is they who bring it to life. A curriculum document itself is neither exciting or dull and ultimately it is the teacher's response to it that really matters (Biddulph, 2013; 140).

3.3.5 The possible impact of assessment

In the analysis of the school curriculum and the role of teachers, schools may not be quite as autonomous as they appear, as their curriculum may be 'dominated by the requirements of external examination' (White, 2005, 91). Others share this view, and conclusions from the literature suggest that external examinations can have the effect of narrowing the curriculum as teachers focus on the tested subjects, often to the detriment of non-tested, usually more creative subjects (White, 2005; Au, 2007, 2008; Hayward, 2013; Lingard, 2013). Other impacts include 'teaching to the test' as testing affects classroom pedagogy and subject knowledge may become fragmented as it is taught for the test rather than holistically (Au, 2007, 258; 2008; Hayward, 2013; Lingard, 2013). The impact of assessment on the curriculum is therefore worthy of further exploration.

Au considered possible links between assessment and Bernstein's pedagogic device and argued that high stakes testing reproduces inequality in schools through selective regulation and distribution of forms of knowledge (2008, 640). Therefore, high stakes tests are as much a part of the relay of 'socially determined inequalities' into the classroom as content knowledge itself, and so should be considered part of the pedagogic device (2008, 641). Others such as Wong (2017) and Gibbons (2018) have also explored links between the pedagogic device and assessment and the possible impact of assessment on the curriculum is clearly an important concept that must be considered carefully. I now consider the pedagogic device itself in more detail.

3.4 Basil Bernstein, the curriculum and the 'Pedagogic Device'

The development of a school curriculum from a National Curriculum may be analysed with reference to the work of Basil Bernstein and particularly his theory of the 'pedagogic device' (2000, 27). Bernstein identified that schools played a key role in socio-cultural reproduction, as they are part of a 'relay' ensuring that a version of a national social and cultural consciousness is reproduced. The development of this theory was a key element of Bernstein's work throughout his life (Singh, 2002; Cause, 2010; Gibbons, 2018) and it forms the major theoretical framework for this research for the analysis of the research data.

The theory of the 'pedagogic device' was first proposed by Bernstein in 1986 in a later development of his work on curriculum discourse and how societies reproduce power structures through control of the curriculum. It was further

developed over time to be fully realised in his major revised work of 2000 (Apple, 2002; Singh, 2002; Wheelahan, 2010; Cause, 2010; Puttick, 2015; Wong, 2017 and Gibbons, 2018). Gibbons has usefully noted that 'since Bernstein first introduced this model in 1986 his terminology evolved' (2018, 4), and that his own advice was to 'read later papers rather than earlier ones' (Bernstein 2000, 211). Following this advice, I refer to the revised 2000 edition of his major work 'Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity' throughout this paper, using his terminology from that edition.

In his work, Bernstein asked whether 'there are any general principles underlying the transformation of knowledge into pedagogic communication' and to answer this question he proposed the theory of the 'pedagogic device' as way of analysing the 'relay' of that knowledge rather than focussing on the nature of the knowledge itself (2000, 25). The pedagogic device is therefore 'a condition for the production, reproduction and transformation of culture' (Bernstein, 2000, 38) and may be summarised as 'an attempt to analyse the fields, agents, and sites involved in the transformation of knowledge from wherever they are produced into the content of school lessons' (Puttick, 2015, 471).

3.4.1 Basil Bernstein

Basil Bernstein (1924-2000) was a renowned British scholar who wrote extensively on the nature of education, the curriculum, school and social justice (Singh, 2002). He developed a wide range of work primarily focussed on inequality in society and how educational and pedagogic processes might

combine to (re)produce dominant hegemonies and social inequality (Apple, 2002; Singh, 2002). His influence on the sociology of education has been extensive, and his work shows links to Durkheim (Wheelahan, 2000, 19) and Bourdieu's Fields and 'cultural capital' concepts (Apple, 2002; Singh, 2002; Wright and Froehlich, 2012; Lingard, 2013), all being concerned with the nature of knowledge and the structure of society.

Many researchers have used Bernstein's theoretical work to develop new insights on the nature and transfer of knowledge in society and in schools (such as Singh, 2002, Apple, 2002, Morais, 2002, Au, 2008, Kang, 2009, Cause, 2010, Tan, 2010, Leow, 2011, Wright and Froehlich, 2012, Ensor, 2015, Puttick, 2015, Wong, 2017, Lim, 2017, Barret, 2017 and Gibbons, 2018). As Apple has suggested, 'he provided the conceptual door for others to go through' (2002, 608) and Cause also supported his contribution, stating that 'although complex, for the educational researcher that is brave enough to invest the energy and time necessary to understand his work, his literature and empirical research provides a unique and very convincing way of viewing the ways in which society reproduces difference and social status' (2010, 3).

While Bernstein's work has continued to be utilised, it would appear from the literature that there has been 'a resurgent interest in his work' since his death in 2000 (Lim, 2016, 369) and much of this may be due in part to a seminal article from 2002 on his work and the pedagogic device by Parlo Singh, an Australian academic and one of Bernstein's former students.

Singh's article summarised Bernstein's work, proposing 'his theoretical project is of enormous significance to an analysis of the production and reproduction of knowledge via official schooling institutions' (2002, 572). Singh and others have continued to develop Bernstein's ideas by progressing the theoretical aspects of his work; for example, by considering connections to theories of policy enactment (Leow, 2011; Singh, Thomas and Harris, 2013) and also to feminist scholarship (Singh, Pini and Glaswell, 2018).

Much recent educational research adopting a Bernsteinian approach has originated from outside the United Kingdom and this broad body of research adds an international flavour to the utilisation of Bernstein's theories. This has relevance, for as Lim stated in 2016, much work in educational research is from a western perspective that takes certain aspects for granted such as the state's limited ability to intervene directly in education (due to 'relative autonomy', Apple, 2002). Lim noted this autonomy is not always present and research where the state has a more direct role in education brings fresh insights into Bernstein's work. For example, Tan (2010), Lim (2016) and Wong (2017) have used the pedagogic device to consider the role of the state in developing a national consciousness in Singapore and each found that his theory assisted in the analysis of this process. Wong (2017) also suggested that assessment played a large part in the nation building and felt that assessment was under-developed in Bernstein's work, an insight I expand upon below.

Recent research using Bernstein's work has focussed on various aspects of the pedagogic device and its three 'Rules'. These are the Distributive, Recontextualising and Evaluative Rules, although there appears to have been less interest in the evaluative rules (Gibbons, 2018). Other aspects of Bernstein's work such as classification and framing (Hoadley, 2006; Barrett, 2017) and possible links to policy enactment theory (Leow, 2011; Singh et al, 2013) have also been explored in recent research. While the main focus of my own analysis is on the recontextualising and evaluative rules of the pedagogic device, I also incorporate elements of other aspects of Bernstein's work as relevant.

3.4.2 The Pedagogic Device

The pedagogic device (2000) theorises the relay of knowledge from where it is produced into the school setting and aimed to answer Bernstein's question, 'are there any general principles underlying' this transformation? (2000, 25). A key aspect of the pedagogic device is that it claims a main function of education is the reproduction of society rather than to challenge it (Wright and Froehlich 2012, 214) and at its heart Bernstein saw the device as part of a conservative process, aiming to preserve the status quo in society, including its inequalities (2000, 25). The key features of the device have been very clearly summarised in subsequent work (for example, Singh, 2002; Cause, 2010; Puttick, 2015 and Gibbons, 2018) but key elements must be outlined to inform the current research.

3.4.3 Structure of the pedagogic device

Bernstein stated that the pedagogic device is 'a condition for the production, reproduction and transformation of culture' (2000, 38) and it is complex and hierarchical in the ways in which the different elements interact and are structured (2000, 37). The pedagogic device attempts to outline the process by which a society generates and regulates knowledge and relays this knowledge into pedagogic discourse in school such that the society reproduces itself. The generators of the knowledge try to control what is 'thinkable' and 'unthinkable' so that the society does not destroy itself through the process of education. The device therefore has a role in regulating society through the production of a school curriculum (Apple, 2002, 613). The device is hierarchical in structure, with three interlinked 'rules' forming the key controlling elements, giving rise to three interlinked 'fields' and 'processes' where the relevant discourses take place and may be contested. These interlinked aspects of the device may be seen in the following diagram:

Rules	Fields	Processes
Distributive	Production of discourse	Creation
Recontextualising	Recontextualising	Transmission
Evaluative	Reproduction	Acquisition
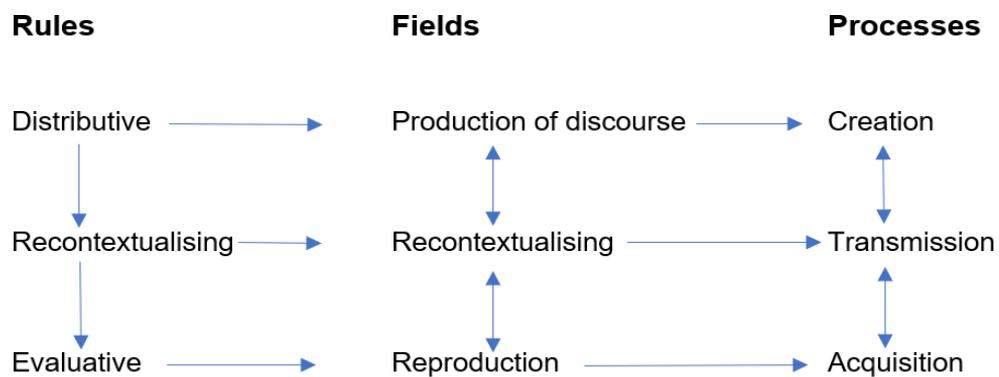
FIGURE 1: THE PEDAGOGIC DEVICE AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RULES, FIELDS AND PROCESSES (ADAPTED FROM BERNSTEIN, 2000, 37)

3.4.4 The Distributive Rules

The 'highest' level of the hierarchical structure of the device are the Distributive Rules, and their function is to 'regulate the relationships between power, social groups, forms of consciousness and practice' (Bernstein, 2000, 28). They achieve this by distributing 'different forms of knowledge', which Bernstein classified as being: 'esoteric' and 'mundane' and 'thinkable' and 'unthinkable' knowledge. He proposed the 'unthinkable' in smaller scale societies was controlled by religious systems whereas in more modern, larger societies 'control and management of the unthinkable is carried out by the higher agencies of education…(and) the thinkable…is managed by secondary and primary school systems' (2000, 29). Bernstein felt that the distributive rules 'create a specialised field of production of discourse' and that 'this field is controlled more and more today by the state itself' (2000, 31). In summary, Bernstein felt that the 'distributive rules mark and distribute who may transmit what to whom and under what condition' (2000, 31). By controlling the 'thinkable' and 'unthinkable' a society therefore tries to control its reproduction and limit challenges to its structures.

The distributive rules have a hierarchical relationship with the recontextualization rules, meaning that only what has been distributed may then be recontextualised. This hierarchical relationship continues into the evaluation rules, where only what has been recontextualised may be evaluated (Bernstein, 2000, 28).

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3.4.5 The Recontextualising Rules

As noted, the distributive rules control what may become pedagogic discourse in the next layer of the device, the recontextualising rules. Bernstein believed that the knowledge created through the Distributive Rules became pedagogic knowledge in school through a process of recontextualising, which 'selectively appropriates, relocates, refocuses and relates other discourses to constitute its own order' (2000, 32). The imagined knowledge of the Distributive Rules becomes an actual pedagogic knowledge, a text of some type that can then be transmitted. Bernstein noted that the 'recontextualising principle creates recontextualising fields (and) agents with recontextualising functions (and) practising ideologies' (2000, 33). A field may be Government or a school, and agents may be teachers (or 'pedagogues in school', 2000, 33) and Bernstein felt that they would play a role in the transmission and mediation ('recontextualisation') of knowledge into school pedagogic discourse. This element of the pedagogic device is of great relevance to this study, and the process of recontextualization has been the focus for much recent research.

For example, Cause noted the importance of the process, stating that 'when a curriculum moves from one place to the other, it gets recontextualised because it is inevitable that a transformation will take place as it is transferred from the state curriculum authorities, to the school, then to the teacher and then to the student' (2010, 6). Ensor also found that teachers were key players in the recontextualisation process, and their resistance to change meant that schools are often resilient to outside policies (2015). Other recent

research into the recontextualising rules includes Kang (2009), Tan, (2010), Leow (2011), Wright and Froehlich (2012), Loughland and Sriprakash (2016) and Lim (2016), and all have concluded to various degrees that teachers are indeed key agents of recontextualization and that state programmes aimed at changing school policy succeed or founder based on this fact. Bernstein himself felt that the recontextualising field had such a 'crucial function in creating the autonomy of education' (2000, 33) that he distinguished two further elements for analysis.

3.4.6 The Recontextualising field

Bernstein sub-divided the recontextualising field into an official recontextualising field (ORF), 'created and dominated by the state and its selected agents and ministries' and a pedagogic recontextualising field (PRF), consisting of 'pedagogues in schools and colleges, and departments of education, specialised journals and private research foundations' (2000, 33).

The ORF may be seen as the state-controlled production of official knowledge, such as the curriculum, and the PRF consists of pedagogising agents such as teachers who further develop this knowledge into a pedagogic discourse for the classroom (2000, 33).

A key issue in this relationship is the potential for conflict between the ORF and the PRF, as there may be disagreement between the two over the detail of 'pedagogic discourse', possibly creating an 'arena of struggle' (Bernstein, 2000, 33, 38). Bernstein felt the relationship between these two 'sub-fields' was of great importance and might affect the development of the relay of

knowledge. If the PRF was autonomous then agents of the state would have less control over what goes on in the classroom or school. However, if the ORF had more control then agents of the PRF would have less autonomy and the state may exert more control over the curriculum and as a result the pedagogic discourse in the classroom (2000, 33). In this latter case, Bernstein felt that there might be some tension as those in school would feel that they lacked autonomy and were being told what to do (2000, 33). This situation might lead to the possibility of increased 'resistance' by teachers towards the curriculum and the instructions given to them by those outside the school.

The potential for conflict between the ORF and PRF, or even within them, has been noted by many who have researched the recontextualising field in Bernstein's work. For example, Tan felt that 'tensions and confrontations…could hinder the successful use of pedagogic reform as intended by the state' and that if the PRF has a certain level of autonomy then 'the PRF could potentially impede the official pedagogic discourse produced and legitimized by the state' (2010, 168). Tan agreed with Bernstein that the stakes in this struggle are high as the group that controls the pedagogic device 'exercises power in relation to the distribution, recontextualization, and evaluation of complex knowledge' (2010, 168). Others such as Kang (2009), Lim (2016) and Loughland and Sriprakash (2016) have reached similar conclusions about the potentially difficult relationship between the ORF and the PRF in curriculum discourse.

Outside of this relationship, the ways in which a curriculum is monitored and assessed may also be vital to the relay of knowledge. This impact of assessment on the curriculum has been known as 'assessment backwash' (Watkins et al, 2005) and Lingard also considered it a key aspect of the curriculum development process (2013). Bernstein felt that assessment was part of the Evaluative Rules of the pedagogic device and these are now discussed in more detail.

3.4.7 The Evaluative Rules

The evaluative rules constitute the final part of the pedagogic device and in the hierarchical structure they can only evaluate what has been recontextualised. Bernstein felt that the key to the pedagogic device was 'continuous evaluation' and that 'evaluation condenses the meaning of the whole device' (2000, 36). He also felt that these rules provided the criteria to be transmitted and acquired (outlined in the 'field of reproduction and the process of acquisition' 2000, 114, 37). In a further clarification Bernstein stated that the evaluative rules regulate classroom practice 'for they define the standards which must be reached' (2000, 115). While this appears clear, within the evaluative rules of the device Bernstein does enter into detail on actual evaluation or assessment of the criteria and it is this aspect that needs further development. Recent work by Wong (2017) and Gibbons (2018) has reached a similar conclusion.

Commenting on assessment within the pedagogic device, Au felt that 'high-stakes tests are a physical manifestation of the evaluative rules, the distillation

of the pedagogic device into classroom practices' and so regulate classroom practice and pedagogy (2008, 645). Au also noted that high stakes tests in the USA are a product of the ORF (2008, 647) which the PRF must put into practice. He felt this was a potential 'arena of struggle' and that 'control of pedagogic discourse is always contested, as illustrated by the relationship between the PRF and ORF' (2008, 647). Others have noted the same, such as Wong and Apple who felt that if the PRF is strong then it can impede official pedagogy from the ORF (2003, 85). Wong and Apple also felt there were a range of agents in both the PRF and the ORF and due to these different groups, 'there may be differing interpretations, implementations and political interests within fields. This creates the potential for real conflict both within and between fields' (Au, 2008, 648). These conclusions of Au and Wong and Apple clearly develop Bernstein's own views on the possible conflict between the ORF and the PRF and is of much relevance to this research.

Wong felt that the evaluative rules could be further developed and boldly stated in his abstract that 'Bernstein's theory of the pedagogic device has two under-developed elements' regarding the evaluative rules (2017, 364). Wong's study of Chinese schools in Singapore aimed to re-appraise the evaluative rules and his key critique was that the pedagogic device 'has some limitations so far as its treatment of evaluative rules is concerned…he overlooks the fact that in the contexts of schools and educational systems, such rules are most often instantiated in the form of formal, summative assessments. This limitation prevents his theory from unveiling the ways

through which evaluations affect the pedagogic device's operations' (2017, 365).

I have sympathy with this perspective as there is limited detail given on the nature of assessment within the pedagogic device. Bernstein offers less detail in the discussion of the evaluative rules compared to other parts of the theory (2000), which is also true of others analysing the theory (such as Ashwin, 2012 and Puttick, 2015). The evaluative rules may indeed be ripe for further development, as Wong has stated. This is because while Bernstein uses the term 'evaluative rules' for the 'lowest' part of the pedagogic device, he equates this with the field of reproduction and the process of acquisition (2000, 37). If the evaluative rules are referring to the level to which knowledge is acquired at the end of the process, Bernstein does not make clear the extent to which assessment plays a role in this process, as assessment should be a key factor in judging the level of acquisition. It is this aspect of the Evaluative Rules that needs further attention.

Wong also proposed that assessment should comprise three sets of sub-rules: temporal, consequential and discriminatory (2017, 365). Of the three, I feel the concept of consequential assessment has most value to this research as this specifies a linkage between assessment and employment or educational opportunities and that the more consequential a test the more the returns for those who are successful on taking it (2017, 365-366). This summarises the nature of external assessment in English schools.

In his analysis of assessment and the Evaluative Field, Wong was in part building on the work of Au (2007, 2008), who considered the impact of what he termed 'high-stakes testing' and the possible links to the pedagogic device. Although Wong does not refer to Au, Wong's notion of 'consequential' assessment is synonymous with Au's definition of 'high stakes testing', which Au states is where 'results are used to make important decisions that affect students, teachers, administrators, communities, schools and districts' (2007, 258). The SATS tests taken at the end of Year 6 in English Primary schools meet this definition.

Au felt that there were often struggles over high-stakes testing, a clear example of the potential for opposition in an arena of struggle within the pedagogic device. This has indeed been seen in the United Kingdom, with Teacher Unions, parental groups and even some political parties stating opposition to a growth in the use of high-stakes testing or to their use at all (Tapper, 2018; Weale, 2019). As Bernstein stated, it does appear that the 'device itself creates an arena for struggle' (2000, 38).

In further recent research on the evaluative rules, Gibbons noted that while 'there has been considerable use of Bernstein's model of the pedagogic device in educational research…the evaluative rules have been under-developed' (2018, 4). Gibbons developed her own analysis on the application of the evaluative rules in the context of reflective practice in Higher Education, a different context to my research. Wong's research used the example of educational change in Singapore for his empirical work and so I believe my

own study is the first to consider developing the Evaluative Rules in the context of both Secondary and Primary schools in England.

3.4.8 Pedagogic Device Paradox

Bernstein didn't feel that the pedagogic device was deterministic in its impacts as it contains both internal and external paradoxes that challenge its effectiveness (2000, 38). The internal paradox contained in the device is that it cannot control what it has been set up to control, for 'in the process of controlling the unthinkable it makes the possibility of the unthinkable available' (Bernstein, 2000, 38). The external paradox is that the distribution of power and the different levels within the device 'creates potential sites of challenge and opposition…(and) an arena of struggle between different groups' (2000, 38). The external paradox is of particular interest to this research as teachers represent one of the groups in a potential 'arena of struggle' where the relay of knowledge in the device may be challenged or opposed.

3.4.9 Relative Autonomy

Au argued that Bernstein's thinking on the pedagogic device has its political roots in the concept of 'relative autonomy', which has its source in Marxist and neo-Marxist thinking on capital and social structures (2008, 646) and this concept has also been discussed by Michael Apple (2002). The concept argues that social relations associated with capitalist society are relatively autonomous from the economic relations within that society and so the

educational system might 'reproduce capitalist relations but cannot be reduced to them' (Apple, 2002, 609). This means teachers can affect the relay of power and knowledge through the pedagogic device and can resist, disrupt or intervene in its workings because of their 'relatively autonomous relationship to external social and economic conditions' (Au, 2008, 647). This concept is of great value when considering the extent to which teachers can affect policy and also play a recontextualising role in the pedagogic device, although as Lim has noted (2016) the level of autonomy will depend on the national and social context of the educational system.

3.4.10 Realisation and Recognition Rules

Within the evaluative rules of the pedagogic device students must demonstrate that they can produce the required 'text'. Wheelahan explained that this means the students implicitly understand the assessment process and how to produce the 'right' outcomes (2010, 34), or that they understand what has been referred to as the 'the rules of the game' (Winter and Linehan, 2014). The extent to which they can do this depends on the extent to which they have the necessary 'recognition' and 'realisation rules' (Bernstein 2000, 125).

The recognition and realisation rules are key features of the processes of transmission and acquisition. They operate at the level of the acquirer so are part of the processes operating within the fields of recontextualization and reproduction (Bernstein, 2000, 37). The recognition rules mean that the acquirer knows which specialised subject they are in, and that they also

recognise the 'power relations' of which they are part (2000, 17). However, if the acquirer does not possess the 'realisation rule' then they cannot 'speak the legitimate text' and will not show publicly they have acquired the appropriate knowledge (2000, 17). Bernstein argued that these rules can be difficult to acquire at school and so those pupils from more middle-class backgrounds who are able to develop these rules at home may be more successful at school and are more able to 'play the game'. This concept has major repercussions for socio-economic change and reproduction in school and was a key aspect of Bernstein's work. In subsequent research this concept has been developed by Apple (2002), Au (2008) and Barrett (2017) who analysed socio-economic inequality in American schools and found the theory to be helpful in the explanation.

In summary, Bernstein's concept of a 'pedagogic device' aimed to theorise the way in which knowledge is relayed from its point of production, is recontextualised and then acquired within a school system. He felt that the aim of the device was hegemonic in nature (Apple, 1995), as a society would aim to reproduce itself through the medium of education. From a review of relevant literature there has been much use made of Bernstein's pedagogic device in educational research in a range of contexts although much research appears to focus on the recontextualising rules of the device.

The focus in my own research utilises the two latter elements of the device in my analysis, the 'recontextualising rules' and the 'evaluative rules'. In Bernstein's work, however, the nature of the evaluative rules and how they

link to assessment practice is not always clearly described or defined and it is here that some reappraisal of the evaluative rules may prove useful. Wong felt that his article was a 'first step to elaborate these underdeveloped aspects in the Bernsteinian formulation' (2017, 365) and I argue that my work is a further step in this process.

