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**Portraits of teachers in landscapes of change:
exploring the role of teachers
in school improvement**

by

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on an investigation which aimed to explore how teachers interpret their roles and construct their professional identities in relation to school improvement and how they can be supported in their contributions in this respect. The initial research questions were set within a conceptual framework linking teacher professionalism and school improvement, in particular the symbiotic and reciprocal relationships between individuals and organisations which were illuminated by the concepts of agency and structuration. Research aims, questions and conceptual development were reflexively and iteratively modified, to encompass the significance of school context in influencing professional identity and agency and to explore intractable dilemmas arising in interpreting external and internal policy requirements in relation to personal values. The implications of narrative enquiry for validity were acknowledged, focusing on distilling the ‘essence’ of situated professional selves and identities through portraiture to explore these substantive themes.

The professional values, priorities and aspirations of six teachers were investigated through semi-structured interviews incorporating elicitation tools, and presented as a form of nested case study where individual portraits were set within the organisational landscapes of their two contrasting schools, based on evidence representing a range of perspectives. This involved navigating the methodological territory between narratives and portraits. Analysis is presented as an ‘exhibition’, with three ‘galleries’ exploring different themes emerging from the empirical evidence. This enabled comparisons to be made between the stance that teachers choose to take in relation to internally or externally driven change and their own motivations, aspirations and actions to achieve outcomes according with their personal values and concerns.

The research contributes new understandings in relation to how, within ‘imposed’, ‘selected’ and ‘constructed’ organisational environments (Bandura, 2001), teachers’ professional identities are, to a greater or lesser extent, imposed or constructed. This in turn affects their agency in influencing their professional environments aligned with their personal professional values and aspirations. The empirical evidence therefore shows the significance of organisational cultures, leadership and individual agency, in influencing how professional environments and identities are constructed or imposed. A new model is derived from the empirical evidence and parallel conceptual development, contrasting complementary epistemological, ontological and agentic perspectives for schooling. This provides a framework for developing professional identity and professionalism, in which individual agency is considered a vital dimension. Since teachers have a predominantly narrative understanding of reality, it is argued that narrative and visual approaches are key to such school improvement work. Making the agentic perspective visible and developmental supports key components of agency - intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness (ibid.). The resulting levels of engagement give grounds for optimism in supporting teachers’ more powerful individual and collective agency, including working critically and strategically with systemic reform, contributing proactively to local initiatives for change and pursuing personal change agendas.

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Chapter One

Investigating the role of teachers in school improvement

The reforms and initiatives to which schools are subjected have profound effects on the lives and work of teachers and other education professionals. In many countries, it has been argued that the teaching profession is continually under siege, creating an ongoing crisis of definition and identity; indeed, education professionals have themselves been viewed as a 'subject' of reform (Ball, 2008). In the dynamic and volatile climate of contemporary education policy, new questions are continually raised about the role of teachers in processes of school change and decision making. These questions challenge existing notions of teacher professionalism (Whitty, 2006), both those long-held and those that have more recently emerged.

The concept of agency is fundamental in exploring roles and identities in relation to school change. Agency enables choice concerning one's core work, in relation to personal interests, motivations, values and hopes. Professional identities are negotiated through the interaction between personal agency and 'social suggestion', as Vähäsantanen et al. (2008) have suggested. Many countries, including England which is the setting for this study, have responded to rapid change and necessary innovation in the last few decades by moving into an era of increasingly strong social control, where education organisations accountable to the state are driven by efficiency and profitability. However, while it is easy to slip into the language of a global deluge of change and concomitant teacher de-professionalisation, there are notable exceptions where an ethos of teacher professionalism is encouraged and teachers' values and agency are promoted and celebrated as integral to professionalism.