3.5 Summary of the literature review and influence on research design

There has been much research conducted over many years to consider the role of policy in education and how it is enacted as it goes through the process of being decoded from text into action in school. The conclusion appears to be that policy is always reframed or filtered in some way in this process, and it may be that all the actors involved in the process are aware of this fact. It seems clear that what matters is not just what is written in a policy document, but how teachers respond to the document and how their response is monitored. This key point has informed my research design and approach to analysis as it was clear that as well as considering the curriculum, I would need to speak to teachers at schools in different Key Stages to consider how they have responded to it. My research design therefore echoes that of others such as Bowe et al (1992), Webb and Vulliamy (1999), Kang, (2009), Tan (2010), Priestley et al (2013), Ensor (2015) and Puttick (2015), who interviewed relevant teaching staff in schools in their curriculum research. This survey of relevant literature also confirms my use of Bernstein's pedagogic device as an analytical framework for my curriculum research is a valid approach based on a summary of similar research. These perspectives

have informed the research and analytical frameworks of this study and I now

outline the methodology and method chosen for my primary research.

Chapter 4: Methodology and methods

'Different ways of viewing the world shape different ways of researching the world' (Crotty, 1998, p.66).

4.1 Introduction

The chapter begins with a brief overview of research philosophy, before discussing the chosen methodology, methods and data collection. The chapter ends with a discussion of the approach to data analysis.

4.2 Research philosophy

Research philosophy considers key terms such as ontology and epistemology and how these theoretical perspectives inform the research process. Methodologies and methods do not exist in a vacuum and the ways in which the nature and reality of the world (ontology) and the theory of knowledge of the world (epistemology) are viewed will lead towards certain theoretical frameworks, methodologies and methods (Cohen and Manion, 1994; Scott and Usher, 1996; Crotty, 1998, Denscombe, 2007; Thomas, 2009; Robson, 2011; Ashwin, 2012; Braun and Clarke, 2013).

4.2.1 Ontological perspectives

Most writing on the philosophy of research has placed two key ontological perspectives at either end of a continuum. At one end is the 'realist'

perspective that states objects and the world itself have an independent existence outside the world of the knower, while at the other end, the 'nominalist' or 'relativist' perspective considers that the world can only be known by those experiencing it (Cohen and Manion, 1994; Crotty, 1998; Denscombe, 2007; Robson, 2011; Braun and Clarke, 2013). However, a third perspective of 'critical realism' has become more commonly adopted in recent qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2013, 27). This position, based on the work of Bhaskar (1975, cited in Braun and Clarke, 2013), sits between realism and relativism, proposing a 'real and knowable world' that is 'behind the subjective and socially located knowledge' accessed by social science research (Braun and Clarke, 2013, 27). The critical realist position recognises that some version of reality exists outside of our experience, but that we can only ever know it partially. Braun and Clarke state that the 'critical realist position underpins a number of qualitative approaches, including thematic analysis' (2013, 27) and it is the ontological position adopted in this research. While I will be accessing the individual perspectives on reality expressed by those I have interviewed (and indeed my own), I believe there is a partially knowable reality existing in the school and educational world outside of the experience of each individual teacher.

The distinction between ontology and epistemology may be blurred as they are sometimes used interchangeably (Crotty, 1998) and Crotty also noted that 'the terminology is far from consistent in research literature and social science texts' (1998, 1). Hammersley referred to this difficult aspect of research as 'terminological confusion' (2012, 44) and so one must therefore tread carefully

when referring to terminology and definitions, although there is generally agreement within research literature about key features of ontological terms (Thomas, 2009; Robson, 2011; Braun and Clarke, 2013).

4.2.2 Epistemology

Ontology and epistemology are connected and so an ontological perspective will inform an associated epistemological position. It would be difficult, for example, to adopt a positivist epistemology when one has stated a nominalist ontology (Cohen and Manion, 1994, 9). Epistemology is concerned with what counts as legitimate knowledge and the nature of knowledge (Braun and Clarke, 2013). The different perspectives may form another continuum with objectivism at one end and constructionism at the other (Cohen and Manion, 1994; Crotty, 1998; Girod-Seville and Perret, 2001; Thomas, 2009; Robson, 2011; Bryman, 2012; Braun and Clarke, 2013). Crotty defined the two terms as 'objectivism is the epistemological view that things exist...independently of consciousness and experience, while constructionism rejects this view of human knowledge...there is no objective truth waiting for us to discover it' (1998, 5, 8). The objectivist epistemology increasingly fell out of favour in social sciences research throughout the twentieth century (Scott and Usher, 1999, 13), and in the world of social science research, reality is usually claimed to be 'constructed' by both the researcher and those being researched (Robson, 2011), so that 'truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of engagement with the realities in our world' (Crotty, 1998, 8).

However, given the adoption of the ontological position of critical realism by some researchers, there has also been adoption of an equivalent epistemology that may be considered as a version of 'constructionism-lite', a position known as 'contextualism' (Braun and Clarke, 2013, 30). In this position, a single reality is not assumed, and knowledge emerges from the context of the research. It retains some notion of a 'truth' and so has a realist dimension that differentiates it from constructionism (Ellis, 2007; Braun and Clarke, 2013, 31)

For the reasons outlined above this research is positioned within a contextualist epistemology as the reality I am exploring is one co-created by myself and my research subjects, but I believe is one that exists within a context in a wider reality. For example, within a realist, common sense framework, both the National Curriculum and the two schools do exist (Scott and Usher, 1999; Ashwin, 2012) and the impact of the former on the latter is a reality constructed in the mind of the teacher. My research therefore concerns a 'reality' that exists, as well as being dependent on the subject's interpretation of that reality and my own interpretation of them as the 'observer' (Pring 2004).

4.3 Research paradigm

Once ontological and epistemological positions are established one must then consider the research paradigm, methodologies and methods, as each step in the research process clearly informs the next (Crotty, 1998). While allocating all research processes into three or four paradigms may be an over-

simplification, the paradigms can provide helpful ways of viewing the world and provide 'elaborate methodological fortresses' that 'set firm foundations for research design' (Somekh and Lewin, 2011, xix). Research in the social sciences may take many forms, but often operates within an interpretivist paradigm where events and actions are viewed from the perspective of those being studied (Bryman, 1988; Crotty 1998, 67; Braun and Clarke, 2013). It also 'attempts to understand and explain human and social reality' (Crotty, 1998, 67), a clear summary of the aims of this research project.

The interpretivist paradigm is often seen as an umbrella term in qualitative research that includes the more specific approaches of Hermeneutics, Phenomenology and Symbolic Interactionism (Crotty, 1998; Counsell, 2009; Hammersley, 2012). Phenomenology is commonly used in qualitative social science research as it is often considered an alternative to positivist approaches (Denscombe, 2007; Bryman, 2012; Braun and Clarke, 2013). However, it may be argued that all of reality is in fact 'socially constructed' and that all qualitative researchers have the goal of understanding subjects from their point of view (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, 31, 32). This does not make all qualitative research phenomenological as a result. This research project is more closely aligned with a hermeneutical theoretical position, where a researcher aims to find meaning in their interpretations of data, often in some form of text (Counsell, 2009, 272).

The interpretivist paradigm highlights the uncertainty of knowledge and the absence of a 'truthful' reading of the world as no interpretation can be

'uniquely correct' (Scott and Usher, 1999, 26). When considering everyday experiences, it recognises that meaning is constructed by those involved. Researchers must therefore recognise that they cannot stand outside and study the world they inhabit and that they are in fact interpreters of interpretations, caught within a 'hermeneutic cycle' (Scott and Usher, 1999, 27; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

Interpretivism remains a popular research paradigm within educational research as it emphasises the actors themselves and their perspectives on the world, while also recognising the importance of interpretation. This may be considered 'integral to the qualitative tradition' (Ormston et al, 2014, 13).

4.4 Research methodology

Research in the interpretivist paradigm usually leads to the employment of qualitative approaches (Trafford and Leshem, 2008, 96; Robson, 2011; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Ormston et al, 2014). These strategies are clearly linked as interpretivist approaches usually seek opinions or awareness of knowledge from people and so qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups and ethnographic methods will be more suitable to this type of research (Crotty, 1998; Cohen and Manion, 1994; Denscombe, 2007; Thomas, 2009; Robson, 2011; Braun and Clarke, 2013).

In the past there has been debate over the validity of qualitative methods in comparison to more positivist, quantitative approaches, but most would now accept that this debate is somewhat redundant, and that research in the social

sciences has its own rigour and credibility (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Crotty, 1998; Robson, 2011; Braun and Clarke, 2013). To ensure such rigour, qualitative research requires the demonstration of integrity and competence such as a 'trail of evidence throughout the research process to demonstrate credibility or trustworthiness' (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006, 81, 82). This aim for rigour and integrity in research is linked to the key concepts of validity and reliability, respectively meaning trustworthiness in the process and the use of appropriate and sound research design (Grbich, 2012).

The key qualitative method used in this research was the 'semi-structured interview' within a case study framework. Interviews can demonstrate rigour in the analysis stage by the use of direct quotes from the participants, strengthening validity and credibility of the perceived outcomes (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006, 82). Both aspects are discussed in more detail below.

4.5 The case study approach

While the case study approach is common within qualitative research, there is some disagreement around the exact nature of the approach within the typology of research methods (Tight, 2010; Chadderton and Torrance, 2011). A case study may focus on individuals, groups or events (Verma and Mallick, 1998; Robson, 2011), and this flexibility may mean that 'case study' is really an umbrella term for a range of methods used within some sort of bounded space rather than a method in itself (Thomas, 2011). As Thomas noted, 'the case study is a frame that offers a boundary to your research' (2011, 21) and so the approach may be more a description of the spatial or temporal

boundaries to the research in which other methods will actually be employed. It may therefore be more a unit of analysis within social research than a method in itself (Tight, 2010, 336).

Notwithstanding the above comments, the case study approach continues to have many 'advocates and practitioners' particularly within a qualitative methodology and the interpretivist paradigm (Tight, 2010, 336). It is a common approach in educational research, perhaps because a school provides a very clear, bounded, research space (Thomas, 2011) and the approach allows in depth study and analysis to follow up a key question of interest (Chadderton and Torrance, 2011, 53). The approach is also often selected for pragmatic reasons, because it is not possible to sample the whole world in qualitative research (Bassey, 2002). An appropriate case study school can therefore provide a useful, pragmatic sample of the wider world being researched.

A case study approach was chosen for this research as it was deemed most suitable for interviewing a range of subject leaders within a bounded setting in two schools. The approach has supporters such as Yin who has stated that 'case studies are the preferred strategy when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context' (2003; 1). Yin also noted that if great care is taken in the research design, case studies can be explanatory and have value; they are not just the first, descriptive step on a perceived 'research hierarchy' where other, 'stronger' research methods subsequently take over (Yin, 2003, 3; Robson, 2011).

Within a pragmatic approach there are questions to consider regarding the size of the case study and its selection. Yin suggested the selection of what he termed a 'typical' case study, where the chosen example is representative of its wider field (2003). I adopted this approach in my research, where the two schools were both mixed comprehensives and, as local authority funded, were obliged to follow the National Curriculum. As such, they were representative of many 'typical' schools across England.

4.5.1 Generalisability

While the issue of generalisability may be one that affects much of qualitative research, it may be greater in the case study approach (Bryman, 1988; Verma and Malick, 1998; Walford, 2001; Yin, 2003; Pring, 2004; Thomas, 2011; Robson, 2011). This is because, by its very definition, 'the method requires a focus on a very small number of sites, yet there is often a desire to draw conclusions which have a wider applicability' which may be an 'illusory goal' (Walford, 2001; 22, 15). Others have agreed, stating that as case studies are unique events, similarities between case studies may be seen but generalisations cannot be made (Pring, 2004; Thomas, 2011).

Why then should one bother with the case study method? In its defence, researchers have argued the method has validity as it provides depth of study and detail; has a focus on a specific issue or problem; provides insight into real life situations; provides the possibility of 'transferability' of research findings and offers 'fine-grain' analysis or a perspective on the world (Deem and Brehony, 1994; Verma and Mallick, 1999; Walford, 2001; Yin, 2003;

Pring, 2004, Walshe, 2007; Fanghanel, 2009; Thomas, 2011; Robson, 2011; Wenger-Traynor, 2013). These positive perspectives on the approach appear to justify its continued use in research.

Thomas offered another perspective on the generalisability issue, suggesting that 'concerns about how far we can generalise from a case study are neutralised when we realise how tentative any generalisation might be in social research' (2011; 216). With the recognition that much knowledge produced by social research may indeed be provisional comes the realisation that case study research findings do not always need to be generalised into a wider population and may be of intrinsic value in themselves.

4.6 Sampling

Although there was some pragmatism in my choice of case study schools, there were factors influencing the choice. I needed to work with schools that are obliged to engage with the National Curriculum, and they would also have to be accessible as I planned repeat visits. Given the size and timescale of the research, I decided one case study school from each sector would suffice, with the aim of interviewing as many relevant staff as possible within each school. Sample sizes are always a compromise between the aims of the research, the need to capture enough relevant data but to not be so large as to be overwhelming or unfeasible (Braun and Clarke, 2013, 45).

Although my aim was to interview as many staff as possible, I did have a notional sample size across the two schools that would provide access to a

range of staff from different subjects. After contacting staff seeking voluntary engagement with the research, I went on to conduct 14 interviews, 6 at the Secondary school and 8 at the Primary school. While larger samples may elicit more information, this number satisfied Braun and Clarke's suggested 10-20 interviews for a medium sized project (2013, 48). I considered this number would provide enough breadth of data while also allowing for a level of detail that would provide sufficient depth from the responses. As Braun and Clarke noted, deciding the sample size is not easy, but ultimately there are no rules and the researcher must decide what will work for them, alongside the need to be pragmatic and realistic (2013, 55).

As I had some knowledge of local Secondary schools due to my own work the choice of school to approach was simplified as I was aware of a suitable school that fully met my criteria. My request to the Headteacher was successful and I was able to start planning the actual interviews with relevant staff. The Primary school situation differed slightly in that I did not have the same level of knowledge. However, having approached the preferred 'feeder' school fulfilling my criteria, I received a positive response from the Headteacher and could progress the research.

To plan the teacher interview sample, I first divided the subjects within the National Curriculum into three categories dependent on the level of curriculum guidance provided in the document based on a simple content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004). Within these three categories (see below) I aimed to interview at least one representative subject leader. This would give insight

into how teachers from different subjects with different levels of curriculum guidance had responded to the new National Curriculum. The response to my initial enquiries realised four interviews in the same subjects at each school, in addition to both Headteachers, and three additional subject leaders at the Primary school. The subject leaders involved at both schools comprised:

Core subjects with a high level of curriculum content guidance – English, Science;

Foundation subjects with a medium level of curriculum content guidance – History;

Foundation subjects with little curriculum content guidance – Art.

I also interviewed the subject leads for Maths, Geography and Music at the Primary school, providing extra insight into the workings of the school and its curriculum planning. Despite repeated attempts, I was not able to interview these subject leaders at the Secondary school.

It is important to note that I did not aim to directly compare the schools or the subject responses, just to consider the possible impacts of the new curriculum on schools at two different key stages and to ascertain levels of commonality across the same subjects. While both Headteachers were keen to be involved and were incredibly helpful, ease of access to the subject leaders proved to be quite different across the two schools. This is partly due to size, with the Secondary school having quite autonomous subject departments, whereas at the smaller Primary school the Headteacher was closer to the staff and could

be involved in helping establish the interviews. The role of the Headteachers in controlling access to my research fields is an example of the 'gatekeeper' concept.

4.7 The Gatekeeper

The 'gatekeeper' is a key figure in qualitative research, appearing to control access to the research field (Walford, 2001, 22). As I needed permission from both Headteachers to approach their staff, they were clearly operating in this capacity.

There are differing perspectives on the role of the 'gatekeeper', from a more traditional approach where negotiation of access through the gatekeeper is seen as a basic administrative task to be dealt with before the 'real' research begins to a view where the gatekeeper is not just a barrier but becomes an active participant in the research process (Walford, 2001; Bell and Opie, 2002; Munro et al, 2004; Crowhurst and kennedy-macfoy, 2013; Crowhurst, 2013; Wang, 2013).

In all cases there may be a concern that the researcher becomes identified by some as being connected to the 'powerful' gatekeeper figure who granted the original research access and so this raises the issue of positionality, possibly affecting the responses given to the researcher (Crowhurst, 2013). These views felt pertinent when gaining access to staff in the Secondary school, where permission from the Headteacher did not guarantee engagement with the research by the subject leaders. It may be that only those who were more

experienced and confident agreed to take part as they were not worried about being challenged in the interview process, and if so, this might have some effect on the nature of the interview responses and the research data gained. Other researchers have found similar issues when trying to arrange research interviews with teachers in schools (Chadderton and Torrance, 2011). In contrast, the Headteacher at the Primary school adopted a more 'hands-on' approach to the research project and acted more as an ally in the research process rather than just a gatekeeper to 'get past' (Crowhurst, 2013, 465).

In summary, my research experience confirmed the importance of the 'gatekeeper' in terms of access to research sites, and I perhaps underestimated the importance of the active role they might play in the process.

4.8 Research methods

Social researchers are able to draw on a variety of research methods and so must make decisions about what methods to choose (Crotty, 1998; Denscombe, 2007, 3). Each choice makes a set of assumptions about the social world it investigates and brings with it both advantages and disadvantages. Social researchers must also be reflexive and aware that they can never be value free or fully objective in their research, as they are a part of the world they are researching (Troyna, 1994; Verma and Mallick, 1998; Charmaz, 2006, Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). With these caveats in mind I adopted Pring's pragmatic suggestion that 'if one wants to know something, one goes out and has a look' (2004, 33).

At the start of my research process, it was clear I would need to analyse the National Curriculum document itself, to gain some sense of aims and intent and to provide information about subject content for the interviews with teachers. However, as the main aim of my research was to consider the responses of subject leaders to the document, rather than the full detail of the text, I decided to conduct only a brief content analysis of the National Curriculum document to ascertain the amount of guidance for each subject, as content analysis is a widely used research technique for analysing text for a range of purposes (Ozga, 2000; Krippendorff, 2004; Grbich, 2012). This process served to inform the research design and my preparation for the subject leader interviews.

The schools themselves provided a bounded case study for my research field, and I considered the range of research methods available, focussing on appropriate methods for eliciting information from individuals (Denscombe, 2007; Thomas, 2009). Semi-structured interviews were identified as my main research method, discussed further below.

4.8.1 Interviews

I interviewed a range of teachers at both schools, and while these were Heads of Department at the Secondary School, at the Primary school the teachers would be more accurately described as subject co-ordinators. For the sake of consistency, I have referred to them at both schools as subject leaders. I also interviewed the Headteachers at both schools to gain an

appreciation of the broader impact of the new curriculum on their pupils, staff and schools.

To elicit teacher perspectives on the new curriculum, I considered whether to use individual interviews, focus groups or a survey approach (Robson, 2011; Chadderton and Torrance, 2011; Braun and Clarke, 2013). While the focus group method has benefits such as time management, this approach was dismissed as while all taking part in my research were subject leaders, they were from different subjects and so would have different experiences. No benefit would be derived from collective interviewing as it would be difficult to tease out (and record/transcribe) their different experiences.

I determined that individual interviews would serve best to gain sufficient rich and worthwhile data. While more time consuming (for the interviewer, at least), they provide greater opportunity for following up comments made by interviewees. The method also allows for flexibility in the interviews and I felt this was of benefit given the context (Robson, 2011; Braun and Clarke, 2013).

Individual interviews are usually seen as lying on a continuum from structured interviews through semi-structured interviews to unstructured interviews (or conversations) (Scott and Usher, 2009). There are various reasons for using the different approaches, but with all it is helpful to remember that the respondent is never in full control as the interviewer has arranged the interview, agreed the location and time and, crucially, set out the initial questions that will be asked (Scott and Usher, 2009, 109). An interview is therefore really an arranged encounter where there may be personal rapport

issues, a mistrust of being recorded or transcribed or even hidden power struggles (Walford, 2001; Schostak, 2006). The interpretivist interviewer needs to remain aware of these potential issues throughout.

As I had specific questions to ask and also wanted to explore other areas raised by the interviewees, I adopted the semi-structured interview method. This was appropriate as it 'provides the best of both worlds' with the 'structure of a list of issues to be covered together with the freedom to follow up points as necessary' (Thomas, 2007, 164). I therefore planned a range of key 'prompt' questions to elicit information, while also allowing for the interview to move into other related territory as relevant. This led to some interesting discussions around assessment in the school curriculum that were broader than originally anticipated.

The final list of initial prompt questions may be seen in Appendix One, and these were developed with the aim of generating relevant data from the interviews, based on my own planning and also my reflections on a pilot interview with the outgoing Headteacher from the Secondary School in the year preceding the data gathering in 2016. The questions have the role of addressing key areas of interest but are also flexible enough that they allow for further development depending on the phase/subject context of the subject leader involved. It can be seen that my initial interest in assessment within the National Curriculum was based around the removal of assessment 'levels' at both key stages and this question remained, even though it became

apparent that for most teachers it was not a major concern and it was high stakes assessment that was the key area for discussion.

Although they are a common qualitative method, one must be aware of potential problems when using semi-structured interviews (Scott, 1996; Pring, 2004; Walford, 2001; Schostak, 2006; Alvesson, 2011). This is partly because although the interviewer is 'in charge', the interviewer inhabits their own world of beliefs through which responses are filtered in the interview, influencing the interviewer's understanding of the responses (Scott and Usher, 1996, 65; Pring, 2004, 40; Schostak, 2006). As Schostak stated, 'no individual can step inside the experience of another' (2006, 14), but the interpretive approach to research at least recognises the fact that there is a 'double layer' of interpretation regarding the interviewer's perception of what is being said.

These two levels of interpretation when dealing with the outcomes of the interview have been called the 'double hermeneutic' (Proctor and Padfield, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2013). With the 'double hermeneutic' both the researcher and the researched are interpreting the world for themselves, and so stepping further away from any possible 'truths' to be uncovered (Proctor and Padfield, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2013). As much qualitative research is positioned within a constructivist or contextualist epistemology, it is therefore important to recognise the possible impact of this 'double hermeneutic' on any research findings, which will affect claims made by the research and possibly generalisability into the wider world.

Concerns over the validity of interviews are not new (Walford, 2001; 89) and a key aspect of this uncertainty is whether the interview method can uncover reality or 'truth', or only a perspective on reality based on the interpretations of those involved (Cohen and Manion, 1994; Scott, 1996; Verma and Mallick, 1999; Walford, 2001; Pring, 2004; Bell, 2005; Schostak, 2006; Alvesson, 2011; Farnsworth and Solomon, 2013). However, the issue of potential researcher bias and subjectivity may be considered as one that affects all qualitative research and is not unique to the use of interviews. Once these generic limitations of qualitative research are accepted, it may be that interviews are no worse or better than any other social research method that is part of the world it is investigating (Proctor and Padfield, 1998; Thomas, 2011).

While there may be some agreement that interviews are not a perfect research method, they do allow for the generation of a great deal of data and are a vital method if the interviewer cannot share directly in the experiences of those being interviewed. Therefore, many feel that they remain very worthwhile as a method if used with care (Walford, 2001, 95, 97; Pring, 2004; Denscombe, 2007, 176; Thomas, 2007, 165; Alvesson, 2011).

4.9 Reflexivity and positionality

The social science researcher must recognise that they are part of the world they are researching (Charmaz, 2006; 10). The researcher is therefore not researching the world and commenting on it as an outsider from some

'external vantage point' in a positivist sense (Schostak, 2006, 77), they are interpreting it from their own position within the social world, bringing to this interpretation their own values, beliefs, background and bias (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, 15; Robson, 2011, 15). There is no way to avoid this of course, but it is important to at least recognise the fact and be aware of the provisional nature of 'truth' in the research process and analysis (Robson, 2011). Being aware of your own connection to the research links to the concepts of reflexivity and positionality.

Reflexivity has many meanings but is usually taken to mean a critical reflection by the researcher on their own role and their epistemological position (Braun and Clarke, 2013, 335). This means 'explicit recognition' that the social researcher is 'part and parcel of the social world under investigation' (Troyna, 1994; 10) and so they cannot claim to be fully value-neutral, unbiased and objective in how they view the world (Verma and Mallick, 1999, 4). The qualitative researcher must be aware of these perspectives when planning, conducting and analysing their research.

Alongside reflexivity is the important concept of positionality. However objective they wish to be, the researcher will always have a position regarding the research, both literally and metaphorically (Thomas, 2009, 111). This position will affect the nature of the observations and interpretations they make, and so the researcher must accept that they are an active rather than passive agent in the research process (Thomas, 2009, 110). Thomas concluded that in interpretive research, 'you should accept your subjectivity

and not be ashamed of it' (2009, 110). This does not mean that interpretive research is necessarily less valid, but the researcher must make their position clear and take care over any claims made about their research results. In this research I had no strong opinion on the National Curriculum of 2014 and did not have an opinion on the potential impact of the new curriculum on the work of teachers in school. I believe therefore I approached the key questions in my research as free from bias as is possible in this social research situation.

I also reflected on how I was dressed for the interviews and how this might influence the subject leaders. As all interviews took place within the two schools involved, I felt I had to dress smartly, but I avoided my usual formal attire of suit and tie as I wanted to create a more informal environment. As a lone researcher there was little that could be done about gender, age, ethnicity or class issues on my side, but I could at least be aware of them in my planning and subsequent analysis (Scott and Usher, 1999; Walford, 2001; Schostak, 2006; Robson, 2011; Braun and Clarke, 2013).

There is always the potential for sexist bias in interview-based research as both participants are gendered (Robson, 2011). Did being interviewed by a male researcher affect the answers from the subject leaders or their attitude towards the research? I do not think so but of course I cannot be certain. There may have also been separate issues around perceptions of power relationships in the interviews. This was apparent when I interviewed the two Headteachers, as while they were helpful and fully engaged with the research, they remained Headteachers, projecting a certain persona. The same is true

to an extent of the subject leaders themselves. They would also want to appear competent and knowledgeable about their role. I suspect that no teacher would want to admit they don't know what they are doing or are misunderstanding Government policy, and so their responses and construction of their social world must be considered from this interpretivist perspective (Robson, 2011; Braun and Clarke, 2013).

Once data has been gathered it must be carefully analysed with the aim of reaching useful conclusions. I now outline my chosen method of data analysis.

4.10 Analysing the data: Thematic Analysis

Data analysis is an inherent part of research and for some may be considered both a challenging and exciting stage of the process (Spencer et al, 2003, 200). This may be more so for qualitative research, where there are 'no clearly agreed rules or procedures for analysing qualitative data' (Spencer et al, 2003, 202), and choosing from the range of different approaches depends on both theoretical and epistemological assumptions. The boundaries and definitions of different approaches are not always clear cut and may overlap as all are concerned with capturing and interpreting common sense meanings in the data (Spencer et al, 2003, 202). In this research, I have used Thematic Analysis (TA) to analyse my data, specifically the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke in 2006 (further developed in 2012, 2013 and 2018), which I believe is appropriate to the size and aims of this research.

There are different approaches to thematic analysis and this variety provides both flexibility and also possibly some confusion (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017, 3353). Examples of thematic analysis have been used for some time (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Braun and Clarke, 2006) but perhaps the most influential and widely adopted approach has been the 6-step framework set out by Braun and Clarke in 2006 (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017, 3353).

The key goal of thematic analysis is to identify themes, which are interesting or important patterns in the data. Thematic Analysis is therefore more than just a summary of the data, it aims to interpret and make sense of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). It has also been argued that the 6-step process is a very useful framework for inexperienced qualitative researchers and has been widely adopted in the social sciences because it is so clear and usable (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). Braun and Clarke have accepted that Thematic Analysis may lack the 'kudos' of some other analytical approaches, but overall they felt it offered a theoretically flexible, useful and accessible approach to analysing qualitative data that can describe data in rich detail (2006, 78).

When discussing the proposed TA framework, it is helpful to outline key definitions. Braun and Clarke argued that the concept of the 'theme' 'captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set' (2006, 82). This may appear similar to the coding of data, but Braun and Clarke argued that themes are broader than codes, and codes are used when

initially analysing the data to help build up the themes in a recursive process. From these initial codes, themes and sub-themes are generated, refined and finalised (2006).

While highlighting the flexibility of the thematic analysis approach, Braun and Clarke argued that the themes chosen should not be random or weak and should be connected to the data and the actual research question (2006, 91). They also stated that themes should have both 'internal homogeneity' and 'external heterogeneity' (2006; 91) meaning they should clearly differentiate from each other and have some logical, structural coherence. The themes should then be clearly defined and named. Braun and Clarke argued that these steps should all give 'strength' to the thematic analysis process and others have also commented on the need for transparency in this process to demonstrate the necessary rigour required (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Houghton et al, 2013; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017; Nowell et al, 2017).

4.10.1 The steps of Thematic Analysis

In their seminal paper of 2006, Braun and Clarke outlined the six steps of thematic analysis as;

1. Familiarisation with the data
2. Generating initial codes.
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes

5. Defining and naming themes

6. Producing an analytical report using the themes   (2006, 87).

While this may appear to be a common-sense approach to the analysis of qualitative data, it is the absence of other steps or theoretical strictures that distinguish this approach from those such as grounded theory. Braun and Clarke have argued that this flexibility of the approach across a range of epistemologies is the key to its strength (2006, 97).

The Thematic Analysis approach has been further developed in recent times usually with the aim of giving the approach even more analytic rigour and credibility (Braun and Clarke, 2012, 2013; Houghton et al, 2013; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017; Nowell et al, 2017). For example, Fereday and Muir-Cochrane proposed a hybrid approach using thematic analysis to combine deductive and inductive analysis of qualitative data where the generation of codes is both data and theory driven (2006, 80). My approach to the generation of codes in this research has been data-driven and inductive, followed by a deductive analysis of the generated themes using a theoretical framework. I believe this is an appropriate variation of the hybrid approach outlined above and was selected because I did not want to limit the generation of themes from the data through the initial application of the theoretical framework.

In the generation of codes and themes, qualitative researchers must be aware of some critiques that see the process as possibly a rather positivistic approach within a supposedly interpretivist framework (Brinkmann, 2014; St

Pierre and Jackson, 2014). Brinkmann was concerned that some qualitative researchers felt there was 'data' out in the world waiting to be 'mined' and analysed when in fact data is 'always produced, constructed, mediated by human activities' (2014, 720, 721). Braun and Clarke themselves alert researchers to the fact that themes are 'generated' by them, not 'found' in the data (2013), an approach I have followed in this research.

4.10.2 Application to my research

Braun and Clarke have identified that 'the analysis of qualitative data essentially begins with a process of immersion in the data' (2013, 204), and this was indeed my first step as, not having transcribed the data personally, it enabled me to recall each interview in detail, identifying and exploring emergent key points.

The 'immersion' stage begins with close reading and re-reading of transcribed material where the researcher starts to 'notice' items of interest in the data. These might form overall impressions of the data, conceptual ideas or more concrete and specific issues (Braun and Clarke, 2013). These initial impressions are not fully objective, as the researcher will bring their own position to even this initial reflection and the first aspects standing out from the data may be only the most obvious, those things the researcher was expecting or in which they have a particular interest (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Friese, 2014). The data therefore must be revisited so that the researcher can start to engage with the data more critically.

The next step is coding, a common approach to data analysis within qualitative methodology. As Braun and Clarke described, 'codes provide the building blocks of analysis…a word or phrase that captures the essence of why you think a particular bit of data may be useful' (2013, 207). There are different approaches to coding, but a common initial distinction is between 'selective' and 'complete' coding (Braun and Clarke, 2013, 206). Selective coding involves identifying only those aspects of the data that relate directly to the phenomenon being researched, and so has an initial analytic element where decisions are made about the data and its apparent relevance. This was the approach used in this research. My interviews generated much data but some of this appeared irrelevant or tangential (such as sharing a home town and school with one subject leader) and I was confident in dismissing these responses. However, I did code material where there was any uncertainty over its status, with a view to further analysis at a later stage.

In addition to 'selective' and 'complete' coding there is a further important distinction. This is between 'semantic' (or 'concrete') coding and 'conceptual' or ('theoretical') coding (Braun and Clarke, 2013). The 'semantic' or 'concrete' codes summarise the actual content of the data based on the semantic or direct meaning, without the application of an analytical or interpretive framework to the words (Braun and Clarke, 2013). This is often followed by 'conceptual' or 'theoretical' coding, where the researcher applies theoretical frameworks to identify 'implicit' meanings in the data. I used semantic coding to generate my codes and my theoretical framework was applied at a later stage in the analysis of the generated themes.

Although thematic analysis aims to be rigorous, it is not positivistic and as Braun and Clarke stated, 'no two analysts will code in exactly the same way' (2013, 207). This is because each analyst will bring their own positionality, knowledge and biases to the data. If the research sits within an interpretive framework then this situation must be accepted to an extent, although researchers can sometimes work together on coding to try and overcome such issues. In the early stages of my coding I did engage the help of an experienced educational researcher to discuss my initial coding which proved very helpful in the overall process.

My initial coding was based on the 13 interviews conducted with the subject leaders and Headteachers in the two schools. I have given the interviewees pseudonyms and I found this more helpful than numbering the respondents as I believe the names give them an identity and voice of their own that can be traced through the analysis while also preserving confidentiality (Bell, 2005, 48; Braun and Clarke, 2013, 63). The teachers, their names, subject and school are listed in the table below. All interviews took place in the interviewee's own school, either during or after the school day. No interview was cut short by the interviewee for time reasons, although those that took place after school had no time limit and usually lasted longer. The shortest interview was approximately 35 minutes while the longest was nearly two hours. There was not time to re-interview any of the teachers and so any necessary clarifications were sought during the initial interview.

'Name'	School	Subject	Date of interview
Andrew	Secondary	Outgoing Headteacher	Summer 2015(Pilot)
Nigel	Secondary	Current Headteacher	Summer 2016
Sarah	Secondary	Head of History	Summer 2016
Wendy	Secondary	Head of Art and Design	Summer 2016
Penny	Secondary	Head of English	Summer 2016
Alan	Secondary	Head of Science	Summer 2016
Louise	Primary	Headteacher and subject lead for Science	Autumn 2016
Juliana	Primary	Subject lead for English	Autumn 2016
Nina	Primary	Subject lead for Maths	Autumn 2016
Heather	Primary	Subject lead for Geography	Autumn 2016
Colin	Primary	Subject lead for History	Autumn 2016
Carol	Primary	Subject lead for Art and Design	Autumn 2016
Shirley	Primary	Subject lead for Music	Autumn 2016

TABLE 1 TEACHERS INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

Applying thematic analysis, a range of themes and sub-themes were generated from the initial analysis of the codes and these themes are presented in the next chapter with illustrative quotations to allow the analysis to be as explicit and transparent as possible (Nowell et al, 2017). During the initial analysis the themes were constantly revisited and renamed many times to try and fully demonstrate their analytical power as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012, 2013). Braun and Clarke stated that themes must be internally and externally coherent, based around organising concepts and sufficiently different to each other so that they are important in developing the analysis (2006, 83). Importantly for the novice researcher, Braun and Clarke stated that defining the themes was not necessarily due to just the prevalence of codes, it is the importance and relevance of the codes and subsequent themes to the research question and data analysis that matters (2006, 83). Therefore, not all codes will become part of a theme, although of course this highlights the importance of the subjectivity and reflexivity of the researcher making the decisions.

The steps in this process may be seen in Appendix Two, where the initial code clusters generated from the coding of the interview data are included, along with the initial range of themes generated from these code clusters. This activity was completed following the guidance from Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012, 2013), and therefore as Appendix Two demonstrates, not all of the initial code clusters became themes, and not all of the initial themes were kept and developed into the final stages of analysis. This follows the approach

of Thematic Analysis, where the data must be constantly revisited to ensure coherence and relevance to the research question.

After much revisiting of the initial codes and themes, the relevant data was organised into 5 themes, with two being further divided into two sub-themes. I felt that these themes captured important material from the data relevant to the research questions.

4.11 Use of computer software in analysis

As is common with the analysis of much qualitative data (Robson, 2011; Friese, 2014), I used a qualitative software analysis programme, ATLAS:ti, to assist me 'code' the interview responses as the first step in the thematic analysis of the data. This material was stored as password protected data, accessed from a password protected computer. The original voice recordings were also stored on a secure device and will be deleted once the writing process is fully complete.

4.12 Research ethics

It is clear that social researchers working with people must be ethical in their work (Denscombe, 2007, 141; Robson, 2011, 194) and ethical practice in research is as much about principles of correct conduct as it is a box ticking exercise to satisfy a procedural need (Thomas, 2009, 149). The ethical aspects of research are of vital importance and there is some consensus around the key ethical principles shared by good research (Denscombe 2007; 2010; Wilson, 2009; BERA, 2011; Robson, 2011; Bryman, 2012; Braun and

Clarke, 2013). The key ethical concept is to 'do no harm' and the guiding principle of respect is important, covering aspects such as privacy and confidentiality, gaining informed consent, avoiding deception and allowing for self-determination of the respondents (Braun and Clarke, 2013, 62-63). This suggests a 'deontological' approach to ethics, where the processes are deemed to be equally vital to the outcomes and both must be clearly ethical (Wilson and Stutchbury, 2009, 67; Braun and Clarke, 2013, 61).

Every area of social research has its own specific guidelines and I have followed those proposed by the British Educational Research Association (2011) and the Ethics committee of my University. Ethical issues in qualitative research in the social sciences are given great weight as such research usually involves working with people, who may be vulnerable or not fully conversant with the processes involved. These concerns can be heightened in educational research which often involves children (Cohen and Manion, 1994, 347), which was not an issue for my research as it only involved teachers.

However, this raises different ethical considerations which are equally important. Bryan and Burstow, for example, have argued that ethics in school-based research is central to the outcomes as the quality and rigour of the research rests on an acknowledgement of the ethical dimensions (2018, 110). These include being truthful to the aims and potential benefits of the research while also protecting the professional reputations of the participants and their schools and being aware of any other possible personal costs to them. This

balancing act was termed the 'cost/benefits' ratio by Cohen and Manion and they concluded that 'the process of balancing benefits against possible costs is chiefly a subjective one and not at all easy' (1994, 348). They also stated that there are few absolutes in this area and so researchers must make decisions based on personal and professional values (1994, 348). All researchers must therefore put specific controls and measures in place to ensure ethical practice.

In this research, I ensured I gained 'informed consent' from the participants. They had to 'opt in' to the research process and had the option of 'opting out' at any stage. They also had the right to view the transcriptions of their interviews, and to view the final outcomes of the work. The participants were guaranteed confidentiality in the research which meant they would not be identifiable to outsiders and for this purpose pseudonyms have been used in the analysis. Confidentiality rather than anonymity was promised to the participants as anonymity suggests that even the researcher does not know the origins of the interview responses (Bell, 2005, 48). In this interview-based research and analysis this was clearly not possible.

Confidentiality also means that the schools themselves are not identifiable and this is an important aspect of education research where it may not always be in a school's best interest to be completely open and honest about what they are or are not doing (Bryan and Burstow, 2018). Clearly there is a balancing act involved here as certain aspects of the schools and their catchment areas must be discussed to provide relevant context, but in any

potential conflict of interest, it is ethically correct to err on the side of the schools and their confidentiality. Therefore, certain aspects of the school's locations and structures remain undisclosed which may have some small impact on the overall discussion (Braun and Clarke, 2013, 64).

As part of the aim to ensure the confidentiality of the two case study schools, I have also refrained from using material such as written comments and inspection grades from their recently published OFSTED reports. As the visits by OFSTED were discussed by teachers at both schools, this material would have provided useful additional data but would also have made the schools more identifiable. Therefore, alongside the relevant recent KS2 SATS results for the Primary school, I have erred on the side of caution and purposefully not referred to this additional material.

A further ethical issue concerned my own position regarding the teachers I interviewed. Although this was not 'insider' research as I did not work at either school (Robson, 2011), they were aware that I had once been a teacher and now worked in a University Education Department. I therefore needed to be aware of potential 'power' issues where I might be considered the 'expert' who was trying to catch out the teachers with my questions about the curriculum (Bryan and Burstow, 2018). As I had no subjective attitude towards the new National Curriculum, not working directly with it, I believe I was fair and respectful regarding the interviewing process.

A final ethical issue in educational research is that there is usually a strong social justice dimension to the work of the educational researcher rather than just considering the immediate case in hand and this could cause ethical tensions to arise over what should and shouldn't be reported (Bryan and Burstow, 2018, 110). This element clearly has implications for the researcher to consider, and I have striven to do so.

4.13 Limitations

Most research projects do not flow smoothly from start to finish and the researcher must expect to change plans and accept compromise throughout (Griffiths, 1998, 97; Robson, 2011, 406). There are many practical issues to be overcome when conducting research such as time constraints and access difficulties, and many of these have been addressed in the discussion. However, there are also broader issues such as the complicated search for 'truth' in conducting qualitative research, and this may place limits on the whole process.

Discussing the difficulty of defining 'truth' amongst postmodernist researchers, Schostak asked 'if there are no certainties, why believe anything? Why not believe anything?' (2006, 84). It does often feel that in the world of social science research it may be difficult for the qualitative researcher to produce worthwhile research, given all the potential critiques. However, most researchers believe it is still worthwhile if the critiques are made explicit, and one is aware of other viewpoints, perspectives and potential answers (Schostak, 2006; 85). Discussions with teachers are always interesting and

revelatory but what these interviews reveal is clearly open to interpretation and that is where the clearly stated researcher position and use of a relevant theoretical framework becomes important. Discussion of the themes generated from my research data with reference to relevant theory forms the next chapter of my thesis.

Chapter 5: Findings and initial discussion

'What is the point of a national curriculum?'   (Hopkin, 2013a, 66)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the themes that were inductively generated from the interviews using data-driven semantic coding and presents illustrative quotations for each theme alongside quotations of particular interest (Braun and Clarke, 2013, 207). Providing direct quotes from participants is an essential part of the reporting process of themes and this includes both short quotes to aid understanding of specific points and longer quotes to give a flavour of the original interview and transcription (Nowell et al., 2017, 11). This chapter also briefly discusses connections to the literature, where relevant, in order to develop the critical analysis. However, positioning the findings in relation to the relevant theoretical framework is more fully developed in the following discussion chapter (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

The themes have been named to give them a distinctive, short and explanatory titles in accordance with Braun and Clarke's advice on thematic analysis (2006, 2013).

5.1.1 The five themes

- Theme One - Subject leader perspectives on the new National Curriculum

- - Sub theme one – subject leader reactions to the actual content

    - Sub theme two – subject leader thoughts on the reasons for curriculum change

- Theme Two - The influence of school ethos on curriculum planning

- Theme Three - The influence of subject leader philosophy and experience on curriculum planning

- Theme Four - 'Assessment backwash' - the impacts of external assessment and monitoring on curriculum planning

    - Sub theme one – The impacts of national testing on curriculum planning

    - Sub theme two – The impacts of OFSTED monitoring on curriculum planning

- Theme Five - The pupils and the local context

5.2 Theme One: Subject leader perspectives on the new National Curriculum

A key focus of the interviews was on how the subject leaders had reacted to the new National Curriculum and the impact it had on their curriculum planning in school. It was also interesting to explore their thinking around why

the curriculum had changed. In analysis of the wide-ranging responses it became clear that these two aspects should be separated into two sub themes for clarity and overall theme homogeneity.

5.2.1 Sub-theme One: Subject leader reactions to the actual content

A key area of discussion was the extent to which the new National Curriculum differed from the previous version. Although there were clear differences in responses based on subjects and school type, many of the teachers commented that the new curriculum had got 'harder' for their pupils and that there was now too much content in some areas. This had clearly impacted on their work and their curriculum planning.

Many teachers felt the curriculum content had got 'harder' simply because some content had been 'moved downwards' through the curriculum so that expectations of understanding and achievement at each level had been raised. This was especially the case in the Primary school, where they felt that material usually in the Secondary curriculum (at KS3) was now in their section of the curriculum at KS2. Although this idea does link to Michael Gove's original intention to raise standards in education (discussed above), it was not always welcomed by the teachers.

An illustrative quotation exemplifying the Primary curriculum getting 'harder' is presented from Juliana:

> 'The expectations of the content is a lot harder than it was before so things that perhaps (were) coming in at an older age are coming in at a

lower age. Lots of things, especially upper Key Stage 2 you would think

probably more Secondary School. Yeah there's more content and at a

higher level so it's doubly difficult… so it's made it much tougher'

Similar comments were also made by Louise, Nina and Heather in the

Primary school, with Nina in particular feeling that the new expectations in the

curriculum were 'unrealistic' for the targeted age groups in Maths. Many of the

Primary teachers felt that the content in the National Curriculum had changed

in the recent revision and that their job was now harder because of the

increased and more difficult content in some subjects. This clearly impacted

on their work as they had to adjust their curriculum planning to take account.

An example was in Geography, where Heather noted she was now expected

to teach six figure grid references in year 6, an aspect of the curriculum

usually covered in Secondary school in the past. Overall, the idea of the

curriculum becoming 'harder' was particularly seen in the responses of the

English and Maths subject leads.

 For some of the subject leaders these changes raised the issue of increased

pressure on the pupils and their ability to cope and an illustrative quotation is

presented below from Nina:

> 'A lot of the writing is just too difficult. You know they're not writing for
>
> fun…these children struggle, you know…they can't do everything. They
>
> can only do so much'.

Agreeing with Nina, Juliana was very concerned about the impact of the new curriculum on her pupils and this was a factor that the Primary teachers took into account in their work. Juliana clearly had strong views about the curriculum and spoke to me for nearly two hours, sharing many concerns about how her subject had recently changed.

There were some variations in the responses in the Primary school however, and as an example, Louise, the Science lead expressed a different view about the new content for her curriculum, noting that;

> 'the change to the Science curriculum hasn't had too great an impact. It's just meant that what we had to do was look at our topic matrix, across subjects, and maybe restructure some of the cross-curricular units of work so that we could tweak, rather than radically overhaul them'.

Therefore, in her subject at least, it appeared that there had been some 'tweaking' rather than major changes to the curriculum although of course this view might reflect a difference in perception on the curriculum from an experienced teacher.

It was apparent from the interviews that the idea of content 'moving down' through the curriculum seemed to affect many teachers in the Primary school. In contrast, the Secondary teachers seemed much more ambivalent about the content of the new curriculum and appeared relatively happy to just 'get on

with it'. For example, in an illustrative quotation, Penny, the English lead, commented;

> 'that's the good thing about it because it isn't all bad and it isn't all good'.

Penny was also largely satisfied with the nature of the curriculum design and the links between the key stages. In a similar vein, Sarah, in History, felt that the new National Curriculum had not had much of an impact on her own KS3 curriculum planning. Where Secondary teachers did agree that material had been moved 'down' between the key stages, they didn't seem to find this problematic, as indicated by Alan, the Science lead:

> 'there's a lot of the KS 4 stuff so stars, galaxies and things like that is coming down to KS 3…it doesn't matter if it cascades down from KS 4 to KS 3 for us because we already know the KS 4 stuff''

Alan was clearly aware that content had moved, but it did not seem to worry him, which may not be surprising as he taught at both Key Stage 3 and 4, as is the case for most Secondary school teachers. The feeling was that some minor adjustments might need to be made to the KS3 curriculum as a result of the National Curriculum changes, but this did not appear to concern the staff involved. However, movement between KS3 and KS2 was an issue for the Primary staff who may not have taught the 'new' material before.