The English government has recognised that the emphasis on teacher status and professionalism in countries that perform well in international comparisons, such as those in Finland and Singapore, may be one of the keys to the development of a world class education system (DfE, 2010). In 2011, Singapore's Ministry of Education introduced a framework for developing teachers' professional culture by strengthening professionalism, deepening engagement, fulfilling aspirations, enhancing career opportunities (including in middle leadership) and achieving 'work-life harmony'

(Singapore Ministry of Education, 2012). Its 'Academy of Singapore Teachers' has been developed as a networked learning community with the aim of fostering "... a stronger teacher-led culture of professional collaboration and professional excellence" (2012). A study of contrasting conceptions of teacher professionalism between England and Finland (Webb et al., 2004) found that in Finland, the discourse was dominated by notions of teacher empowerment, supporting school-based curricula and more active, child-centred pedagogies. These examples give encouragement from alternative professional cultures, suggesting that it is worthwhile to consider the existing and potential role of teachers in school improvement, which this thesis aims to explore.

In the many countries where powerful central accountability has been driving school reform, including England at the time of this study, it has been argued that contemporary educational reform has created a "paradox of innovation without change" (Priestley et al., 2011). During a period of rising educational standards overall, while policy has emphasized diversity and choice (Coffey, 2001), the social inequities that the New Labour government's policies in the United Kingdom were designed to tackle have widened (Whitty, 2006; DCSF, 2009; Bangs et al., 2011). While it may be true to say that attainment has risen, this may not necessarily mean that the gap in attainment between privileged and disadvantaged has been narrowed. Building the necessary educational capital demands changes in aspiration, expectation and engagement.

It is acknowledged that schools are limited in the difference they can make to social and economic deprivation, but there are also limiting factors in terms of the ways in which reform is approached. Reforms, whether externally or internally driven, tend to concentrate on the more visible and manageable structural elements on the surface, while failing to acknowledge the micro-political complexity of power relationships, identities and cultural norms beneath (Stoll, 1998; Morley, 2008). School improvement initiatives can founder against these often unacknowledged and poorly understood sub-surface elements, compounded by local contextual factors that create the most challenging of circumstances for learning and achievement. According to Bangs et al. (2011), who interviewed policymakers, academics and others involved in shaping and implementing English educational reform over the last few decades, a 'desultory' attitude to teachers amongst some policymakers in the New Labour government was at odds with the capacity building rhetoric. Michael Barber, head of their Standards and

Effectiveness Unit, reflects that top-down policies to raise standards had more of a negative effect than was realised at the time, which he now feels was somewhat naïve. Although there was a flurry of positive teacher engagement with the CPD Strategy of 2001, funding was withdrawn by Brown's government and responsibility for CPD into the current coalition government has increasingly rested with schools. Meanwhile Secretary of State for Education in the previous government, Gillian Shephard, recognises a lack of attention to professional development that she attributes to mistakenly planning for only one term of office.

Further to this lack of sustained support for the development and affirmation of the teaching profession, MacBeath et al. (2006:1) argue that school improvement policymakers require, and may lack, "...a textured understanding of what it means for schools to meet the needs of young people on the edge of the social mainstream". The two schools that are the focus of this study are attended by many such marginalised young people. Yet research (ibid.) shows that some schools can rise above their exceptionally challenging circumstances, displaying a commitment to deep learning that transcends cultural barriers. It is difficult to see how such cultural change can be achieved without the commitment of teachers to the learning process and to the young people themselves. This would be better supported, however, if there were a coherent strategy for the teaching profession, which Bangs et al. (2011) argue has been lacking in successive English governments in recent years.

In this introduction I consider the current context for school change within which teachers' professional activities and identities are located and begin to problematise some of the themes central to this thesis. In order to lay a foundation for the development of the initial conceptual framework for the study in Chapter Two, an overview is given of the theoretical, political and methodological fields within which the research is located. This includes a critical discussion of the professional context within which teachers in England were working during the period of study and the socio-political factors and global forces for change governing their changing educational contexts. The structure of the thesis is explained, followed by an outline of the methodological stance adopted and some of the issues arising. Finally I consider the potential for application of knowledge and understanding from this study, which extends beyond a theoretical contribution to discuss the implications for policy and for practice in support of teachers' role in school improvement.

Innovation without change?