Some subject leaders commented on the amount of content for each subject in the National Curriculum document, noting the different levels of written

detail and the perceived importance this might give them. Core subject leaders such as Nina and Juliana often noted how much content they had to deal with, while some non-core staff commented on how little content they were given and the resulting lack of curriculum guidance.

As an illustrative quotation from one of the subject leaders with little content in the curriculum, Carol commented that;

> 'I think Art has got the least. I thought History was pretty skeletal and then we got through to this and it was like 'crikey'! Could you really afford the ink? Just initial shock when it was published, and we were like 'crikey so that's how much weighting and importance they give to Art and Design'. It was pretty staggering really.'

This comment is interesting, for not only did Carol notice how little content was listed for her own subject and the apparent lack of importance it may suggest, she was also aware of how this compared to other subjects. In the Primary School this is not surprising as most teachers teach across all subjects. This lack of content for Art was also noticed by the Secondary subject lead, Wendy, who was also concerned about the perceived lack of status it might give her subject in school. The different levels of content may give some sense of weighting to the subjects and this worried some teachers that it might affect their perceived status and curriculum time within their school, although they noted that this had not yet happened.

However, the lack of content for some subjects was not always seen in a negative way. For example, Shirley, when commenting on the curriculum content for Primary Music felt that;

> 'I think it is reasonable and I think what is quite nice about it is the fact that…wherever you are in the country it will be the same but…you can make it relevant to the children you're teaching. So that's a good thing.'

Shirley felt that with so little written content, the scope for flexibility in the Music curriculum was helpful and it meant that she could steer the content more specifically to her own context as relevant. This is a discourse of acceptance rather than the resistance expressed by some of the other teachers.

Some of the teachers also felt that the updating of the curriculum content was a good thing as it kept them up to date and aware of new ideas. An interesting quotation about this aspect of the new curriculum was made by Penny, who noted that;

> 'One of the good things about it is challenges us to make sure that we know our subject and that we are up to date with our subject and I think that's partly the function of the terminology'.

This reveals an interesting perspective on the new curriculum, accepting the need for a new and revised curriculum to keep subject leaders up to date in their subject knowledge. As English does have quite detailed curriculum content this would clearly impact on the work of the subject leader.

It appeared that the impact of the new curriculum varied depending on the Key Stage and subject involved. Some noted a big change in level and amount of content, such as in Primary English and Maths, but some did not feel it had had a major impact on their work. This is of interest, as clearly a new National Curriculum is intended to have an impact in school. The subject leaders also expressed their thoughts on possible reasons for the changes and these are discussed below as a separate sub-theme.

5.2.2 Sub-theme Two: Subject leader thoughts on the reasons for curriculum change

Many expressed views on the possible reasons for the changes to the National Curriculum with some also expressing opinions about the Government and their attitude to teachers. Some commented that they tried to ignore these wider political issues and just wanted to get on with their job as they knew better than those in Government. For example, in an illustrative quotation on the reasons for the curriculum change, Penny felt that;

> 'It's a political act, it's overtly politically…and it's an act that's about ideology and philosophy. It isn't necessarily about learning so it's our job to make that document be about learning, not about ideology'

Penny clearly felt the changes were political rather than pedagogical and that it was the job of teachers to make it successful in school. This echoes the comments made by Biddulph that a curriculum document must be brought to life by teachers (2013).

A common response was that the Government had intentionally tried to 'raise standards' in school by simply making the curriculum 'harder'. Many felt that this was not necessarily for pedagogical reasons and was more likely to be connected to concerns over international comparisons, such as the PISA rankings. Comments of this type were made by both Heather and Louise in the Primary school with an illustrative quotation from Louise stating that;

> 'I think the Government wants to be seen to be raising standards within PISA tables; it wants us to compete better at an international level'.

This comment shows an awareness of policy at a macro level and the apparent importance of international comparisons.

Heather made a similar comment, stating that:

> 'It's a Government thing isn't it that they've decided that we weren't teaching as complicated and as high order as we should have been, and this was the idea that they will overhaul education and make them look like they're achieving. They do it all the time.'

The comment above reflects a common response that changes were being made to the curriculum for macro policy reasons, rather than pedagogical ones. It is also worth noting the use of the term 'they' in the comment above, echoing the concern made by many that curriculum change is something done *to* teachers, not *with* them. In fact, the use of the term 'they' was a common response from the teachers when commenting on curriculum changes and the broader political picture. This did tend to suggest a certain

attitude of 'us' and 'them' within education and that the subject leaders did not see themselves as part of a process, just the receivers of policy.

For example, in an illustrative quotation, Penny felt that:

> 'I think we've got people who don't really understand the nature of learning and education in charge of learning and education and they want everything in a straight line and that's not how children progress'.

Penny expressed some dissatisfaction with those in charge of education and a disconnect with those in schools who actually do the job and 'know' what to do, having the correct 'teacher knowledge' (Ellis, 2007,448). This suggested a potential clash between the views of the 'experts' in school and those within the Government. For example, Penny went on to comment that;

> 'They should trust the experts, because we're experts and they're not...(laughs)'.

The use of the word 'they' again was interesting, as has been noted above. Penny then commented further on the possible reasons for the curriculum changes;

> 'You only have to look at the Key Stage SATS to see that there is an agenda and also you can see a pattern. Things get harder, the Government come out and go 'no we're not going to give teachers more money or we're not going to do this because they're a bit rubbish'

and it just seems a bit 'Big Brothery' to me so we try and ignore the politics'.

Penny suggested an agenda around the curriculum change and that there was a particular Governmental view of teachers. The reference to Orwell's Big Brother is interesting and suggests some connotations for those at the receiving end of policy. It also links to the 'discourse of derision' concept around teachers that many felt started to develop in the 1970s and has never really gone away (Ball, 1994; Maguire, 2014). However, Penny's response was to just get on with her job and 'ignore the politics'.

An interesting angle on the new National Curriculum were subject leader comments made about the 'men' involved in producing the new curriculum, and the fact that the document itself came across as very 'male'. This was interesting, as clearly a policy document is not gendered. However, the language used in the document may give a certain impression and some noted that the document felt mechanical and structured.

This point is illustrated by a quotation from Juliana, who felt that;

> 'It must be written by a man and I don't mean that in any bad way but you know that pure…you sit, you teach like this; you need to do this, it's very – quite a male – I see it as quite a male…it's not creative in any way. It's very specific, structured'.

These comments about the nature of the document and its perceived male, non-creative approach echo those from one other subject leader and throw an interesting light on teacher perceptions of the curriculum document.

A similar comment about the curriculum document was made by Penny, who felt that:

> 'That's a very antiseptic document – well they all are, and they're bound to be, it's very hard to make it not but it's fairly, it's very cold…here it seems quite robotic, quite cold and children shouldn't be der dum der dum der dum, its a bit Midwich Cuckoos or something'.

Penny used interesting terms to describe the document, such as antiseptic and cold, but also noted that this was perhaps to be expected in a policy document. Her reference to the John Wyndham novel of 1964 where village children all look and act the same is also interesting and gives some insight into her feelings about the way in which this curriculum might affect her pupils.

The comments about the 'maleness' of the document were not made by all teachers, but have been included here as they were unusual and were deemed of interest. Braun and Clarke note that this is one of the benefits of thematic analysis, where material of interest that does not necessarily generate its own broad theme may still be included for discussion (2006; 2013). A curriculum document itself is not gendered of course, but if there is a particular perception about its origins and structure, it may affect the way in which the document is viewed and mediated by subject leaders.

Although there were some comments on political aspects of the curriculum change, the subject leaders did not critique the curriculum in terms of the subjects involved or at any macro level outside the need to raise standards and compete internationally. While some appeared less than happy with the actual content for their subject in the new curriculum, many did not appear to be too concerned and were content to just deal with the new material. The main concern shared by some of the subject leaders was whether the level of the content was appropriate for their pupils. This lack of broader political awareness and a pragmatic desire just to 'get on with it' for their pupils reflects the findings of Priestley et al in Scotland, when researching teacher responses to a new curriculum (2013).

5.2.3 Summary

This theme considered subject leader views on the impacts of changes to the curriculum and the possible reasons for the change at larger scale. Many subject leaders suggested that they would cope with the changes and that it might not affect their work developing a new school curriculum. However, the perceived differences in the impacts of the new curriculum on Primary Maths and English, compared to the other subjects at both Key Stages, was very clear.

5.3 Theme Two: The impact of school ethos on curriculum planning

Many subject leaders commented on how the ethos of their schools affected them and their curriculum planning and this was clearly an important theme in

the data. It has been noted previously that structures within schools may impact on teachers and their work (Bowe et al, 1992; Priestley et al, 2013) and this appeared to be the case in this research.

A whole school ethos was more apparent in the smaller Primary School, which had fewer staff than the Secondary school and more porous boundaries between the subjects, as there were no subject 'departments' as such. The Primary school in this research also had a Headteacher, Louise, who appeared to drive the school ethos based on her own clear vision for education.

The situation was different in the Secondary school. While fewer subject staff were interviewed, they rarely discussed the overall ethos of the school, and when they did discuss an ethos it was at the level of their own subject department. Secondary subject departments do tend to be quite autonomous and so it is more likely that the ethos, outlook and philosophy of the subject leader and their team will shape the way in which they respond to a curriculum document (Bowe et al, 1992; Priestley et al, 2013).

The ethos of a school will impact on how individual teachers deal with a new curriculum, as there will be guidance from Headteachers on educational and organisational priorities. These influences may be more obvious in a smaller school and to exemplify the impact of the Headteacher on the Primary school, an illustrative quotation is presented from Louise:

'What I've always said to staff is…all that the National Curriculum does it tells us what to teach. It doesn't tell us how to teach it or in what depth to teach it, so if there are some elements that we really don't think are appropriate for the children, you cover it quickly and move on. You've fulfilled your statutory duty'

Louise noted here a key element of the National Curriculum document that it has little guidance on pedagogy or how long teachers should spend on different elements. There is potential for some discretion on curriculum decisions, bearing in mind potential monitoring or assessment issues. As Louise stated, her ethos was that staff have an element of freedom in how they mediate the curriculum and make suitable decisions for their pupils. To further assist her staff mediate the curriculum, Louise added that she reminded them that they didn't need to 'cover' any non-statutory content, and only needed to fully take note of the statutory requirements in the curriculum.

These comments demonstrate how the view of the Headteacher can directly influence the work of staff in a school through the ethos they develop. Louise had some experience in her role and so was able to comment on how the National Curriculum and levels of guidance had changed over time. She was dismissive of (as she termed it) the 'Mary Poppins' type of curriculum, where teachers had very little guidance and could just cover their 'favourite things'. She was also unimpressed with strongly regulated curricula where teachers were told what to do, but she had learnt over time to combine both approaches. As she stated:

'Actually, you can bring your favourite things into that regulation and you get a better, stronger curriculum out of it'.

This key point summed up Louise's attitude towards the National Curriculum and the clear ethos she tried to develop within her school. This translated into how the staff dealt with the curriculum, adopting what they felt they must but also adapting it to result in a stronger curriculum outcome.

A further element of the school ethos was that the Headteacher had a positive attitude towards creativity and supported the Arts and more creative subjects in the curriculum. This was a recurring comment in the Primary school, and in an illustrative quotation, Carol stated that:

'We're very lucky. We embrace creativity here. We do embrace alternative ways of doing things. If I was in another school that wasn't as driven by creativity, then it would be different but then I wouldn't be working there anyway'.

Carol's feeling that her school embraced creativity and so supported her subject was clearly important to her work. Other staff made similar comments, such as in Music where Shirley also felt that the creative ethos at the school supported her subject in ways that might not happen elsewhere.

For both creative subject leads there was a strong feeling that Louise was trying to develop and retain a creative ethos in the school and so their subjects, Music and Art, would be 'protected' somewhat from other curriculum pressures that might encourage more focus on the 'Core' subjects. Louise

clearly had a strong personal philosophy and ethos towards education for her school and in a smaller school such as this, it exerted a more direct influence on the school staff.

Other Primary staff made similar comments about how the ethos of the school affected their own work. For example, Heather noted that:

> 'We're very lucky that we have freedom to pick and choose what we want to teach when, whereas in other schools it's very rigid in what they're teaching. So we're allowed to pick our topics but we have to ensure that they're hitting the criteria'.

Heather was clear on how the ethos of the school affected the curriculum decision making in the school. This comment again suggests the desire of the Headteacher to develop a certain ethos towards mediating the curriculum and to resist outside pressures, giving some curricular freedom to the teaching staff.

In a further illustrative quotation, Nina summed up the importance of the ethos set by Louise on the teacher's work at the school:

> 'How it's…executed on the shop floor definitely comes from the ethos that the Head sets.'

Although this comment relates to pedagogy as well as curriculum planning, it helpfully sums up the views of many of the Primary subject leaders. The ethos developed by the Headteacher clearly had an impact on the attitudes of the

staff at the school and influenced their work in mediating the National Curriculum.

There was much less discussion in the Secondary school concerning a whole school ethos. This was perhaps not surprising given the presence of larger, more autonomous subject departments where the ethos of the department head, the subject leader, was more apparent. While the Headteacher at the Secondary school did make a case for the importance of creative subjects and sport, he also recognised that results in English and Maths really did matter to the school and so would influence their curriculum planning. The impact of the personal ethos of the subject leaders is discussed as a separate theme below.

5.3.1 Summary

The ethos of a school, strongly influenced by the Headteacher, will affect the ways in which teachers work with a new National Curriculum. This is important as the whole school ethos may run counter to the personal philosophy of the teacher, although as one of the Primary teachers suggested, they might not wish to work in such a school anyway. The influence and ethos of the Headteacher can play a big role in a smaller school such as a Primary, whereas in the Secondary school structure there are more staff and more autonomous subject departments so the influence of subject leaders may be more important.

5.4 Theme Three: The influence of subject leader philosophy and experience on curriculum planning

In the interviews the subject leaders outlined their wide range of backgrounds, experiences and personal educational ethos. It was apparent that these factors played a role in how they mediated the National Curriculum, and others have also commented on how teacher's values and beliefs play a role their work (such as Priestley et al, 2013; Fanghanel, 2009). This theme links to the concept of agency, which is affected by factors such as personal beliefs, skills and knowledge (Priestley et al, 2013, 191). The concept of teacher agency has much value in research, but is a major area of academic work that is outside the scope of this study.

Many of the subject leaders discussed their own subject backgrounds and this was particularly the case in the Secondary school, as they possibly felt that as subject department heads they had to demonstrate confidence and expertise. As department heads they must inspire confidence and trust in their department teams, and both of these aspects were summed up clearly in this illustrative quotation from Penny, the English subject lead;

> 'I'm a literature geek. Yeah and so and I think as Head of Faculty
> (Department) you have to be as you are as a teacher and they will trust
> you and if you know what you are doing, if your subject knowledge is
> extensive and I do think you do need to have extensive subject
> knowledge as the Head of Department'.

It was clear that Penny felt that, as a subject lead, she also needed to be seen as a subject expert who could lead her team and be trusted to make the correct curriculum decisions. She also commented on the views of her department on her decision-making:

> 'I am very well-read; I have a lot of subject knowledge and basically that's what I do – I read all the time.......and so they trusted me to do the right thing because they knew I knew what I was doing'.

This portrayed a self-confidence from Penny in her subject knowledge and in the ability to mediate the curriculum on behalf of the department. This level of confidence and belief in their abilities at the Secondary level was also expressed by Wendy and Sarah, the Art and History subject leads respectively.

Their responses differed to some of those in the Primary school, where subject leads such as those in History, Geography and English, commented that they were largely self-taught in terms of subject expertise and so their subject leadership often came from a personal interest. However, they also seemed keen to justify their positions and convince of their expertise.

Subject expertise and the confidence this brought to the mediation of the National Curriculum document was discussed in many interviews. It appeared that a strong subject background and more experience gave a strong confidence in what should be taught or included in a subject curriculum. This was most clearly demonstrated by the subject leaders in the creative subjects

where there was limited input from the National Curriculum document itself and so it was left to the teachers to decide what should be included.

For example, when asked how she knew what to include in an Art curriculum, Wendy responded that;

> 'I am open to other teachers bringing in new ideas, but…I very much think that was shaped by my actual training…and my experience through that really shaped what I believe is right and wrong and what I think should be taught'.

While Wendy noted that she was open to inputs from others, she suggested a clear sense of 'right and wrong' and knew what should be included in a curriculum, based on her own beliefs and experience. This comment highlights the importance of the personal views of the subject leaders at the Secondary school in terms of how they mediated the National Curriculum.

The sense of the need for a strong subject background and a level of expertise to mediate a curriculum was also outlined by both Carol, the Primary Art lead and Louise, the Primary Science lead. At the Secondary school, Wendy also stated that her Art team felt able to trust her leadership and direction when developing the curriculum.

Carol, the Primary Art lead, made a similar point when commenting on the lack of subject content and guidance in the curriculum for her subject. She felt it needed some input from a subject expert such as herself to make sense of the document and to provide guidance for other teachers at the school. While

actually looking at the curriculum document in the interview, she commented that;

> 'If they were just to pick this up and plan their Art from this, we'd get no progression of skills whatsoever, so they do need a little bit of guidance. A lot of them are more than capable of doing it themselves but...it makes common sense that you divvy it out and you lead so that everyone knows what they're doing'.

It was clear that Carol considered her own expertise as vital in helping the other Primary teachers with this subject content and that it was her role to lead and mediate it for them.

Apart from confidence in subject expertise, it was also apparent that teaching experience played a part in curriculum decision making. The more experienced teachers in this sample (for example, Louise, Simon, Sarah and Penny) appeared able to ignore aspects of the National Curriculum or shape it more to suit their own ethos or the needs of their subject. This suggests that the impact of experience on making curriculum decisions is important, especially where the teacher has experienced different versions of a National Curriculum. Curriculum revisions always have to be managed and some of the subject leaders commented on how the National Curriculum had changed over time and how it had affected them, usually through a changing workload.

An interesting outcome was that the personal philosophy of the teacher could also influence cross-phase provision between KS2 and KS3, which is a key aspect of the new National Curriculum for some subjects. This was mentioned

by both Alan and Sarah, in Secondary Science and History respectively, as for them the curriculum document outlined specific subject content at both KS2 and KS3. This division of content relied on collaboration between schools to ensure continuity and a lack of overlap, and as these teachers mentioned, this level of collaboration is quite hard to achieve in the English system.

Sarah made some interesting points about the problems facing History at this level, where teaching in KS2 is supposed to end at 1066 and KS3 progresses from that point onwards. For example, she commented that;

> 'I don't think there's continuity with the Primary Schools yet – some of the students seem to be coming through (with) 'oh yeah I've done this before'. 'You shouldn't be doing anything after 1066 at Primary'. 'Well we've already done this; we've done that'. I mean they still come and 'oh we did Henry the Eighth last year' and it's like 'no, you're not supposed to'……and that's something I think we need to improve is that communication with Primary Schools as well, especially within the local area to see what they are actually covering'.

Sarah made the point that although the document itself was clear about what should be taught in each Key Stage, this wasn't necessarily happening as teachers could still mediate the curriculum to an extent to suit what they wanted to teach.

Sarah made a further interesting comment;

'One of my friends is a Primary School teacher and she was like 'oh yeah we're doing the Blitz and everything at school' and I was like 'why?' and she was like 'well because we like it'. And (I'm) like 'well you're not supposed to be doing it...well right, OK. Brilliant!'

These comments highlight the problem of close coordination between the two Key Stages, which perhaps appears more straightforward on the pages of the National Curriculum than is the reality in schools. The second quotation is of particular interest because as Sarah noted, her Primary teacher friend was teaching another area of the curriculum simply because she 'likes it'. This point highlights the role played by teacher autonomy and personal philosophy when mediating the curriculum. It also suggests how the lack of assessment or close monitoring of curriculum coverage, while not always welcomed by teachers, may affect cross-phase liaison if teachers are able to make their own decisions without consequence. This suggests that the intended outcomes of the National Curriculum can be affected by other factors 'on the ground' in school. Cross-phase liaison issues were also mentioned by Nina at the Primary school and Alan at the Secondary school. Alan particularly felt that there was not enough cross-phase liaison in his subject and that pupils were not coming in from Primary schools with the subject knowledge that he would expect at that level, as contained within the National Curriculum.

Interestingly, the comments made above by Sarah about personal preferences were also relevant to her own choices, as she noted when discussing a conversation she had had at a school open evening. A parent

had asked her if she was following the new curriculum closely and 'taking all the good stuff out?' Sarah recalled her answer:

> 'I was like 'no we're leaving some of it in' and I said 'we're not following it religiously; we're going to be putting some of the other stuff that we know the students like that fit into some of those time periods. Those things will be in there.'

This comment demonstrates that Sarah was also content to not follow the curriculum religiously and to add other material of her own choice. This highlights her ability to mediate the curriculum at this stage, as there are no external exams at KS3 to monitor the coverage. Monitoring would only be through OFSTED inspections, and as Sarah mentioned in her interview, checking on her KS3 curriculum coverage was not a key aspect of her most recent inspection experience. Her comments in fact summarise the views of many of the Secondary teachers, that there had been limited direct impact on them from the new curriculum document. They felt they had been able to mediate it to an extent to suit themselves and their pupils needs and interests.

However, where the content of the curriculum was being closely monitored either through national testing or OFSTED, teachers did need to be more aware of the new content and the need to 'cover' it. This difference is a key finding in this research and is analysed more fully in the following chapter.

As Secondary school departments tend to be relatively autonomous, the ethos and philosophy of the subject leader will impact on the whole

department and this was apparent in the responses. This suggests links to the conclusions of Bowe et al (1992) and their research into how departments in different schools managed the original National Curriculum in the early 1990s in England, and to Priestley et al's research into a new curriculum in three Scottish schools in the 2000s (2013). Both pieces of research found that the nature and ethos of a department did have an impact on the adoption or adaption of curriculum documents.

As an illustrative quotation of how one subject leader felt about her department and the curriculum document, Penny commented:

> 'I did the structure and then we divvied it out and everybody collaborated…we're quite a literary faculty as well so that helps. English here is very successful. That's to do with our level of expectation and the fact that we're all quite stubborn and we don't like stuff going'.

Penny clearly explained her role in organising her team in terms of developing the curriculum, and that the ethos of the department was helpful and collaborative in that regard. There is some sense of 'resistance' to curriculum change in her response, as she highlighted the idea of stubbornness and holding on to curriculum material that the department values. This again suggests some flexibility in mediating the curriculum document at KS3.

Sarah made a similar comment about her department and their work with the new curriculum:

'I mean we are all very similar within History; we all think very – along the same lines on the majority of things to be honest so we all kind of had that first gut feeling about it and it was like: 'Yeah, we'll go with that'.'

Sarah felt that her staff all had similar views on the curriculum and so had similar responses to the content. Similar comments were also made by Alan in Science and Wendy in Art, highlighting the importance of the philosophy of the subject leaders themselves and also the extent to which they influenced or moulded a department ethos in terms of approach to the curriculum. For example, department members might favour different aspects of the curriculum and it is up to the subject leader to manage these differences and suggest a way forward.

5.4.1 Summary

The personal ethos and philosophy of the subject leads played a role in how they mediated the curriculum document, based on their levels of experience, subject knowledge and personal preferences for their subject. These decisions were often part of a departmental approach, where the subject leads needed to take account of the views and interests of others in their team. However, the subject leads made the final decision and so their own ethos and philosophy played a major role.

A key point raised for some subjects was that the effectiveness of the National Curriculum relied on a smooth transition between KS 2 and 3 (cross-phase

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between Primary and Secondary). However, if teachers make curriculum decisions based on their own interests or subject philosophy that do not follow the curriculum, as seen here in History, it raises questions about the effectiveness of this transition for the pupils. It also raises questions about the monitoring of this transition, and whether it is possible to plan a curriculum in this way given the disconnect between Primary and Secondary schools.

5.5 Theme Four: 'Assessment backwash' - the impacts of external assessment and monitoring on curriculum planning

There are key differences in the impacts of inspection and testing on the two Key Stages in this research, with the obvious difference being that National Testing (SATS) now only affects the Primary School at the end of KS2. Therefore, the impact of National Testing is presented as its own sub-theme, while the impact of OFSTED monitoring is discussed separately as a sub-theme as it directly affected both schools. Although treated separately, both sub-themes connect to the key concept that school accountability, through either inspection or testing, has a 'backwash' effect on the way that teachers work with a National Curriculum.

5.5.1 Sub-theme One: The impacts of national testing on curriculum planning

In the Primary school the pressure of the national tests taken in the Spring of Year 6 was mentioned by many of the subject leaders. There was a general awareness that these were high-stakes tests, and so were of great

importance to the school, the teachers and the pupils. The Primary English and Maths subject leads commented a great deal on the tests, as might be expected, as these were the only two subjects externally tested in this way. However, comments were also made by other teachers as Primary school staff usually teach all subjects to their own class and so any Year 6 teacher would be affected by the national tests.

The KS2 SATS tests in year 6 may be seen in Bernsteinian terms as an example of the ORF monitoring school coverage of the curriculum through evaluation (2000, 36). The consequential, high-stakes nature of these tests (Au, 2007; Wong, 2017) was something the Maths and English subject leaders alluded to throughout their interviews.

For example, in an illustrative quotation about the impact of the tests, Juliana stated that:

> 'They came into Year 6 and we did quite nice things and then we went into overdrive ready for these tests ......it went straight into this trying to make sure we had the coverage there, *ready to get them through some tests that we had to prove that we'd taught this curriculum*.'

I have italicised the last sentence of this quotation to highlight Juliana's view that these tests were directly connected to proving that the curriculum has been covered as intended. This suggests a direct link between assessment and curriculum planning and that Juliana was aware that the curriculum must be covered satisfactorily. The comment also suggests how preparation for the

tests was a big interruption to the normal curriculum and intruded into the school year. Many of the Primary teachers made this point and they also mentioned the pressure of the tests on their pupils.

The need to evidence curriculum coverage so that pupils would be successful in the tests suggests an element of needing to 'teach to the test' and many of the Primary teachers alluded to this aspect of their work. For example, in a strong reaction to the pressures of the tests on her pupils, Juliana stated that:

> 'they're under pressure because they have to perform. They perform like monkeys in a way. I have to have them performing like monkeys by May in certain things. If that wasn't there, this (the curriculum) might be more acceptable'.

This comment demonstrates Juliana's level of feeling about the tests and how she felt she had to teach to the test to allow her pupils to 'perform' successfully in the Spring. It is quite telling that in reference to the old fashioned 'organ grinder and dancing monkey' scenario she sees herself as having to conduct her pupils through a dance, a 'performance', so that they will be successful. She also commented directly on the curriculum document, noting that the content might be acceptable without the pressure of the external national tests. These external tests clearly had a major impact on how she taught and organised her subject and affected her feelings towards the curriculum itself.

The Primary Headteacher, Louise, also commented on the wider impacts of these National tests and how they affected her curriculum planning. For example, she stated that:

> 'It's had a huge, huge impact even to somebody who is as passionate as I am about a creative curriculum and maintaining breadth and balance, it's driven us down a route that I didn't really want to go down'.

She expressed concern that the monitoring of the curriculum through the external national tests was affecting her desire to provide a creative and balanced curriculum and therefore contrasting with her personal philosophy on education. The route that she suggested in this quotation was teaching for the test, which was mentioned by many of the Primary teachers in a negative sense.

The only other Core subject externally tested at KS2 is Maths and Nina also commented on how the pressure of these external tests affected her work with the curriculum over the school year. In an illustrative quotation, she noted:

> 'The first term has gone now. We're not getting that time back and then when we return at Christmas, we've then got one term left…it's quite a daunting and unpleasant feeling.'

Nina's comments on the lack of time she felt she had to prepare her pupils indicated the level of pressure she felt. She also commented that there was

'not a hope' of getting most of her pupils to the relevant level in time, given what she has seen from the advance practice tests. This fact seemed to cause her much professional distress in the interview.

Juliana also commented further on how she felt that the tests were a direct assessment check on the school's coverage of the English curriculum. Commenting on the curriculum document itself and the expectations of the tests, she stated that:

> 'They are assessed on what is in here. Absolutely assessed on everything that's in here and they have to be – we used to have best fit before. Best fit – it's not now. It's very much yes or no. They can do this, or they can't. They've raised that so I think it's so much harder...the expectation is so much harder'.

As Juliana explained, the pupils now had to pass everything in the test to be recorded at the appropriate level, adding to the pressure on her and the pupils. Juliana also clearly felt that this made the tests harder for both her and her pupils, which only added to the pressure. This comment links to those made by the Primary teachers about the curriculum itself getting 'harder' through changes to its content. This feeling that the expected levels in the tests had risen was a consistent comment from both Nina and Juliana, along with the 'backwash' effect this was having in terms of pressure on curriculum time, planning and pupil performance.

Louise, the Primary Headteacher, clearly summarised these feelings on the external tests and how they seemed to dominate curriculum life in the school at year 6:

> 'To my mind it would be better if the tests weren't as all-consuming as they were because then people would make room for the curriculum as a whole'.

This is a key comment that summarises the perceived impact of the tests on the whole school curriculum, where high stakes testing often leads to a narrowing of the school curriculum as also suggested by Au (2008) Lingard (2013) and Whitaker et al (2013). This was exemplified further by Louise when she commented on the difference made when Science stopped being externally tested by the SATS and how this affected the overall curriculum:

> 'When it became non-statutory, in other words…we didn't need to do a test anymore, it stopped driving it and the Science started to take a backward step. Literacy and Numeracy strategies were all-consuming…where you were hearing that your mornings must be English and Maths based and your afternoons try and fit everything else into it. *So that's where the rest of the curriculum started to get squeezed and Science was dropped as a test and it therefore stopped having that same significance in terms of being held to account in your performance*'.

Louise reiterated that her curriculum planning was driven by the importance of the SATS in English and Maths and this was affecting the time available for other subjects in the curriculum. I have italicised the last sentence to emphasise the key point that once it was no longer externally tested, Louise's view was that Science ceased to have the same importance in the curriculum, as it was no longer held to account in the same way. In other words, the approach to the Science curriculum in the school could now be more flexible as it was no longer subject to consequential or high stakes assessment (Au, 2007, 2008; Lingard, 2013; Wong, 2017).

The impact of the external assessment was further commented on by Juliana who noted that:

> 'once those tests are out of the way in May then that's when we can be a bit more flexible and a bit more creative, I suppose'.

This comment, suggesting that the May date for the National tests in year 6 was an important transition point in their curriculum planning, was one made by many of the Primary subject leaders, especially Nina, who felt that the tests in May dominated her work for the Year 6 pupils.

For the Primary English and Maths subject leaders, the external National tests for their year 6 pupils had great impact on how they managed their curriculum time and mediated the curriculum document. This is because the SATS assessment is closely aligned to the curriculum content and, as the assessments are of such high stakes, the teachers felt obliged to closely

'cover' the content of the National Curriculum. This assessment was therefore providing a strong check on the curriculum coverage and it may be argued that it is the assessment regime that was ensuring that teachers were responding 'correctly' to the new National Curriculum rather than the existence of the new curriculum itself.

Juliana summed up the issue of this 'assessment backwash' very clearly in her interview while pointing at the English section of the National Curriculum and asked:

> 'How many things are you not covering in School because you're having to cover this?'

Along with many of the Primary subject leaders, she clearly felt that the pressure of ensuring full curriculum coverage in two subjects to ensure success in national tests was impacting on curriculum planning for the other subjects. This pressure was affecting what might be considered the 'curriculum share' of other subjects in the curriculum.

As an example, Juliana commented:

> 'I teach more Literacy and English now than I ever taught before, so some curriculum areas have had to sort of go or be less'.

She went on to note an example of this pressure to cover the English curriculum:

'If you looked at our work for Ancient Greeks it will be mainly literacy work. It might have a Greek theme to it, so we try and convince the children that they are actually doing History of an afternoon but no, no they're actually still doing a SPAG lesson which they know, but that's a pressure we've been put under'.

It would appear the pressure for success in English is so strong that the other subjects may merely become vehicles for it. Juliana also noted that the pupils were aware of this pressure, which worried her. Other subject leads noted the same issue, such as Colin, who was not happy that the need to evidence progress in Literacy sometimes seemed to over-ride the need to record progress in his own subject of History.

Nina also made a similar point about the pressure on her time due to the need to evidence Literacy:

'there does come a point where we're saying you know what if we don't get the writing, you know, it will quite literally be 'there is no PE this week' because we've got these two weeks to get these pieces of writing ready to go to moderation. You make a compromise and it's wrong.'

The flexibility of the Primary school timetable means that teachers were usually able to make changes as needed to support curriculum requirements, but as Nina pointed out, she was not happy about having to make compromises with the curriculum in the pursuit of coverage in Literacy. This

clearly affected the breadth of the curriculum they could offer, although Nina also noted that due to the Headteacher's desire for a creative and balanced curriculum, on some occasions English and Maths also took second place to visiting speakers or other curriculum innovations. The overall feeling was of great pressure on curriculum time, which echoes the findings of the Rose and Cambridge Primary reviews of 2009.

The pressures were summarised by Louise, who appeared quite exasperated when commenting on the time pressures in school for the whole curriculum:

> 'they need to go swimming once a week – then add into that the fact that they're also supposed to have some time in a Games lesson, or a PE lesson and you end up with just a very small block of time which is left for Art, Music, History, Geography, IT, Science'

Her comment on the squeezing of curriculum time for the other subjects (their 'curriculum share') was one that many of the Primary teachers noted, such as Heather and Colin. Shirley also commented that sometimes Music didn't take place when it should have because the content for Maths and English had not been completed that day. The Primary teachers made it clear that the effects of the 'assessment backwash' from external testing on the KS2 curriculum were largely negative in terms of time allocation for other subjects.

Although equivalent National Tests do not take place in KS 3, there are high stakes National tests at the end of KS 4, the GCSE exams. As these exams are such high stakes for the pupils and the school, the need to prepare pupils

for them at the end of year 11 was something that all teachers noted, and they often saw the non-assessed KS 3 phase as preparation for the GCSEs themselves. In fact, the Secondary Headteacher commented that he saw the GCSEs as a five-year course.

The high stakes of the GCSE exams combined with the lack of testing at KS3 and the apparent flexibility of content of the new National Curriculum meant that at this Secondary school the KS3 curriculum was now being covered in only two years (rather than the usual three) and that the GCSE courses were now given three years (rather than the traditional two). This was an interesting development and was not surprising given the lack of assessment at KS3 and the fact that GCSE results are one of the key benchmarks by which Secondary schools in England are measured. This is an interesting 'backwash' effect on the Secondary curriculum.

Another aspect was that both Sarah and Penny felt this curriculum flexibility at KS3 allowed them to include elements of the GCSE curriculum at this stage so that pupils would be more prepared for their GCSE exams. For example, Penny felt that it gave her department more time to teach difficult material such as poetry, and that this had led to more confidence amongst her pupils. As an illustrative quotation, Penny commented on how she used the KS3 curriculum content to help prepare for the GCSE exam:

> 'We don't teach all of that terminology, but we teach the content, the knowledge, the skills that we feel they need to set them up for Key Stage 4 well'.

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She also made the point that she only 'dips in' to the subject glossary in the curriculum as needed at KS3 and used it to help set up the pupils for success at KS4. Sarah also commented that she made a point of bringing KS4 History vocabulary into her KS3 curriculum to help her pupils be better prepared. It appears that the KS3 curriculum is seen as a stepping stone to the KS4 GCSE and both subject leaders were planning their KS3 curriculum based on this fact. This highlights the apparent flexibility for the teachers in curriculum planning at KS3. It also links to the previous theme of subject leader philosophy and ethos and how their attitude to their subject affected their curriculum planning.

Nigel, the Secondary Headteacher, made an interesting point about the preparations for the GCSE exams, summarising his attitude towards the curriculum:

> 'What we should be doing is starting it on Day 1 in Year 7, you know, we're preparing students for this run-up to take their examinations and in the same way that you've got an Olympic athlete that would be having a target of five years down the line, that's the same with our students and I think the new National Curriculum's allowed that'.

It is clear from this comment that Nigel saw the GCSE as a five-year course, and that the non-examined and more flexible KS3 curriculum allowed this planning. This raises questions about the status of the KS3 element of the National Curriculum and the fact that it had been planned by its producers as a three-year course. This is direct example of a school mediating the

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curriculum differently to the way originally intended and is an example of many conclusions of policy implementation research that suggests policy refracts and changes as it is implemented (Cuban, 1998; Trowler, 2003; Supovitz, 2008).

When planning their KS3 curriculum, Secondary subject leaders appeared to take note of the KS4 curriculum, and this influenced their planning. As the GCSE course ends with high-stakes assessment, it is not surprising that the desire for success in these exams has an impact on decisions made lower down in the school.

An interesting point connected to assessment was that some Secondary teachers were in favour of more of this at the end of KS2, to ensure continuity in the curriculum across the Primary/Secondary cross phase divide. Sarah made this point when commenting on the National Curriculum's desire for a clear chronology in History, stating that:

> 'if that's what they want then it needs to be enforced because otherwise...they're not building up that understanding of the early period before 1066...and if that's what they're wanting, this chronological approach across the Key Stages, then I don't think it's particularly working at the moment'.

She highlighted the fact that just stating requirements in a National Curriculum document doesn't necessarily mean that it will happen as teachers will

mediate the curriculum and take note of specific assessment impacts as required.

At the Secondary school, Alan also commented on the difficulties of the school's cross phase links:

> '(success) relies on the fact that Science has been taught well at Key Stage 2 which we don't think it has been uniformly. Some of the feeder schools seem to do it very well. But a couple of the other ones aren't so good…so we can't guarantee that all of the kids will come in with the same stuff and…if they've done the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum they should have.'

Alan clearly noted that curriculum progression from KS2 to KS3 relied on the work being covered satisfactorily within the Primary schools, which might not always take place in some. The lack of external assessment at this key transition meant that the curriculum may not be delivered as originally envisioned at this point. Interestingly, this links to Louise's comment on how the loss of SATS tests in Science at KS2 had affected its place in the curriculum and therefore its status and this may have had the impact on teaching and progression in the subject noted by Alan.

It appears that while many in the Primary school do not welcome the SATS tests and their perceived impact on the curriculum and their pupils, the lack of external testing or assessment in most subjects does have a variety of

'assessment backwash' effects on curriculum planning, content and smoothness of subject progression.

5.5.2 Sub-theme Two: The impacts of OFSTED monitoring on curriculum planning

All schools in England have regular inspections from OFSTED, a quasi-Governmental agency that monitors standards and performance across the education sector. Much of the performance pressure on Primary and Secondary schools comes from these school inspections and they are high-stakes affairs with schools publicly graded at the end of the process. However objective it is, the OFSTED inspection can be difficult for schools, especially if there are differences in educational philosophies. Therefore, OFSTED inspections may have an 'assessment backwash' on schools, as they prepare for them and deal with the feedback. This type of monitoring is different to that of the National tests discussed above and potentially affects all subjects in all schools, and so it is discussed separately as its own sub-theme. It is also of note that both schools involved in the research had had relatively recent OFSTED inspections and so the experience was mentioned by most of the staff in their interviews.

The Headteacher of a school will feel particularly accountable for the outcomes of an OFSTED inspection, and this was clearly demonstrated by Louise at the Primary school. She appeared to have been quite affected by the process as she had some disagreements with her lead Inspector over educational philosophy. As she explained:

'For the first time ever last year I was *inspected*. I've been inspected now probably six or seven times, but for the first time I hit an inspector who just didn't understand it. He just wanted to see which national textbook I was using for Geography or which national website I was using for Maths and when I was trying to explain to him the complexity, that it doesn't work like that……he didn't like it and said it was airy fairy and we really clashed; we really clashed horns – it was just two completely different ideologies coming together and was difficult'.

This quotation is interesting in many ways. It highlights the evaluative nature of the OFSTED inspection and the impact of different educational philosophies on the process. Louise also mentioned that the Inspector was interested in the text books and national websites that the school was using. This suggests possible links to a neo-liberal agenda, where there is an expectation on schools to use certain commercial materials. The use of the term 'airy-fairy' is also interesting, as it does suggest a real difference in philosophy at her school compared to that of the Inspector. Louise also commented that she was determined to follow her own philosophy and not bow to pressure from outside the school. As she went on to note, this could make life difficult:

'It takes its toll and you do reach a point when you start to look at it and you start to think how long can I keep resisting this? How long can I keep asking my staff to resist it?'

The use of the term 'resistance' is interesting and is important in terms of how Louise saw her relationship to outside Government agencies such as OFSTED, summing up her own philosophy towards curriculum planning. Louise was clear about her priorities and her wish to resist outside pressure, but she did note that this could also be problematic:

> 'Going our way leaves you vulnerable because if your results aren't where they need to be you've nobody to blame but yourself, whereas if you're following somebody else's nationally published unit of work…then it's easier for somebody like that Inspector to tick and say well yes they did do what they were supposed to do, but the children just weren't quite up to it'.

Louise was clearly aware that following her own philosophy on curriculum planning made her and the school vulnerable, if results were not seen to be good enough. Whatever her own philosophy, however, the school is still monitored and measured by OFSTED and so the effects of external monitoring would have some impact on how they managed the National Curriculum. One impact would be the 'breadth' of the planned school curriculum.

The combined pressures of external testing and the OFSTED inspections means that Primary schools have the difficult task of trying to achieve the expected breadth in their curriculum, while at the same time developing enough depth in English and Maths to achieve success in National Tests. These two aims may not be compatible, and this pressure was highlighted by

Louise that in the recent OFSTED inspection she had been criticised for narrowing the curriculum offer to the pupils and 'teaching to the test', even though this ran counter to her own educational philosophy. On this point she stated that:

> 'It's not what I entered the profession to do, but if that's all you wanted, don't then send an Inspector into my school who tells me that we're not teaching enough breadth of subjects as well. He's a Geography Specialist and he tore our Geography apart. I just felt like saying to him 'well what do you want me to do, because I can't teach that amount of Geography and that amount of Science and that amount of PE and PHSE and everything else alongside what we're being asked to do in English and Maths'.

Louise appeared frustrated when making these comments about the pressure on her curriculum to achieve success in the KS2 SATS tests alongside the need for curriculum breadth in the other subjects. As Louise noted, she was finding it increasingly difficult to achieve both competing aims in the time available and to meet the approval of the OFSTED inspectors. This discussion around issues of breadth and depth in the Primary Curriculum again echoes points made in the Rose and Cambridge reviews of 2009, and it would appear that this Primary School at least is still trying to deal with this issue.

Colin and Heather also commented on OFSTED monitoring at the Primary school. They both discussed the questions the inspectors asked the pupils

about the nature and content of their subjects and the expectations on pupils seemed to surprise them. For example, Colin stated that:

> 'Last year, the inspector that came in was asking very specific questions. He was asking lots of very specific things about sort of events and things like Greek democracy and Greek power and the children didn't really know what he was talking about and he sort of was like 'well you've been doing the Greeks; you've been doing the Romans. You should know about this and you should have covered this'.

These were quite specific questions by the Inspector to the children about the nature of the subject and they were also indirectly checking coverage of the History National Curriculum by teachers at the school. Heather made similar comments about the Geography inspection:

> 'They were looking in books; they were asking for evidence; looking at plans…they were asking things like 'can you find this on the map?' 'What continent was that?' But they were also – which was a tricky thing for us as a school, they were asking the children what does Geography mean? What is Geography? But we don't teach them as Geography – we call it a topic and everything is in a topic so for them to define what Geography was, was quite tricky because we've never sat them down and said 'this is Geography'. And it was the same for

the other subjects, for History and for Science, you know they were asking 'what is a scientist?'.

This is an interesting development of the comments from Colin, as not only was the Inspector checking on the coverage of the Geography curriculum, there was also an element of checking the pupil knowledge and awareness of the subject itself. This can be an issue for Primary schools who often treat subjects as part of a topic (as mentioned by Heather) whereas the KS 2 National Curriculum treats subjects as distinct, separate entities. This appears to be what the OFSTED inspector was expecting and suggests a tension in the way that the curriculum is delivered *to* the school and then delivered *in* school by the teachers. The fact that the Inspectors expected the Primary pupils to recognise which subject they were studying and to clearly define it links to Bernstein's concept of the 'recognition' and 'realisation' rules, where pupils need to be able to speak the 'legitimate text' to show they understand the subject and their place in school (2000, 17).

Heather further summarised the problems of this subject-based approach for her school with regards to the Inspection;

> 'We teach within topics and cross-curricular and we teach them that the world is all connected…but the OFSTED inspector and this curriculum...they want subjects as standalone subjects...whereas our children they're in the same room all the time. So trying to define a subject as a different subject is really quite tricky'.

Heather again commented on the difficulty of following a topic-based approach to the curriculum when the pressure from the OFSTED inspector was on pupil recognition of separate subjects. Heather also made the point that this differentiation between subjects is easier in a Secondary school where pupils move around the school to different subject rooms, so they are more likely to know which subject they are taking. Colin made a similar point regarding History and Science. There appeared to be a clear disconnect apparent between the structure of the National Curriculum and the preferred method of delivery in this Primary school.

The nature of the pressure on Primary school teachers to deliver both depth and breadth in the curriculum was perhaps summed up in this illustrative quotation by Juliana, who noted that;

> 'OFSTED came in and said: 'you don't do anything other than Literacy and Numeracy' so yeah, yeah, you can't win'.

This comment clearly summarises the competing pressures on the school, the need for both breadth and depth in the curriculum. As many of the teachers mentioned, it is difficult for them to meet the demands of both within a limited timeframe. As Juliana said, it may feel sometimes like a game that the school cannot win.

The Secondary school is also subject to OFSTED monitoring inspections and all subjects are involved in the process. Some of the teachers noted that the nature of school inspection seemed to have changed over the years, and an

illustrative quotation is presented from Andrew, the outgoing Headteacher of the Secondary School, who stated:

> 'HMI used to come in to give advice and not judgement. OFSTED teams have to come out with a judgement on the school and...there is an entire difference between the cultures or the political direction that's guiding that structure if you like…if it can't be measured, it doesn't exist'.

Andrew had noted a perceived change to the ethos of the OFSTED regime, where once it was more advisory and supportive but now felt more judgemental and performative. His comment about measurement is interesting and highlights that the pressure to perform and produce good results is clearly a key one for both schools in this research.

The perceived rigour of the OFSTED inspection was also mentioned by other staff at the Secondary school. For example, Alan seemed quite upset by the experience and made the following comment:

> 'We had that recent OFSTED which was not a very nice experience and the OFSTED inspector who had inspected me last time, said 'what's gone wrong?' and I said 'well there's nothing gone wrong with Science. We're getting better grades. It's just you've changed the bar higher and quicker than what I'm managing'.

Alan was clearly aware of the need to obtain good grades in his department but was told that it had 'gone wrong' because his grades were not improving quickly enough. He seemed rather exasperated in the interview that, while he was aware of the rules of the 'game', outside agencies such as OFSTED were changing these rules more quickly than he could manage. The pressure on him and his department to 'perform' came across very clearly.