National reforms, based on rolling out strategies via training and professional development, are not consistently effective, since the constraints of complex, localised and idiosyncratic social systems of schools and their professional subcultures can override the characteristics of a particular innovation (Stoll, 1998, after House, 1974; Warren-Little, 1997). Put more simply, much education reform fails to appreciate the depth, range and complexity of what teachers do and the local and political forces that shape and constrain their actions (Bascia and Hargreaves, 2000; Fullan, 1997). If we are to understand how to achieve educationally productive change, we must look beneath the surface at teachers' moral grounds for action and the emotional textures of their practice (Hargreaves et al., 2001). We need to consider "...the quality of interpersonal relationships and the nature and quality of learning experiences" (Barth, 1990: 45), aspects which are likely to be of central concern to teachers themselves. The role of teachers in school improvement therefore needs exploration. Many would argue that teachers should be working at the leading edge of change, intellectually, emotionally and politically (Bascia and Hargreaves, 2000; Durrant and Holden, 2006). This study embraces a range of school improvement factors and forces and explores the connections between them, from the unique perspectives of six individual teachers working within the changing contexts of two contrasting schools. In particular, it is concerned with teachers' beliefs, values and cultural norms and their philosophical, emotional and practical responses to school change.

A pervading discourse of performativity in the English education system and elsewhere (Ball, 2008) is characterised by dichotomies of asset and deficit. Schools stand or fall by their inspection grade and league table position in all phases of education. Children are selected and categorised by test and examination results which are also used to measure teacher performance and rank schools, in multiple confusions of purpose. Policymakers of the last Labour government offer some disturbing revelations that "...the numeracy and literacy targets had 'no evidential base'" (Bangs et al., 2011:150) and that targets were only 'educated guesses'.

Although few have been as forthright in exposing the flawed rationale of the standards agenda and its delivery mechanism, the effects of this given regime on teachers, as well as children and schools, are complex and have been widely explored (see for example Ball, 2003; Day and Gu, 2010; MacBeath et al., 2006; Day et al., 2006; Wrigley, 2009a). Pressures and conflicts arise from competing agendas, a culture of

surveillance (Coffey, 2001) and the pedagogic and epistemological constraints of instrumental, stressful, risk-averse professional cultures. With New Labour's top-down delivery of the standards agenda, and obsession with 'deliverology' in the urgency to demonstrate improvement in order to secure further political backing, there has been a lack of consideration for sustaining teacher engagement, self-efficacy, ownership and morale which are crucial to improvement (Bangs et al., 2011).

Alongside this, as teachers increasingly lost autonomy and control within the top-down reform culture, there was a rise in therapeutic responses to professional dilemmas (see for example Power, 2008; Priestley et al., 2011; Day and Gu, 2010; MacBeath et al., 2006; Galton and MacBeath, 2008). Yet, as Coffey (2001) notes, there is also much continuity in teachers' work, for example in the focus on managing classrooms and in the central importance of the relationships and social interactions between teachers and learners.

This thesis explores the ways in which teachers perceive their professional roles and identities in relation to school change, considering whether selected teachers perceive themselves to be victims, instruments or instigators of improvement in different circumstances. The research investigates not only how the teachers contribute and respond to what is normally defined as school improvement, but also what they are working to improve and would like to change, within and beyond formal school and national agendas. Discussion focuses on the nature and extent of teachers' engagement with school improvement and also their perceptions and experiences of how schools can change due to teachers' own agency 'from within' (Barth, 1990).

Professionalism and professionalism in changing times

Towards the end of the period of this study, which took place during the academic year 2009-10, the English Conservative - Liberal Democrat coalition government published an education White Paper on 'The Importance of Teaching' which emphasises the importance of teachers' role and status (DfE, 2010), citing international examples of high performing school systems. In the White Paper, familiar demands for standards and accountability are couched in language revisiting notions of greater responsibility, autonomy and freedom from constraint, where schools must set their own priorities, but still firmly and familiarly on the government's terms. Elements of the statement include a focus on narrowing to a more traditional curriculum with continued rigorous

assessment, improving behaviour and discipline, separation of education from the relatively recent multi-agency agenda, pupil premiums for the most deprived, continued reduction in the power and resources of Local Authorities (while they ostensibly maintain a strategic role) and an increase in academies and free schools with greater autonomy from the state. The changing landscape has forced urgent action in schools, Local Authorities and Higher Education Faculties nationwide, with much uncertainty over detail. Against this backdrop, this thesis aims to explore the reflexive relationships between teachers as individuals and their school organisations, set within their wider socio-political contexts.