Other subject leaders at the Secondary school noted that OFSTED seemed very interested in results, but not so much in the teaching of the KS3 curriculum. An indicative quotation is from Sarah who, when asked about this aspect of the OFSTED inspection in History, noted that;

> 'No, we didn't have any discussions with regards to the Schemes of Work or the curriculum or anything'.

This highlights a key difference between the questions OFSTED asked of the Primary school staff compared to those at the Secondary school. This difference was also illustrated by Penny, who noted that some Secondary schools had dropped some work on Shakespeare from their KS3 curriculum once the KS3 SATS for her subject had ended in 2009, even though Shakespeare is still mentioned for inclusion in the KS3 curriculum. The lack of national testing at KS3 means that the teachers do appear to have more

freedom at this level to interpret the curriculum, even with the external monitoring of OFSTED.

5.5.3 Summary

There is assessment of the curriculum at both schools through different means and the 'backwash' effect of the external SATS tests in English and Maths at the Primary School is quite strong. The pressure of these assessments affects the way the two subjects are taught, has an impact on the rest of the curriculum and appeared to have some effect on staff. Secondary school staff do not have this assessment pressure and this gives more curriculum freedom at KS3, to the extent that there is now only two years given to this phase of the school curriculum. The lack of assessment in most subjects at KS2 does have a backwash effect of making cross-phase liaison and progression planning more difficult for the Secondary staff.

Both schools are monitored by OFSTED, and the nature of the inspection regarding the curriculum and the subjects at KS2 and KS3 appeared to be quite different. There was more pressure on the Primary school to show subject differentiation and to explain their approach to their curriculum, whereas KS4 appeared to be the key focus at the Secondary school.

5.6 Theme 5: The pupils and the local context

Many subject leaders commented on their pupils, their home background and their outlook and motivation. Both the Secondary and Primary schools in this research are located in a relatively socio-economically deprived urban area in

the north-west of England. This was an aspect commented on more by the teachers at the Primary school, which had more of an inner urban setting. Subject leaders commented that their pupils had a narrow outlook on the world and were not as supported at home as children might be in more affluent areas.

These perspectives have been commented on before by others such as Apple, (1995), Au (2008), Lingard (2013) and Bernstein himself, who noted that those who recognise the distinguishing features of a school are more likely to succeed within it, and that this was more likely of middle-class children (2000, 104). This symbiosis between school and home is considered by many to be an important one and where it is lacking the pupil may struggle, particularly with externally imposed curricula and testing regimes that may be seen to reinforce or reproduce a particular middle class view of the world and society (Apple, 1995; Au, 2008; Bernstein, 2000; Lingard, 2013).

Feelings about the home background of the pupils and how it affected their work in school were clearly expressed, often with some exasperation, by Juliana. For example, she commented that:

> 'You see our children are shocking at Geography. Really, really, really bad at Geography. Because…they don't go anywhere. A lot of them don't go out of the town. Some of them might go to Spain, but that will be the only place they go and they'll go to Benidorm. It'll be like being in Blackpool. It will be like being on the Promenade to them. It has no cultural significance or difference to them other than it's hotter'.

While these comments were not meant to be negative, they do suggest a particular view from Juliana of her pupils and why teaching certain subjects may be more difficult. Of course, not all of the pupils would act or think in the same way but her comments do reflect the fact the Primary School was located in an urban area that was relatively poor in the context of its region.

These comments were echoed by Heather:

> 'The majority of our children don't go on holiday. I took children on the train yesterday and six out of the eighteen had never been on a train and we were only going to (a local city) and a few of them hadn't even been there before.'

It was clear that both teachers were supportive of their pupils and that these comments were only highlighting the difficulties of teaching (particularly Geography) to those with a relative lack of experience of the world. Juliana also made similar comments about the pupil's view of her own subject, English:

> 'They don't read; they don't go to libraries. We've got that library out there…and I'll go and I'll say to them 'go and sit – why don't you sit on the sofa outside?' and they'll say to me 'and do what?' They won't naturally look at those books and think 'I want to read them' and there's a lot of new books out there. They're not interested'.

Her difficulty in encouraging her pupils to read for themselves and to enjoy the subject was clearly stated and she appeared to be linking this to a general view of the subject, partly formed outside school. As Bernstein and others

have stated, if children don't have the encouragement at home, then it can be very difficult for the teachers to help them develop a love of learning at school.

This point was also made by Nigel, the secondary Headteacher, who felt that parental support and the home ethos was vital to pupil confidence and academic success. He stated that:

> 'I think when…you've got your high performing, quite affluent kids that make quite a lot of progress; they've got maybe a greater degree of support at home for education'.

Nigel clearly equated success in school to socio-economic background and parental influence and support, and this again supports the comments made by previous research, as noted above. Of particular interest to this study is that these comments clearly reflect the view that a strong link between family and school contexts is more likely to lead to school success and is more likely for pupils from a middle-class background (Bernstein, 2000, 104).

Nina made a similar point when commenting on the attitude of the pupils towards Maths and how she always encouraged their confidence in the subject. She felt that part of the issue was that there was not enough encouragement at home and a parental 'fear' of Maths was being passed on to the pupils. As she commented:

> 'children considered themselves to be just crap at Maths basically …not necessarily that they'd been told but a lot of them say 'well my mum and dad weren't very good at Maths, therefore I'm not', so this idea

that it's genetic which we're trying to really shake that out of parents and children actually'.

Many of the Primary teachers were aware of the socio-economic location of their school and the home backgrounds of their pupils, and how this might affect pupil progress at school. In some ways this affected how they mediated the National Curriculum, as they had some sense of what their pupils could do and would enjoy (noted particularly by Shirley in Music). However, this also led to some negative concerns from Nina and Juliana as they had to follow the National Curriculum closely to satisfy the demands of the external SATS tests. They could not mediate their own curriculum as much as they would wish, to respond to the needs of their pupils, and were forced to follow a prescribed curriculum that they felt had too much content at too high a level. Nina also stated that the curriculum was then assessed in such a way that her pupils found it hard to access and therefore to achieve success. They both discussed these aspects of their work with some emotion in their interviews.

Alan also became quite emotional when discussing this aspect of his work. His was aware of the socio-economic location of his school and the background of many of his pupils and stated he believed in a meritocratic society. However, he felt that the new National Curriculum and the Department for Education's desire to compare different types of schools were not necessarily helpful:

'It's a constant thing in the Press, I think you just feel that, in the State sector, (that) in the private sector they're so much better, well isn't that because you've got rich kids from higher socio-economic backgrounds with parents who push them? And I find it risible that we should be going to have a look and how it's taught better in private schools.'

Alan was unhappy with the comparison made between private and state schools and the pressure that this put on him and his pupils to perform, even though home circumstances might be quite different. In his comments on these aspects, Alan stated:

'I come across as a raving Leftie but I'm not. I'm just very passionate – and when I say passionate, what I want to say is that I think this kind of issue of a meritocracy; I want to believe that any pupil I teach can go on to govern the country'

Alan clearly believed in the concept of a meritocratic society and was aware of how broader issues within education were affecting his own school and department. These feelings were apparent from many of the teachers who clearly wanted to do their best for their pupils and felt hampered by educational structures, such as the nature of the new curriculum itself and the high-stakes testing for some subjects.

5.7 Summary

A clear message from the subject leaders was that the curriculum had 'got harder' and that some content seemed to have 'moved down' the curriculum

in an attempt by the authors of the curriculum to raise standards. However, as this change would also by default have an impact on cross-phase provision, it made curriculum planning more problematic as many of the teachers noted that cross-phase co-ordination between schools is often difficult to achieve.

The reactions to the new National Curriculum differed between the two schools. In the Secondary they did not feel that the new curriculum had had a major impact on their work or caused them to make major changes to their subjects at KS3. A key factor was assessment and as the teachers at the Secondary school are not subject to high-stakes external exams at KS3 they felt more able to mediate the curriculum to suit their own philosophies and the interests of their pupils and this had also indirectly led to three-year GCSE courses at the school.

The situation in the Primary school was quite different. While there was also some mediation of the curriculum by teachers, the impact of the new curriculum appeared to be much greater, particularly on English and Maths. Therefore, unlike the Secondary school, it appears that in the Primary school high stakes external assessment in certain subjects is a key factor affecting the curriculum planning of the subject leaders. The impact of OFSTED looking for curriculum breadth was also felt quite strongly.

These findings will be further developed in the following chapter, where the responses of the subject leaders will be analysed deductively through the lens of Bernstein's pedagogic device.

Chapter 6: Discussion

'What is the relationship between education and the larger society?'
(Apple, 1995, xxiii)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter employs a hybrid approach to Thematic Analysis (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017), where the inductively generated themes from the interview data have been deductively analysed using the theoretical perspective offered by Bernstein's pedagogic device and with reference to other relevant literature on the curriculum and educational policy. For the deductive element, the themes were analysed to consider how they might bring empirical insight to the theoretical aspects of the pedagogic device and how the theory might be developed as a result. The focus of this deductive analysis is on the Recontextualising and Evaluative Rules of the device and the relevant Fields and Processes associated with them (Bernstein, 2000, 37).

I have employed the pedagogic device within the analysis, while maintaining a 'critical distance' (Ashwin, 2012, 89) that allows an examination of the less fully realised elements of the theory and to consider how these elements might be further developed as previously discussed by Au (2008), Wong (2017) and Gibbons (2018). I begin with an overview of how the themes link together conceptually, both in terms of policy enactment and also as an empirical example of the pedagogic device. I then consider each theme in turn, applying relevant theory to provide further insight to the subject leader

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responses. Finally, I summarise an overview of the relevance of the pedagogic device to this research and consider how aspects of the device may be theoretically developed.

6.2 The inductively generated themes

An inductive analysis of the interview data using Thematic Analysis generated five main themes that considered the key factors affecting subject leader's engagement with a new national curriculum:

1. Subject leader perspectives on the new National Curriculum

    i. Sub theme one – subject leader reactions to the actual content
    ii. Sub theme two – subject leader thoughts on the reasons for curriculum change

2. The influence of school ethos on curriculum planning
3. The influence of subject leader philosophy and experience on curriculum planning
4. 'Assessment backwash' – the impacts of external assessment and monitoring on curriculum planning.

    i. Sub theme one – The impacts of national testing on curriculum planning
    ii. Sub theme two – The impacts of OFSTED monitoring on curriculum planning
5. The pupils and the local context

I now demonstrate how these themes link together to develop an overall perspective on the data and to consider the key question of how different factors affect subject leaders when mediating a new curriculum. I will also consider how this overview links to the theoretical perspective offered by the pedagogic device itself. The next step is to present the themes diagrammatically so that the links between them may be further understood and analysed.

6.3 The relationship between the themes

While each theme was presented and discussed separately in the preceding chapter, in the 'real world' elements of a complex situation such as mediating a National Curriculum do not operate in isolation. Therefore, the interaction of the themes and the ways in which they influence or even control each other must be considered. Although there is a preceding step (the Distributive Rules) where knowledge is generated, in terms of policy enactment, the start of the process is the National Curriculum document itself, which is a physical iteration of an educational policy introduced by the Government. Therefore, Government intent for this educational policy and the document must be placed at the start of the process and may be seen as an input into the school 'system'. The National Curriculum document itself will then offer opportunity or constraint to the teachers dependent on the Key Stage and the subject. A subject with little written content in the document, such as Music, may offer opportunity to a subject leader who wishes to develop their own version of their subject curriculum. In contrast, more content heavy subjects such as

English may constrain subject leaders in their ability to develop their own curriculum, especially where the National Curriculum contains much statutory material that must be 'covered' by the teacher.

At the heart of the mediation process within school is the subject leader, as they have a certain level of autonomy. However, as can be seen from the previous discussion, the subject leaders are affected by other themes that operate both as constraints and opportunities on their actions. The two key themes operating in this way are the ethos of the school (which may support or limit the subject leader dependent on how far their perspectives align) and the context of the school and its pupils. The subject leaders would need be cognisant of these factors when developing their own curriculum.

The three themes of school ethos, subject leader philosophy and local context may collectively be seen as 'filters' acting on the introduction of a new National Curriculum. By mediating and applying this filtration on the original curriculum document, subject leaders will produce their 'desired' version of the school curriculum, one to which both the school and the subject leaders aspire.

However, the desired curriculum faces two further key restraining factors as summarised in theme four. These are the two similar but slightly different external factors of high-stakes national tests and OFSTED monitoring. These two factors largely act as constraints on curriculum planning within the school and provide a form of 'assessment backwash', possibly directing teachers towards 'teaching to the test' (Lingard, 2013) and acknowledging the views of

OFSTED on the curriculum. In addressing these additional external factors, there results the **actual** school curriculum.

The actual school curriculum may not, therefore, be the version that the teachers, school leaders or Government initially intended, but is one that might satisfy the aims of the teachers and the school as well as meeting the perceived needs of relevant external agencies. The difference between the desired and actual versions of the curriculum may be minimal in some cases, (as was the case in the Secondary school), but where the difference is greater the result is less staff satisfaction with the outcome (the case in the Primary school).

The processes and interactions between the themes described above may be seen diagrammatically in the following way:
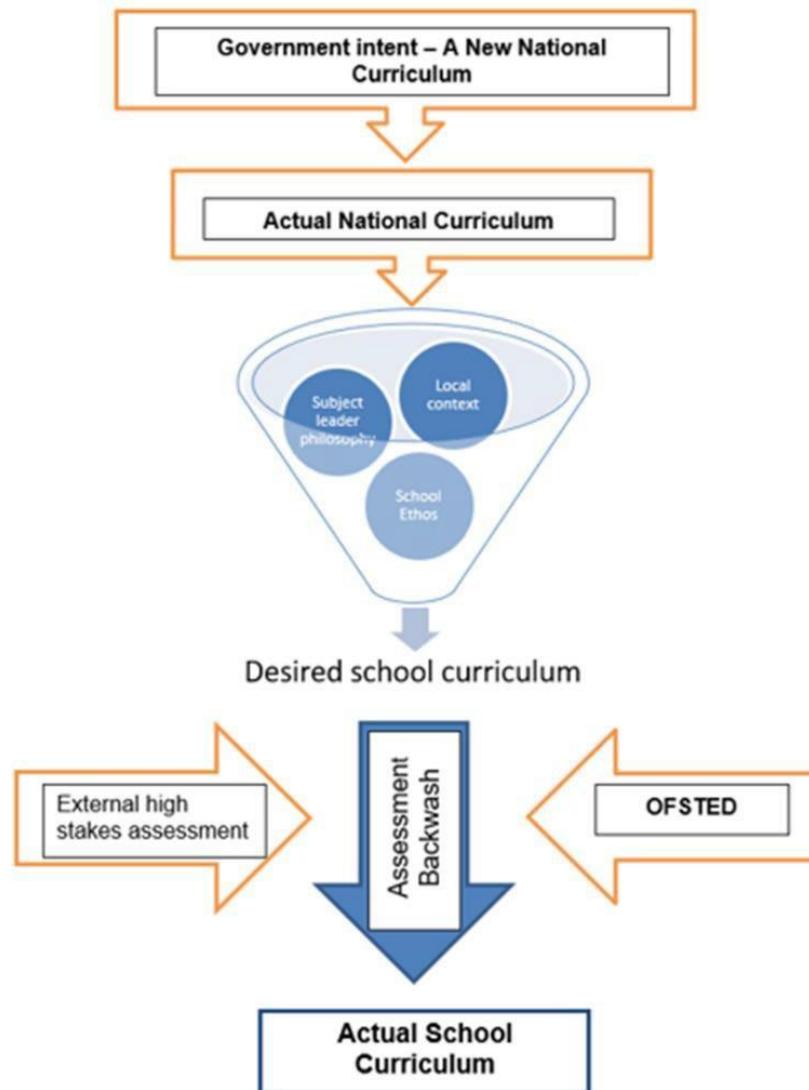
FIGURE 2: DIAGRAM TO SHOW HOW THE THEMES AND SUB-THEMES GENERATED IN THIS RESEARCH ACT ON THE PRODUCTION OF AN ACTUAL SCHOOL CURRICULUM.

Developing this analysis, the diagram may be further adapted to demonstrate how it links to the relevant elements of Bernstein's 'pedagogic device'. The first three steps in the curriculum production process may be considered as being part of the Recontextualising Rules where the production of pedagogic discourse begins. Using Bernstein's further division of the Recontextualising Field, the first two steps may be further clarified as being part of the ORF, where Government produce the policy and also the actual curriculum

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document. The final step in this stage of curriculum production is in schools which is part of the PRF, and the diagram suggests how some of the themes act on this part of the process. The final step in the production of the actual curriculum shows the impact of external monitoring on the process (testing and Inspection) and these are part of Bernstein's Evaluative Rules, where in the Field of Reproduction the pedagogic knowledge contained in the National Curriculum document is acquired to the 'correct' level. This process may be seen in the adapted diagram below:
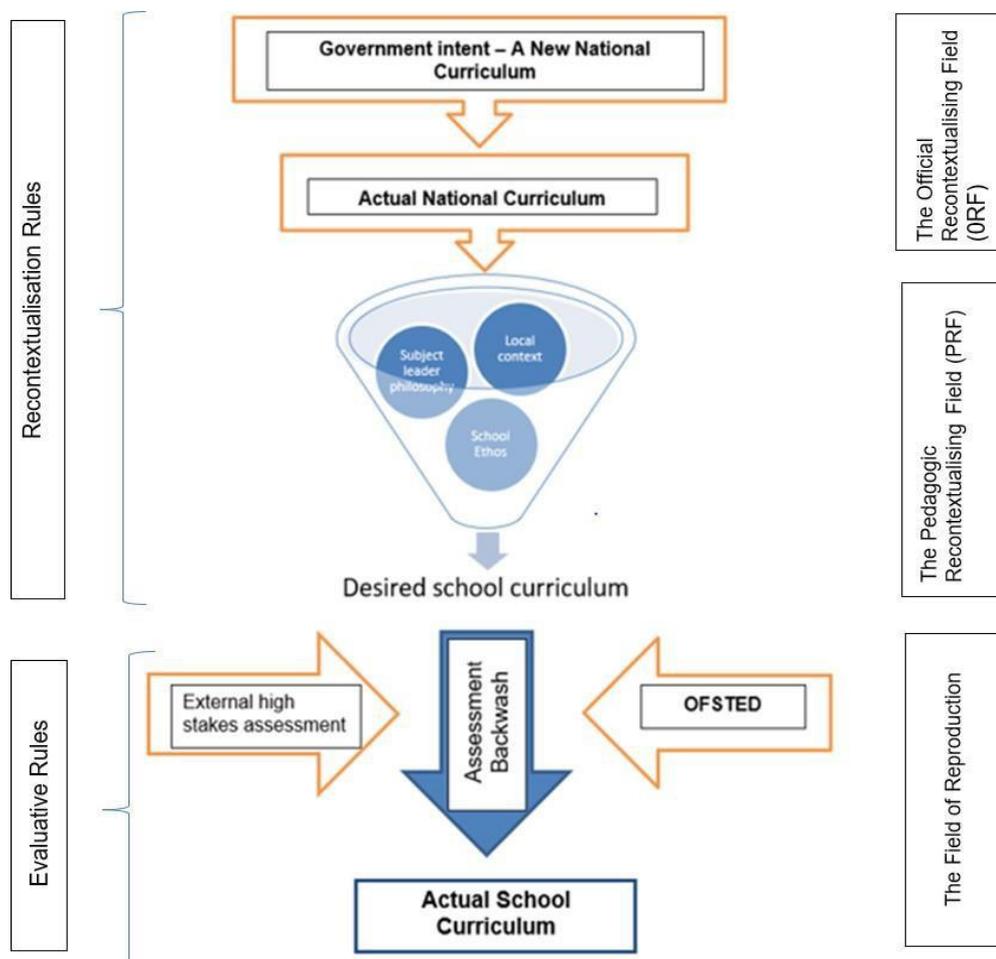
FIGURE 3: DIAGRAM OUTLINING HOW THEMES AND SUB-THEMES GENERATED IN THIS RESEARCH MAY BE LINKED TO THE RECONTEXTUALISING AND EVALUATIVE RULES OF BERNSTEIN'S PEDAGOGIC DEVICE. RELEVANT FIELDS (ORF, PRF AND REPRODUCTION) HAVE BEEN ADDED FOR FURTHER DETAIL.

Figures One and Two above demonstrate the steps involved in actual curriculum production in a school and how the pedagogic device theorises these steps at a more conceptual level. The themes and the pedagogic device together suggest a 'flow' through the system, with various steps intervening between the generation of a policy and its implementation on the ground. This shows clear links to policy enactment literature and concepts such as the 'implementation staircase' (Saunders and Reynolds, 1987), 'policy refraction' (Trowler, 2003), 'policy fidelity' (Cuban, 1998) and the concept of the 'street level bureaucrat' (SLB) (Lipsky, 1980). Lipsky included teachers in his conception of the SLB, as examples of public sector workers who are able to exercise some discretion in their work and have relative autonomy (1980, 3). My findings suggest that this perspective may have relevance, as some subject leaders felt they had enough discretion and autonomy to mediate and plan their version of the final curriculum. However, relevant monitoring and testing also suggests that for some subject leaders, the SLB concept does not apply as they had less autonomy in their work.

The second diagram shows how Bernstein's pedagogic device may be linked to concepts of policy enactment, as a Government generated policy such as a National Curriculum will pass through many steps and layers of 'actors' before being implemented in the school. The many layers involved are examples of Bernstein's 'arenas of struggle', where different perspectives come into play and affect the policy as it travels through the implementation process. The layers include the whole school, the departmental level or individual subject leaders and shows links to previous research, such as Bowe et al (1992) and

Ball et al (2011a), who highlighted the importance of the department and the individual 'actors' in the process.

Bernstein considered that the Recontextualising Field had a 'crucial function in creating the fundamental autonomy of education' (2000, 33), which was largely dependent on the level of autonomy of the PRF compared to the ORF. Where there is some autonomy for the PRF, there is space for curriculum mediation and this creates a potential 'arena of struggle', as the aims of the PRF may clash with the ORF. However, where there is little or no autonomy, there is more compliance and a weaker PRF will largely enact the aims and wishes of the ORF as originally intended (Bernstein, 2000, 33).

As examples of the PRF, it appeared there was relative autonomy for the subject leaders in the two schools, and they took note of both their local context and the ethos of their schools as relevant. However, the ORF possesses further elements of control over the PRF through assessment and monitoring. These elements are linked to the Evaluative Rules of the pedagogic device, where in the 'Field of Reproduction', the pupils at the end of the device go through the 'process of acquisition' and the ORF needs to know that they have acquired the 'correct' knowledge to the 'correct' level. As Bernstein stated, 'the key to pedagogic practice is continuous evaluation' (2000, 36) and through this evaluation, the ORF will attempt to retain some control over the PRF.

Where this monitoring is strongest (in KS2 Maths and English), the space for mediation is reduced and it is more likely that the wishes of the ORF for the

curriculum will be met. It is therefore through evaluation that the ORF retains some control of curriculum policy, but this is where the potential for an 'arena of struggle' will be greatest, as the PRF may try to resist the aims of the ORF or feel constrained by them. Recent debate over the nature and scope of national testing in England, where teachers, teacher unions and some parents still oppose them and wish to see them scrapped, are evidence of this ongoing arena of struggle (Weale, 2019).

6.4 The pedagogic device and policy enactment

The suggested links made between the pedagogic device and other theories of policy enactment are present in the literature, though perhaps not as widely as might be expected. For example, Leow (2011) felt that Bernstein's work had much to offer the analysis of policy discourse research and how public policy is enacted. Leow considered that 'schools and teachers play critical roles in the implementation of state-driven policies and initiatives' (2011, 309), suggesting a clear link between the pedagogic device and general policy enactment discourse. In other work, Ensor's research in South Africa made links between the pedagogic device and policy enactment and suggested that educational systems are quite resilient to reform, as policy initiatives become embedded in to school life in ways that match current practice or philosophy (2015, 67). This is a common theme that has been suggested elsewhere (Lipsky, 1980; Bowe et al, 1992; Ball et al, 2011a) and also by the results in my own research.

Wright and Froehlich also commented on the links between the pedagogic device and policy enactment, stating that 'originally conceived knowledge undergoes changes through selection and filtration processes, eventually becoming curriculum. Gaps in the recontextualization process allow teachers to place their own individual stamp upon the learning and teaching that occur in their classroom' (2012, 219). This highlights the link between the recontextualising field and the steps that curriculum development must go through, where policy becomes refracted and distorted as it is enacted. This link was echoed by Singh et al, who stated that 'the concept of recontextualisation may add to understandings of the policy work of interpretation and translation' and that 'it is at the level of schools, classrooms and specific practices of pedagogic communication that state mandated educational policies are re-produced or enacted' (2013, 467). Referring to the work of Ball, Braun and Maguire (1994 and 2010), Singh et al made clear links between the concept of recontextualising in the pedagogic device and theories of policy enactment and analysis. The research discussed above shows clear links between Bernstein's theory and policy enactment discourse and my thematic diagrams above suggest a similar connection based on the findings of this research.

The key point, that teachers assimilate and incorporate new policy into their current practice to match their own philosophy, was especially apparent in the Secondary school in this research. The lack of external testing gave subject leaders greater freedom in their curriculum planning and allowed for incorporation of their own philosophy on the needs of their subjects and

pupils. This was also true of some Primary subject leaders such as Music and Art, where they felt there was not much guidance in the curriculum in the first instance. However, where there was clear monitoring and impact by OFSTED (such as in History and Geography) and external testing (such as in English and Maths), the autonomy to mediate was lessened and there was some tension between the philosophy of the teacher and the curriculum being imposed upon them.

The relationships identified between the themes in this research demonstrate a clear association with policy enactment analysis, and the 'flow' of curriculum development through the pedagogic device can be clearly equated to concepts of policy enactment. Relevant concepts include 'filtration' (Wright and Froehlich, 2012), 'refraction' (Trowler, 2003; Supovitz, 2008) and an 'implementation staircase' (Reynolds and Saunders, 1987), where the intent of the policy may be lost, diluted or lose 'fidelity' (Cuban, 1998) on its journey due to the spaces for 'play' made possible by Bernstein's 'arenas of struggle' (2000). In this way, the intent of the ORF at the start of the recontextualising journey may be changed or adapted by the PRF in school, and as much policy analysis research affirms, the original intent rarely makes it fully formed into the classroom (Trowler, 2003; Ensor, 2015). However, much of this research ignores the importance of assessment and evaluation in the process, highlighting a need for further exploration and analysis of these key elements in policy enactment.

The concept of the pedagogic device, while operating at a theoretical level to consider the relay of knowledge, may also be seen to operate at a more prosaic level as an example of a policy enactment in action, from policy generation through various steps to enactment on the ground. At each stage it is refracted and loses aspects of its original 'fidelity' before implementation in school. While not a connection made by Bernstein in his own work, this link between the two concepts has been noted by others and is also a theoretical conclusion from this research as demonstrated by many of the comments from the subject leaders.

Where the concepts differ is that Bernstein also considered how the policy or aims of the knowledge relay might be checked in school to ensure that the 'acquirers' had indeed adopted the 'correct' knowledge, and this was theorised through the concept of the 'evaluative rules'. Here the aims of the knowledge relay (or policy) are checked as outcomes to complete the relay. However, Bernstein did not add at this stage any concept of assessment feedback into the Recontextualization Rules from the Evaluative Rules and I feel that this aspect could be further developed in the theory.

This connection between the Evaluative rules and assessment in practice appears under-theorised in Bernstein's work, and while this has been noted to varying levels in subsequent research by Wong (2017) and Gibbons (2018), I believe there is scope for further discussion and development of this aspect of the pedagogic device. This is developed further in the summary discussion below and is a key claim of this research.

6.5 Applying Bernsteinian theory to the themes

I now deductively analyse the themes using the conceptual framework of Bernstein's pedagogic device and its associated theories.

6.5.1 Theme One: Subject leader perspectives on the new National Curriculum

As there is 'relative autonomy' (Apple, 2002) in the English education system, it is likely that there will be space in the system for agents of the PRF to mediate the demands of the ORF, and the research data confirmed this view. All the subject leaders had subject philosophies, both in terms of curriculum content and pedagogy, and their relative autonomy from the ORF and Government intent was shown in comments about the reasons for the curriculum change. There was a strong element in the discussions of 'us' and 'them', a feeling that educational policy was done **to** them rather than **with** them. Many of the teachers also felt that the current curriculum gave them some space for mediation in terms of curriculum planning and enactment and allowed them to use their expertise and the expertise of their departments (if relevant) in this process. This was not quite the case for the English and Maths primary teachers however, who were very aware of the impact of external assessment on their work.

Regarding the pedagogic device, this theme reflects the importance of the Recontextualising Rules, where a Government and its agents (as part of the ORF) will make educational policy and expect this to be enacted in schools by

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teachers and school leaders (part of the PRF). The ORF agents develop their own version of subject knowledge generated within the Distributive Rules of the Pedagogic Device, and as the subject leaders noted, the ORF agents have structured this knowledge so that it meets their need to 'raise standards', improve performance in international rankings and to fulfil the desire of what can be termed a 'conservatist' view of education (Wheelahan, 2010). Some of the subject leaders were aware of these Governmental aims and by suggesting they were not always happy with this intent or the content of the document (seen in comments about the content being too hard, the 'maleness' of the document, and the 'big brother' aspects of the policy), they demonstrated their relative autonomy and suggested space for mediation of the policy.

As has been suggested elsewhere (such as by Kang, 2009; Cause, 2010 and Ensor, 2015), the agents of the ORF do not always fully control the PRF, and so teachers are able to work with a policy, such as a National Curriculum, and mould it to suit their own philosophy where possible. This was especially so for the subjects with little curriculum content such as Art, where it was left to the teachers and their own expertise to decide what should be in the subject curriculum. These subject leaders appeared to be content with this, while those with much more monitored content, such as KS2 English and Maths, were less able to be so autonomous in their curriculum planning.

6.5.2 Theme Two: The influence of school ethos on curriculum planning

A key difference between the two schools was that of ethos and structure. The smaller Primary school operated mainly across subjects and generally

used a topic-based approach to their work. As a smaller school with few subject departments, the whole school ethos was important and was very much driven by the philosophy of the Headteacher, Louise. It was noted by many staff, and by Louise herself, that the school viewed creativity as a key aspect of education and so they were determined to respect the breadth of the curriculum and to support the arts and creative subjects. This ethos was largely appreciated and respected by the staff, many of whom raised it in their interviews. As Louise identified, this desire to keep a broad curriculum and to promote the creative subjects felt at times like a type of 'resistance' to external pressures. This indicated a possible divide between the aims and ethos of the school (as part of the PRF) and the aims of Government (part of the ORF) regarding the new National Curriculum. Louise also noted that this approach put her school in the 'firing line', as she could be open to criticism of her approach by external agencies and parts of the ORF, such as OFSTED.

The situation was different at the larger Secondary school. The teachers here were located within subject departments and it was the ethos of the subject leaders rather than the Headteacher that played more of a role in how the curriculum was managed at subject level. The Headteacher did play some part in creating a school ethos, supporting sport and creative subjects, but still had to pragmatically recognise that, in English Secondary schools, GCSE results are fundamental in terms of reputation and monitoring and this is especially true of English and Maths. Therefore, curriculum planning at KS3 accounted for this, evidenced by the decision of the school to devote three years of school time to their GCSE courses, leaving only two years for KS3.

This was a senior management decision at the school and clearly demonstrates the impact of a whole school ethos on curriculum planning. This was also shown by the subject leaders who commented on how their planning for the KS3 curriculum prioritised the GCSE exams.

These elements evidence clear links to the concept of 'relative autonomy' (Apple, 2002). The power of schools in England to resist the pressures of state policy is relatively strong compared to some educational systems around the world, such as Singapore (Wong and Apple, 2002; Lim, 2016; Wong 2017) and South Korea (Kang, 2009). The fact that the Secondary school in this study has changed its KS3/KS4 curriculum plan to a 2 year/3 year system rather than the originally expected (by the Government at least) 3 year/2 year system shows the autonomy they possess to make this decision without (at the time of writing at least) any negative feedback from the Government or OFSTED. The Secondary teachers also possessed an element of autonomy in their decisions to add GCSE level material at KS3 level to help prepare their pupils better for the GCSE exams. While their work at KS3 was being monitored by OFSTED, it was mentioned that KS3 curriculum discussions were not really part of the recent inspection and so many of the Secondary teachers appeared quite relaxed about the impact of the new curriculum on their practice.

The Primary school teachers also had some autonomy over their work and were able to pursue the school's ethos of a creative curriculum to an extent, but had less autonomy due to the influence of the external high-stakes tests –

directly on the relevant subjects and indirectly on the time available to the other subjects. There is therefore a difference in the relative autonomy enjoyed by the teachers in the two different schools and their ability to resist or mediate a new curriculum.

6.5.3 Theme Three: The influence of subject leader philosophy and experience on curriculum planning

All the teachers interviewed were subject leaders (apart from the Secondary Headteacher) and each discussed their passion for their subject, their personal subject history and their philosophy for how the subject should be taught and organised. With reference to the Pedagogic Device, they were therefore demonstrating their roles as agents within the PRF as part of the field of recontextualization. This is a key role in the pedagogic device according to Bernstein (2000, 33), and the level of autonomy agents of the PRF possess will affect the production of the curriculum and the links with Government policy. The personal philosophy of the teachers is significant, as they can affect the policy of the ORF depending on their level of autonomy and experience. Where there is strong control of the PRF by the ORF, then state educational policy is more likely to be implemented fully formed. This was suggested by Lim (2016), when he considered the role of a 'strong' state (Singapore) on state educational policy. Unlike in more liberal, 'western' regimes, Lim felt that the nature of Government in Singapore meant that there was stronger control of the PRF by the ORF and so state policy aimed at forming a particular version of a national consciousness was more likely to

succeed as planned. However, the experience in England (and as suggested by this research) is of much looser control by the ORF and so there is more freedom for the teachers in the PRF, who may exercise some relative autonomy. Their own personal philosophies are therefore more likely to play a role in the curriculum production within the school. This is all dependent, however, on the level of assessment and monitoring to which their subject is exposed as suggested by the research discussions.

I would also suggest that it is possible to apply Bernstein's concept of the 'recognition' and 'realisation' rules to the teachers themselves in this situation. Bernstein applies these key concepts to the pupils in school and their ability to 'play' the school game (2000, 32), but I believe that they can also be applied to the teachers at a different level. This is because the level of experience and expertise they possess will affect their confidence and ability to work autonomously or otherwise as agents of the PRF. Those teachers with strong recognition and realisation rules of the ways in which educational policy operates and of their own place within this policy process will have the confidence and ability to work within the system to mediate policy to match their subject philosophies within their own school context. This was clearly shown by Louise at the Primary school, who had been through many inspections and curriculum changes and was certain enough of her own philosophy and expertise to guide her staff on what they should include or not from the new curriculum. She was also confident in her own philosophy to try and protect the creative elements of the curriculum against the 'assessment backwash' effects of external testing and monitoring. The experienced subject

leaders in the Secondary school also had this confidence in their own abilities and therefore demonstrated that they too possessed the recognition and realisation rules that enabled them to mediate the curriculum to match their own subject philosophies.

The subject leaders with less experience did not show quite the same level of confidence and did not imply that they were resisting the demands of the curriculum to follow their own version of it, unless they were directed to do so by senior staff. The Geography, History and Music subject leaders in the Primary school were in this category, with weaker demonstration of recognition and realisation rules. While they all demonstrated subject knowledge and personal philosophies, they were all relatively new to the role and in their interviews gave no sense of resistance or change to the National Curriculum. They appeared more likely to follow the new curriculum as directed, and so the philosophy and experience (or 'agency') of the teachers themselves does appear to play a role in how far the aims of the ORF are enacted by the PRF. The views of the teachers themselves are a significant factor in this potential 'arena of struggle' and I also suggest that the 'recognition and realisation' rules as discussed by Bernstein (2000) may be applied to the teachers as well as their pupils.

6.5.4 Theme Four: 'Assessment backwash' – the impacts of external assessment and monitoring on curriculum planning

As discussed in the preceding chapter, there was a great deal of material generated within this theme and it is, therefore, divided into two distinct sub- themes.

6.5.5 Sub-theme One: The impacts of national testing on curriculum planning

Many comments made by subject leaders in this research, particularly in the Primary school, resonated with previous research on the impact of high-stakes testing and possible links to the pedagogic device (Au, 2007, 2008; Wong, 2017; Gibbons, 2018). The teachers felt that the focus on KS2 SATS in English and Maths did have a narrowing effect on the curriculum meaning other subjects suffered with time allocation, losing their 'curriculum share', and they also felt the pressure affected their pupils and how they taught in the classroom, resulting in 'teaching to the test'. The Primary Maths and English subject leaders also noted that it was difficult to promote a love of learning for the subject with their pupils as they had to meet the demands of the tests and 'cover' the curriculum.

Comments were different in the Secondary school where the teachers were not impacted by external testing in their KS3 curriculum, although there was some mention of the impact of the KS4 GCSE tests. Given these comments, I would argue that my findings echo those of Au (2007, 2008),

Lingard (2013) and Wong (2017), that high-stakes tests do have a perceivable impact on the curriculum where they are applied. In other work this effect has been termed 'assessment backwash' (Watkins et al, 2005), a term I have used throughout this paper.

Many of the teacher comments reiterated points made in the Cambridge Primary Review (2009) and by Lingard (2013), both noting that assessment pressure can lead to a narrowing of the curriculum and 'teaching to the test'. As the suggested curriculum changes made by the Cambridge Review in 2009 have not happened in English Primary schools, it is not surprising that these concerns were still being raised by teachers.

In the pedagogic device, high-stakes testing is part of the Evaluative Rules, where there is an 'acquisition' process within the field of 'reproduction' (Bernstein, 2000, 37). It is here that the 'acquirers', in this case the pupils, show that they have acquired the 'correct' knowledge to a 'suitable' level to show that the knowledge relay of the device has been successful. However, Bernstein does not expand on how assessment precisely fits in to this process and this is an aspect of the device that I develop below.

6.5.6 Sub-theme Two: The impacts of OFSTED monitoring on curriculum planning

Regarding the OFSTED monitoring of the two schools, Bernstein's theory on the classification and framing of subjects and the links and barriers between them is of value. He noted in particular, the 'weaker' boundaries between

subjects at the Primary level (which allows for more 'topic' based work), compared to the 'stronger' boundaries between subjects at the Secondary level (where subjects are usually much more autonomous) (2000, 5-6). This difference may also affect the ethos at the two schools and how they approach their curriculum planning.

In terms of the evaluative rules, the ways in which these differences between subjects were perceived by outside agencies such as OFSTED was noticed by the teachers. The questions to the Primary pupils about the nature of the subjects they were studying by the OFSTED inspectors show clear links to Bernstein's concept of the 'realisation and recognition' rules in action (2000, 17-18). The pupils may have been able to recognise that they were studying a particular subject but did not always have the realisation to fully understand what this might mean or have the language to articulate it fully. As Bernstein noted, if they do not possess the realisation rules then 'they cannot speak the expected legitimate text' (2000, 17). Based on the comments made by the Geography and History subject leads in the Primary school, it would appear this what the Inspectors were looking for, because this curriculum discourse requires that pupils have a certain level of knowledge and understanding of what they are studying.

According to Bernstein, this is connected to power relations and the success of the pedagogic device in reproducing the dominant discourse. He concludes; 'for these children, the experience of school is essentially an experience of the classificatory system and their place in it' (2000, 17), which

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suggests that the pupils were aware of the nature of schooling but did not possess enough awareness to 'play the game' and be fully successful in the assessment and monitoring. The comments made by Juliana and Nina about the difficulties their pupils encountered when trying to access and succeed in the SATS tests show clear links to these conclusions from Bernstein.

6.5.7 Theme Five: The pupils and the local context

Comments made by staff at the Primary school, particularly by Louise, demonstrated an element of their sense of mission for the education of pupils in their school. They were aware of the socio-economic background of their pupils and the possible impact this might have on them and their desire to learn. The staff talked passionately about their desire to help the pupils succeed and of their own 'resistance' to pressures from outside the school so that they could do what they thought best for their pupils.

In many ways, their comments about the need for success in English and Maths and the importance of access to a range of subjects, echo much of the debate from those such as Young (2008), Wheelahan (2010), Biesta, (2014), Firth (2013) and Lingard (2013) regarding access to powerful knowledge and the life changing effects this can have on children and their futures. These comments were also made in the Secondary school, particularly in a passionate discussion by Alan, the Science subject leader, about the need for a meritocratic society and how a successful education should allow any pupil to progress and succeed. The teachers were very aware that they could impact the lives of their pupils and they wanted to be able to develop a

curriculum that would allow this to happen.

However, some felt that those subjects with a closely monitored, content heavy curriculum were prevented from being able to meet the needs of their own pupils. Therefore, external monitoring and testing was affecting the decisions they made regarding the school curriculum they wished to mediate from the National Curriculum document. This was particularly the case with the English and Maths teachers at the Primary school, and this link between the impact of assessment and the curriculum's ability to help pupils from less well-off backgrounds has been made previously by Au (2008), Lingard (2013) and Barrett (2017).

6.6 Theoretical development

The Primary school was externally monitored by OFSTED, while English and Maths were even more closely monitored by the external SATS tests. While there was some element of freedom for teachers to mediate the curriculum (especially where they did not have much content in the document itself such as in Art and Music), it would appear that in the Primary school the ORF was exercising some control over the PRF, especially in the two Core subjects of English and Maths. This limited the autonomy of these teachers in terms of curriculum decisions and would also give the Government (the ORF) some confidence that its wishes regarding the curriculum were being delivered in these Core subjects. With the lack of external testing at KS3 in the Secondary School, this element of monitoring of the PRF by the ORF is missing and so

the teachers have slightly more freedom with their mediation of the curriculum.

I would therefore conclude from the data that it is the assessment of the curriculum delivery process that is the key element in determining how far a curriculum document is enacted. It is through assessment and monitoring by the National Tests in year 6 and the OFSTED inspections that the ORF can check that the PRF is delivering the National Curriculum as intended and in Bernstein's terms, this is part of the evaluative rules of the pedagogic device (2000). However, this element of the device may be 'under-developed' (Gibbons, 2018, 4) by Bernstein in his later descriptions of the concept and this part of the discussion will consider how this element may be further developed within the context of this research.

Wong's research of 2017 suggested three sub-divisions regarding the importance of assessment as part of the evaluative rules, and his 'consequential' sub-division in particular proves to be helpful when analysing the situation in the Primary school. The concept of 'consequential' tests equates to that of the 'high-stakes' tests that Au discussed in his paper of 2008, where he felt that such tests were of great consequence for the functioning of the pedagogic device and the resultant curriculum. Combining these ideas, it is clear that high-stakes, consequential testing will have a great impact on pedagogic practice and curriculum design within a school setting.

In the Primary school, the National Tests and OFSTED inspections were of great consequence for the school, the pupils and the staff, although it would

appear the National Tests have the greatest impact as they have such high-stakes outcomes.

As the school needs to ensure the outcomes from the high-stakes tests are as positive as possible, the Maths and English KS2 curriculum was delivered largely as intended from the National Curriculum document by the teachers involved. While teachers are always able to mediate and decode a curriculum document to an extent, as noted by many of the subject leaders where they discussed making the curriculum 'pupil-friendly', in English and Maths they are very closely monitored externally and so need to make sure they do actually cover what is in the curriculum document to the best of their ability. In this sense the high-stakes test and external monitoring are having considerable 'backwash' effects on how the curriculum is organised and delivered in the school. The ORF therefore has some element of control over the PRF in this stage of recontextualization.

However, it also appeared that the Primary school was possibly trying to partly resist the key aim of the pedagogic device, to reproduce the strictures and structures of society. As Bernstein commented, 'this distribution of different knowledges and possibilities is not based on neutral differences…but on a distribution of knowledge which carries unequal value, power and potential' (2000, xxi) and so a mere replication of the knowledge contained in a National Curriculum will not necessarily assist pupils from different backgrounds, and teachers are aware of this fact.

While the architects of the new National Curriculum might argue that, by trying to raise standards and develop a more content based, higher-level curriculum, they are in fact helping pupils change their socio-economic situation, the

teachers at the Primary school made the point that this was not working as the content and assessment was too hard and so was inaccessible to the pupils. The teachers also felt that the assessment demands meant that they were having to 'teach to the tests' in English and Maths and while this might help the pupils succeed to an extent in the short term, the learning was out of context and so had little real long-term benefit to the pupils. This critique of the impact of high-stakes tests has been made by others such as Au (2008) and Lingard (2013), where assessment has been seen to impact directly on the content of the curriculum and how it is taught.

The situation was different in the Secondary School as there are no National Tests at the end of Key Stage 3 (which were scrapped in 2009), and so this element of monitoring the delivery of the curriculum by the PRF from the ORF is missing. Monitoring of this curriculum stage only takes place through OFSTED inspections to check whether the curriculum is being delivered satisfactorily and with enough depth and breadth. It could also be argued that the relative success of pupil progress at KS3 is indicated by later performance in the KS4 GCSE exams which are high-stakes exams for the school, the pupils and the teachers.

Therefore, the relative lack of monitoring by the ORF of the PRF at KS3 level in the secondary school means that the subject leaders appear to have

relatively more freedom to mediate the curriculum and adapt it to suit their own subject philosophies and their pupil's needs. This was seen in the comments made by the four subject leads on how they worked with the curriculum material. The lack of monitoring through exams at this stage did appear to affect what the staff were able to do in terms of planning their curriculum and may also be seen as a 'backwash' effect of assessment, through its absence in this case. Although the OFSTED inspections remained important at the Secondary level, there was more of a focus on the GCSE outcomes, and as Sarah, the Secondary History subject lead mentioned in her interview, her KS3 curriculum and relevant schemes of work were not discussed at all with her when OFSTED visited the school.

It may therefore be concluded that the lack of monitoring through external high-stakes assessment at KS3 compared to KS2 was a key difference in the extent to which teachers were able to mediate the National Curriculum document in the two schools. It further demonstrates a key difference in how the ORF monitors the work of the PRF in the schools. This imbalance is connected to the perceived importance of the KS2 National Tests, where the results not only impact on pupil progress moving on to Secondary school but are also used in international comparisons and the PISA league tables. As noted earlier, the Government of the time considered success and progress in terms of international comparisons to be a key driver of this curricular reform.

6.7 The pedagogic device reconsidered

In the pedagogic device, assessment is considered part of the evaluative rules and is taken to mean an evaluation of the other aspects of the device, such as the work of the ORF and the PRF, and where the acquisition of the relevant knowledge and outcomes of the 'recontextualising field' would be checked by various means (Bernstein, 2000, 36). It is this part of the concept that Wong (2017) considered to be under-developed, as he felt that assessment was not really discussed in enough detail by Bernstein, a view also indicated by Gibbons (2018) and one that I share. In fact, in the 2000 edition of the key text 'Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity', assessment does not feature at all in the index.

It is clear from this research that the KS2 National tests played a major role in the work of the relevant teachers in the Primary school, meaning they followed the curriculum document closely because their pupils were being assessed on the curriculum content in these high-stakes tests. This 'high-stakes' assessment (Au, 2007) is therefore highly 'consequential' (Wong, 2017) and so has major impact on the work of the teachers. The other teachers (especially in the Secondary school) did not have this pressure on their work and so they had more flexibility in how they worked with the new curriculum.