The nature of teachers' professionalism in terms of the ideologies, attitudes, intellectual dispositions and knowledge that are reflected in practice (Hoyle, 1975; Evans, 1999; 2008), influences the ways in which teachers contribute to processes of school improvement and how they perceive their roles. Professionalism has been expressed in terms of a continuum from 'restricted' to 'extended', where restricted forms cast teachers as classroom technicians, while extended forms involve individuals in vision, enquiry and intellectual endeavour as well as practical activity (Hoyle, 1975; Evans, 2008). Much theoretical analysis of the lives and work of teachers focuses on professional identities and contexts and the effects on teachers' lives and motivations. Arguably it neglects or de-emphasises the purpose of the professional activity in relation to the learning and educational experience of children and young people. Policy documents and academic literature chart the pendulum swings of analysis and advocacy, from de-professionalisation to re-professionalisation (see for example Barnett, 2008; Evans, 2008; Bottery, 2004). In the late 20th Century a claim was made for the need for a 'new professionalism' to tackle workload issues in order to improve performance.

This new professionalism was specifically defined in government terms in 2003 as concerned with professional standards, performance management, professional development and induction (Walker et al., 2011). A recent government-sponsored evaluation shows, on the basis of a 20% response rate, that the majority of schools are implementing these criteria and making the required links with quality of learning and teaching and standards of performance (ibid.). Professionalism is thereby defined and evaluated by government in a self-fulfilling cycle of accountability. Yet, as previously discussed, politicians and policymakers admit that during successive Conservative and Labour governments, a coherent and sustained strategy for the teaching profession has

been lacking. Bangs et al., (2011) contrast this strongly with OECD's research ('TALIS': Teaching and Learning International Survey in 2009), underlining the importance of such a strategy, linking professional development to enhance self-efficacy, confidence and self-esteem with teacher performance.

Agency, structure and advocacy

The recipes for teachers' survival and success in this complex and challenging educational milieu are demanding; Day and Gu's extensive study (2010) suggests that in order to manage their 'new lives' and 'make a difference' in the 21st Century, teachers need

- subject and pedagogic knowledge
- technical skills and personal competencies
- a sense of moral purpose, motivation and agency
- passion and commitment
- emotional intelligence and emotional wellbeing
- stable and positive professional identity
- resilience.

These are personal professional attributes and attitudes with which few would disagree, but their applications may flourish or founder at the mercy of changing organisational conditions and wider policy frameworks. These can be affirming and effective, but equally can be subject to ebbs and flows conditioned by political whims and inconsistencies (Priestley et al., 2011). Changes and contradictions can distort moral purpose and even challenge responsibility to students so that "practice can come to be experienced as inauthentic and alienating" (Ball, 2008: 54). One headteacher describes a series of parallel lines of policy existing separately within the government department and having to draw them together into a prism on his desk in order to interpret them for school improvement (Bangs et al., 2011). This points to the significance of local, organisational factors in determining school effectiveness and improvement. Educational strategies introduced with a long term rationale may be subverted at organisational level by the tactical manoeuvres of schools mindful of their league table position. They can be interpreted differently with a change of headteacher, or overturned as a result of a change of government. This study explores whether the opposite view holds, in terms of the extent to which teachers can sustain a sense of self-efficacy and moral purpose, exerting influence on educational processes and

outcomes in their own right. It therefore builds upon, and challenges the assertions of, my previous work in this field.