This suggests that it is the monitoring of the teaching of the curriculum, through assessment and inspection, that is the key element in ensuring the aims and content of a policy such as a new curriculum are enacted. Simply

relying on the mere existence of the document itself and the fact that schools and teachers have been tasked with its implementation will not ensure the enactment as originally planned. This aligns with what many researchers on educational policy have previously noted, that policy changes or becomes 'refracted' as it moves through the policy implementation process and what teachers implement on the ground may not be what was originally intended. There were many examples noted by the teachers in this research, from the KS2 History teacher who included content because 'she liked it', to the KS3 teachers who were mediating the curriculum to benefit from their own subject expertise and the perceived needs of their pupils. It may even be that teachers are hard-wired to 'resist' or adapt outside influences and to rely their own judgement and expertise (Wright and Froehlich, 2012; Ensor, 2015) and as others have previously suggested, perhaps this will always happen where those involved in the process at 'street level' (Lipsky, 1980) feel they have the expertise and judgement to make their own valid decisions.

The pedagogic device has proven to be a useful conceptual tool for considering how the aims of a Government education policy are enacted in schools through the instrument of a National Curriculum and this had been further discussed in recent literature (Singh et al, 2018). The recontextualization rules are helpful when considering the two sub-fields of the ORF and the PRF and how these interact with each-other to lead to compliance or resistance within the school. Where they are aligned it would appear more likely that the aims of the curriculum will be enacted as planned and the hand of the Government can perhaps 'reach into the classroom', in

the words of Stephen Ball (1994). However, even with some alignment between the ORF and PRF, it appears that teachers are willing and able to mediate the curriculum document to an extent to fit in with their own aims and philosophy on their subject, and to take note of school ethos where relevant.

6.8 The pedagogic device, assessment and the evaluative rules

Bernstein foregrounds the role of evaluation in his later discussions about the pedagogic device, and indeed states that 'the key to pedagogic practice is continuous evaluation' (2000, 36). In his resulting diagram of 'pedagogic practice', 'Evaluation' is placed in a key position near the centre of the diagram. But Bernstein doesn't really comment on how assessment operates in any detail in this process. For example, in his comments about the pedagogic field where he discusses the roles of Producers, Reproducers and Acquirers, he does not make any reference to how evaluation and assessment might play a part in these relationships (2000, 37). In his discussion of the pedagogic field there is no discussion of the fundamental role of assessment and I consider this to be an element that is missing from the evaluative rules.

In his discussion of the operation of the pedagogic device, Bernstein considered the religious origins of the device, as religion was the original system for 'creating and controlling the unthinkable' and the key principle for connecting the 'two different worlds' of the 'mundane and the transcendental' or, as Durkheim would have described it, 'sacred and profane' knowledge (2000, 36, 78). Bernstein therefore considered there to be a structural

homology between what he terms the religious field and the pedagogic field (2000, 36). Within this homology, the religious field is structured hierarchically with Prophets, Priests and Laity, and Bernstein equated these to the Producers, Reproducers and Acquirers in the pedagogic field, again in a hierarchical structure (2000, 37). Puttick further discussed these connections in recent research into the impact of Chief Examiners on school Geography, and he felt that Bernstein's homology might be further developed (2015).

I am sympathetic to this view of the need for further development because, as discussed in my analysis, I have outlined the perceived importance of assessment in the evaluative field of the pedagogic device and how it may be undervalued in Bernstein's analysis (Wong, 2017; Gibbons, 2018).

I therefore feel that in Bernstein's discussion of the pedagogic device there is a missing step and the need for the addition of a feedback loop. The reproducers of knowledge need to know that the acquirers have learnt the correct knowledge to the correct level, and so an assessment element of the Evaluative Rules must be added to the diagram, through the use of tests, exams or other external monitoring such as an inspection regime.

I therefore see the device now operating in this form:
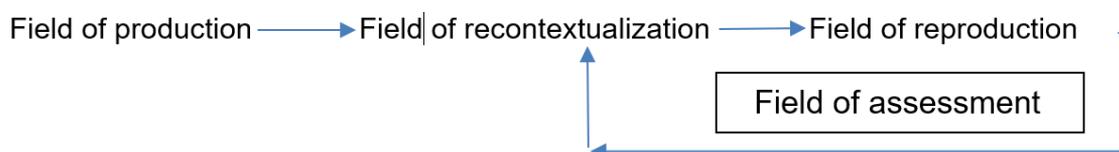
FIGURE 4: THE ASSESSED PEDAGOGIC DEVICE (AMENDED FROM BERNSTEIN, 2000)

Here, the pedagogic device is seen not as a simple, direct relay of knowledge but now includes a feedback loop, where consequential assessment forms part of a field of assessment that monitors the work and outputs of the field of reproduction and feeds results back into the field of recontextualization. The Evaluative Rules now more clearly include an element of assessment, a check that the acquirers have indeed been taught and learned the 'correct' knowledge as intended.

In this way, the ORF is able to check on the work of the PRF and assess the 'correct' knowledge as contained in the Government produced National Curriculum is indeed being passed on to the acquirers (the school pupils) as intended. Of course, as noted above, the level and type of assessment varies depending on the Key Stage and the subject and so it may be seen that not all school subjects are assessed to the same extent. This may be intentional, in that only some subjects are seen as important enough to be tested in this way (connected to PISA rankings and national monitoring), or it may be pragmatic in that it is not possible (or desirable) to test all subjects. Given teacher and parental opposition to KS2 SATS test in recent times and the ongoing teacher union opposition to the remaining SATS tests (Weale, 2019; Potter, 2018), the latter argument may hold more value.

6.9 Summary

In this chapter I have deductively analysed the responses of the subject leaders by applying the concept of Bernstein's pedagogic device to the

themes generated from the data. I have suggested that the recontextualization and evaluative fields of the device in particular provide a useful conceptual tool for analysing the implementation of a National Curriculum document, as it is produced by elements within an Official Recontextualising Field (ORF) and then filtered and mediated by those in the Pedagogic Recontextualising Field (PRF) to produce a curricular outcome that is then shared with pupils in school (the acquirers). The device allows for an analysis of why Governments (the ORF) want to produce a curriculum and drive knowledge production within a school (to reproduce a 'national consciousness') and it also assists in an analysis of the ways in which teachers respond to this direction in terms of resistance or adoption.

The device also assists with the analysis of the evaluative aspects of the curriculum process, but as discussed, this aspect of the device is rather under developed in Bernstein's description, and I agree with Au, Wong, Gibbons and Puttick in suggesting that aspects of Bernstein's conceptualisation of the pedagogic device may be further developed. A key element in my own analysis is the addition of a feedback loop to indicate whether the knowledge that is relayed to the pupils has been acquired as intended. I also suggest that this feedback loop might also be added to Bernstein's homology of the religious field, where an act of Confirmation suggests that the acquirer, or member of the laity, has shown commitment and a correct level of knowledge.

The following chapter concludes the thesis, also commenting on possible

limitations of the research and to offer suggestions for future research

relevant to this field.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

'In all modern societies the school is a crucial device for writing and rewriting national consciousness' (Bernstein, 2000, xxiii)

7.1 Summary

This research explored the impact of a new National Curriculum on the work of teachers across a range of subjects in two English schools and a distinctive feature was that it examined two Key Stages across the Primary/Secondary school divide. It also explored the inter-connected factors that impact on their curriculum decision making. The research used Bernstein's pedagogic device as the key theoretical framework, particularly the recontextualising and evaluative rules and associated fields and processes. Possible connections between the pedagogic device and policy enactment literature have been highlighted, as have potential theoretical developments of aspects of the pedagogic device. This paper therefore makes a contribution to the relatively limited literature that has focussed on developing elements of the evaluative rules of the pedagogic device (Gibbons, 2018), particularly on the role of assessment in this case.

The primary research in this case study approach consisted of 13 semi-structured interviews with subject leaders and Headteachers and the responses were coded, themed and analysed using a thematic analysis approach following the procedures suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006,

2012, 2013) and others.The introduction to this study set out three key research questions that were addressed through the empirical work that followed. Based on the findings from the research and my interpretation of those findings, empirical and theoretical conclusions can be drawn that address these key questions.

The first question asked how subject leaders had responded to the new National Curriculum in their curriculum planning work in school and what were their views on the new Curriculum? A key empirical finding from the research was that the Key Stage and the subject itself were key determinants of the level to which subject leaders were able to bring some autonomy to their mediation of the curriculum, because in the current curriculum document the level of subject content and guidance varied so greatly. It was clear that most subject leaders felt that subject content had been moved 'down' the curriculum in most areas (where there was detailed content to move), in an apparent attempt to make the curriculum 'harder' and to raise standards. Again, this depended on Key Stage and subject, with KS3 subject leaders apparently more ambivalent about the impacts of the new curriculum, and KS2 subject leaders finding that it had had more impact on their work, especially in English and Maths. This is subject to other factors that are discussed further in the answer to the next research question.

When discussing the curriculum, many subject leaders were aware of macro-level issues such as the Government intent to raise standards and to compete more successfully in international comparisons. Many also felt that teachers

weren't trusted and had change imposed on them by those who were notexperts in the field. These comments show connections to the 'discourse of derision' that has been discussed by many others in educational research (Ball, 2008; Priestley, 2011a; Maguire, 2014).

The second research question asked what factors affect the work of teachers when working with a new National Curriculum as an educational policy? The main empirical finding of the research suggest that it is the assessment of the acquisition of curriculum content through external testing that plays a major role in ensuring that subject leaders fully engage with the National Curriculum. This factor directly affected those subject staff involved in Primary Maths and English, the only externally tested subjects across these two Key Stages, although the GCSE exams at the end of KS4 also had an indirect impact on the KS3 curriculum in the Secondary school in various ways. Another key finding was that high stakes external monitoring of the curriculum through OFSTED varied in its impact between the two schools, with a much stronger focus on content and subject delineation in the Primary school and an apparently more relaxed approach to curriculum coverage at KS3 in the Secondary school. This suggested a high level of accountability and managerialism in the Primary school, key elements of the recent neo-liberal agenda for English education (Kassem et al, 2006; Ball, 2008; 2014).

The final research question asked if the theoretical lens of Bernstein's pedagogic device assisted in understanding the aims and intent of the new

National Curriculum and subject leader responses? I believe the pedagogic device does prove a useful conceptual tool when considering the aims and intent of a new curriculum and how the curriculum is produced and developed on its policy journey into school. The key theoretical claim made by my research based on this analysis is that, while Bernstein foregrounds the evaluative rules of the Pedagogic Device, he does not clearly explain how assessment operates within the evaluative rules and the field of reproduction. I have suggested that the pedagogic device should include a feedback loop so that the success or otherwise of knowledge acquisition as a result of processes within the device can be fed back to the Recontextualising Field, to be further incorporated by the ORF. In this respect I have some agreement with the views of Wong (2017) and Gibbons (2018) who also felt that this aspect of the device was under-developed in certain aspects.

The pedagogic device has been employed by many researchers to aid their analysis of a range of aspects of education, such as assessment (Au, 2007; Wong, 2017; Gibbons, 2018), school curriculum content (Tan, 2010; Puttick, 2015; Lim, 2016) and the practices of teachers themselves (Kang, 2009; Leow, 2011; Barrett, 2017). I have found the Pedagogic Device to be a useful heuristic device to analyse the impact of a National Curriculum and how subject leaders respond, especially the recontextualising and evaluative rules. Particularly useful were the sub-fields that Bernstein developed as part of the recontextualising field, the ORF and PRF, and his notion that the existence of 'arenas of struggle' within these fields gives the possibility for both resistance

and adoption of a National Curriculum. I have stated that it is the strength of the evaluation of the field of recontextualization that determines the extent which to which the wishes of the ORF are carried out in school as originally envisaged, not just the mere existence and implementation of a new National Curriculum itself.

I have suggested that the Pedagogic Device may be conceptually linked to theories of policy enactment processes, with generation of policy by the ORF and implementation and enactment by those in the PRF. Although this may simplify the intentions of the device, this analysis has value and assists in understanding what can be an opaque conceptual model. As discussed in the analysis section, others such as Leow (2011,) and Singh et al, (2013) have made similar links between these two concepts.

Bernstein suggested that the pedagogic device is a conceptual tool that helps explain how societies reproduce themselves through educational processes. As Wheelahan has commented, deciding what should be taught in schools and who should be in charge of these decisions is of great importance to society (2010). While teachers play a key role, they are not necessarily the best arbiters of such decisions; for example, White has suggested that decisions over what to include in a National Curriculum should be taken by the wider society itself and not teachers alone, as it is of such great importance (2005). In this view teachers would play some part in curriculum making at the school level but would be guided or controlled by broader curriculum aims set out by society through the Government. My research has

suggested that this is what happens to an extent, as teachers are obliged to implement a curriculum but appear to do so on their own terms where they can. Much previous research has reached similar conclusions, that schools.and teachers are often quite resistant to curriculum and policy change as they have strong personal beliefs and philosophies on what should be included in the curriculum and so will resist and adapt policy where they can (Bowe et al, 1992; Cuban, 1998; Webb and Vulliamy, 1999; Supovitz, 2008; Priestley, 2011a; Wright and Froehlich, 2012; Ensor, 2015). As suggested in my research, the difference is where the enactment of the curriculum is closely monitored through assessment or inspection and this will have a strong impact on the nature of curriculum development within the school.

Given the scale of this research it was exploratory in nature rather than aiming to be empirically definitive. However, the empirical findings raise some interesting questions that would be worth sharing with relevant departments in Government so that they might consider how they should respond.

As I have stated throughout the thesis, the research considered the ways in which teachers actually respond to a national curriculum and the extent to which the hand of the Government can 'reach' into the classroom. One conclusion was that teachers respond professionally to a new curriculum and mediate it to suit their own philosophy, the ethos of the school and their pupils. The only teachers that appeared to feel they had to cover the material in their subject curriculum in the detail suggested were the KS2 English and

Maths teachers, and this was due to influence of the SATS high stakes exams at the end of KS2.

Therefore, if a Government wishes to ensure that teachers fully respond to the intended curriculum content, one clear response would be to introduce KS2 SATS tests for all subjects. Based on this research, this approach would ensure that the Primary National Curriculum at least would be covered as initially intended. However, this is clearly impractical and based on recent changes and perceptions, the direction of travel regarding the SATS is in fact in the other direction, with SATS possibly disappearing completely in the near future (Weale, 2019).

A more realistic response would be to accept the way in which teachers respond to a new policy such as a National Curriculum, based on the findings of this research and previous research as detailed in the theoretical frameworks chapter. Teachers will always bring their own ethos and philosophy to a new curriculum and will work with their departments, school ethos and local context to develop their own version of the new curriculum. Therefore, if schools are tasked with introducing a new National Curriculum, it would make more sense for the curriculum to be written and delivered in the style of the subjects that have limited content in the current version, such as Music and Art. If there is to be a National Curriculum at all then perhaps it should contain minimal content and skills guidance, a 'bottom line' of content that must be covered, so that teachers can use their own skills and expertise

to develop the curriculum that their school and pupils require and deserve. This would clearly become part of an ongoing debate on 'powerful knowledge' and the actual extent and amount of the content (Young, 1998, Wheelahan, 2010). However, if schools in England must have a National Curriculum imposed upon them then it would make sense for it to be guidance at this minimal level so that teachers can be professionally trusted once again to develop their own situated curricula as appropriate. These conclusions are will be shared with secondary PGCE students at my own Institute of Higher Education, to share with them the apparent importance of teacher philosophy and ethos and the role of curriculum making in their future professional role.

7.2 Limitations

All research benefits from 'a posteriori' critical reflection to consider how it might have been improved and how to execute future research. 'Informed hindsight' is a key aspect of the research process (Trafford and Lashem, 2008, 143) and it is helpful to analyse what might have been done differently, both at practical and more theoretical levels.

At a practical level the findings presented in this research are from a case study of two schools and so are limited in their generalisability to the wider educational field. However, I believe that the responses of the subject leaders involved in the research are of great interest and insight and this suggests that a broader data set from more subject leaders across more subjects in a

wider range of schools would be worthy of further consideration and perhaps lead to more generalisable findings.

The decision to conduct research based a case study of two schools was a valid one given timescales and size of the project, but I underestimated the time needed for gaining access to suitable schools and then to individual subject leaders. It was also naïve to assume that all subject leaders would want to be involved simply because they had been asked by a fellow educator. On reflection, I would not make similar assumptions in the future. On a positive note the Primary Headteacher highlighted the key role of the gatekeeper, as she not only gave permission for the research but became an advocate for the research project in school.

At a more conceptual level I have reflected on the use of Bernstein's pedagogic device as the key theoretical framework for analysis in this research, and it has proven useful in offering insight and structure to the analysis. The range of educational research from a range of contexts that has utilised the theory as its main framework is extensive and suggests it has much to offer the educational researcher, while also offering potential for further development of the theory. This was a key aspect of this study.

In my analysis of the data I have alluded to other theoretical aspects that also provide useful insights, such as teacher agency (Priestley, 2011a; Priestley et al, 2013) and content analysis of the curriculum (Ozga, 2000; Hall, 2001; Krippendorff, 2004). It is likely that these analytical approaches would also have yielded interesting results. However, when conducting research there

are a range of decisions to be made at each step and, as Braun and Clarke have noted, it is not possible for qualitative researchers to reach the same conclusions when working on the same data, in the same way that different sculptors would realise slightly different results when working from the same block of stone (2013). The researcher must be aware of different approaches and pragmatically apply the most relevant methods and theoretical frameworks to the questions they are investigating. I have done so in this research while being aware that there were other paths available that could have been taken.

7.3 Possible areas of future research

This research has suggested that the personal ethos, experiences and perceived autonomy of teachers play a key role in their mediation of a curriculum and further research into this aspect using Lipsky's Street Level Bureaucrat theory (1980) would be interesting especially as in England at least there has been limited research on teachers utilising this theoretical approach.

An interesting finding from this research was that the Secondary school had changed their curriculum structure to better prepare for the GCSE assessments. This meant that they only gave two years to the KS3 National Curriculum compared to the three that the Government expect. This is worthy of further research, both to consider the extent to which this practice is common across relevant schools, and the possible impacts of this change. Does this revised structure in fact lead to better GCSE results, and what

impact does choosing exam subjects in year 8 instead of year 9 have on pupils and the ways in which subjects are taught?

7.4 Postscript

Since my primary research was completed, the new head of OFSTED has suggested changes to how the organisation should work with schools. A key aim is to focus more on the school curriculum itself and make fewer judgements based solely on exam results. One of the reasons for this change was a concern that schools have narrowed their curricula too much to focus on success in SATS and GCSES (Roberts, 2019).

7.5 Finally…

This research addressed many contested aspects of education in schools in England, from the nature of the curriculum itself to the impacts of assessment and inspections on the work of teachers and their pupils. It concluded that the effect of a new National Curriculum on the work of subject leaders varies dependent on their subject, key stage, and school. Bernstein's pedagogic device theory offers conceptual insights into the ways in which teachers work with the curriculum as part of a relay of knowledge from Government policy into schools and suggests they can impact upon it as it moves through a range of 'arenas of struggle'. The theory also highlights the importance of evaluation, although my research suggests that the role of assessment itself in this process could be more fully formulated. This is the main theoretical

claim for my research, that assessment needs more acknowledgement as a key part of the evaluative processes in the pedagogic device.

At the heart of this research were the subject leaders who work in a complex and ever-changing educational environment. I sincerely thank them for their co-operation and remain full of admiration for their hard work and desire to do the very best for their pupils, whatever the circumstances.

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Appendices

Appendix One

'Prompt' questions used in the semi-structured interviews:

1. Icebreaker and background questions to put interviewee at ease (eg where trained, personal background, how long a teacher, how long at this school, how long in this role)

2. What are your views on the new National Curriculum for your subject?

3. What are your views on the nature and amount of subject content?

4. What impact has this new curriculum had on your work in school?

5. How much freedom do you have to mediate what is in this new curriculum?

6. What are your views on why this new curriculum has been introduced?

7. How do you mediate the curriculum, ie how do you know what you should teach?

8. What has been the impact of the loss of levels from the curriculum, if any?

9. What has the new curriculum meant for KS2/KS3/KS4 links for you, if any?

10. What is your view of the future of the National Curriculum? What would you like to see happen next?

11. For Headteachers – what impact has the new National Curriculum had on your school in general, if any?

Appendix Two

The development of the generation of the final five themes discussed in the thesis, based on the initial coding, code clusters and initial theme generation.

a. Initial grouping of codes to create broad code clusters generated from the data:

1.   Links to other subjects – cross curricular links
2.   New NC – less content or lack of content – good – more teacher autonomy, uses teacher experience, teachers job to decode and translate. Bad – relies on teacher experience, not enough to plan
3.   New NC – more content – good – guidance for teachers. Bad – too much material, at too high a level, pupil/teacher pressure.
4.   Effects on subject status/time available – pressure on teachers
5.   Assessment – changes – good – old levels not so clear or helpful. Bad – not enough guidance for teachers, need for staff training, staff confidence changes. SATS – effects and impact
6.   Pupils – pressure of SATs, how they learn, nature of intake, type of pupil at the school.
7.   Outside influences – Government, Ebac, Parents, other schools (same/different KS).
8.   Reasons for NC change – political, necessary update, pressure on teachers.
9.   Teacher feelings – defensive, unsure of how to react to changes. Confident, sure of response, pleased with chance to use own expertise/knowledge.
10.   New NC – links to content and knowledge – link to what is knowledge debate
11.   Teacher attitudes to change – adopter/adapter, accommodates change, resister to change
12.   Awareness of other schools and their impact/influence
13.   School ethos – impact on change, impact of Headteacher, status of subjects.
14.   Department ethos – impact on change, impact of HoD, influence of dept staff, how work together
15.   Progression – awareness of progress to KS4, awareness of links/impact on KS2
16.   Performativity – effects of changes on staff and attitudes.
17.   Change – good, need for update etc. Bad – too much change, stability needed

b. Initial code cluster headings based on the data listed above:

Assessment
New National curriculum and teacher views on it.
Impact of new curriculum
Subject organisation and structure
Subject expertise of teacher
Subject leader ethos and philosophy
Reasons for curriculum change
Pupil background
Curriculum pressure on teachers
Awareness of other schools
Cross-phase issues
General aims of education
Support for teachers from outside school
Critique of education
School ethos
Department ethos
Outside pressures on schools
Outside influences on schools
OFSTED pressures on schools
Subject organisation and structure
National curriculum influences
National curriculum impacts
Teacher view of the new curriculum

c. Following on from the generation of the code clusters as seen above, the following broader themes were then initially generated from the data:

• School ethos
• School location and nature of local area
• The pupils
• Department/subject ethos
• Teacher experience and background
• Teacher perspective on education
• The nature of the curriculum document and content
• Time pressure on the school and curriculum
• Influence of previous curriculum documents
• External pressures and influence (assessment)
• External pressures and influence (Government processes)
• External support and influence

In the final generation of themes, some of the above were discarded, (such as nature of the local area), whereas others remained or were subsumed into new, broader themes.

d. The final list of generated themes and sub-themes that were discussed in the thesis:

- Theme One - Subject leader perspectives on the new National Curriculum

  - Sub theme one – subject leader reactions to the actual content
  - Sub theme two – subject leader thoughts on the reasons for curriculum change

- Theme Two - The influence of school ethos on curriculum planning

- Theme Three - The influence of subject leader philosophy and experience on curriculum planning

- Theme Four - 'Assessment backwash' - the impacts of external assessment and monitoring on curriculum planning
  - Sub theme one – The impacts of national testing on curriculum planning
  - Sub theme two – The impacts of OFSTED monitoring on curriculum planning

- Theme Five - The pupils and the local context