In this thesis I adopt a position of advocacy for teachers as leaders of change and drivers of school improvement, drawing on experience and evidence from previous research and development work (for example Durrant and Holden, 2006; Durrant, 2004; Frost et al., 2000). While recognising and examining in detail the volatility of the professional and political contexts within which teachers work, this thesis also investigates transcendent professional qualities and approaches emerging from the data. The evidence illuminates ways in which teachers contribute to improvement in different organisational and policy contexts, and how they are nurtured and supported or constrained and frustrated in their endeavours. Thus I consider the extent to which teachers can operate effectively within externally imposed policies and organisational structures, cultures and norms of practice. I also explore the extent to which they are able to exert influence over these structural factors, in order to improve the lives and learning of their students.

This thesis therefore makes an explicit connection between individuals and organisational improvement by exploring the relationship between agency and structure (Giddens, 1984), drawing on sociological and psychological as well as specifically educational theory as a framework for the investigation of educational phenomena through empirical data. The research at the heart of this thesis examines the nature of the complex interaction between individual teachers (their values, concerns, perceptions, experiences and actions) and processes of school development (relating to national educational reform and global societal change). It is concerned with relationships between leadership, learning and the 'lifeworlds' (Sergiovanni, 2000) of teachers and their students. Central to the thesis are questions about how teachers' agency is enabled or constrained by their organisational structures, structures which are themselves responsive to wider systemic enablement and constraint, and how teachers are thus able to contribute to school improvement.

While the theoretical framework for the research and analysis has a foundation in other disciplines, the emphasis here is educational and the study has a practical as well as a philosophical concern. The intention is to contribute to theoretical knowledge, but also to provide insights into ways in which teachers, supported by headteachers and schools, might work more effectively to achieve better educational outcomes and experiences for children and young people. Although moral purpose, social justice and

equity should always be priorities, it is recognised that the nature, definition and purpose of school improvement in an ‘age of supercomplexity’ (Barnett, 2008) is contestable. The thesis is concerned methodologically with issues of educational purpose as well as process, issues which lie at the core of teachers’ professional lives and identities.

Initial research questions

The purpose of the research accounted for in this thesis was to use a portraiture methodology (Lawrence Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997) to capture the experiences and identities of individual teachers, within the contextual landscapes of their schools, in order to answer the following initial research questions:

1. To what extent do teachers construct their professional roles and identities in relation to school improvement?
2. How do teachers conceive of, and respond to, organisational change and contribute to school improvement?
3. How can schools and policymakers create supportive conditions to encourage and enable teachers to contribute positively to school improvement?

Research methods were selected and adapted to examine the rich, fine grained detail of individual professional lives in relation to changing organisational settings. This involved exploration of the experiences and perceptions of six teachers of different ages, genders, career stages and roles, selecting three within each of two schools in order to provide an element of organisational as well as individual contrast. The location of individual portraits within their contextual landscapes offered insights about the ways in which teachers both contribute and respond to organisational change. Teachers reflected upon, and responded to, the influences of national and local political and socio-economic factors and the directions and decisions taken by head teachers and senior leaders in the organisational context.

It was important to allow flexibility to modify the research questions to incorporate conceptual developments as the research progressed. Summaries of these conceptual developments are included at the end of each chapter. It became clear that there could be greater potential in using narrative and portraiture approaches not only to develop external perspectives through research, as in this study, but also to support professional development, dialogue and action for school improvement, in the dynamic interaction

between individuals and organisations. Reflexive approaches rooted in the ‘storied world’ could enable teachers to clarify and extend their roles in school improvement.

Particularity, universality and application

It is not intended that the analysis presented in this thesis is in any way generically representative of the teaching profession or of school change. Every school is unique and the two schools selected for investigation here might be considered less ‘typical’ than many. One is an academy launched at the start of the period of study, created from a merger of predecessor schools to drive up secondary standards in what became the last few months of the Labour Government, entering the uncharted waters of the Conservative – Liberal Democrat coalition in May 2010. The second school is a well-established urban special school for students aged 4-19 with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Both were initially selected as ‘moving’ schools (Stoll and Fink, 1996) undergoing considerable change and shown to be on an improving trajectory, as will be discussed in more detail later. The landscapes of change constructed from the evidence collected demonstrate powerfully the uniqueness of processes and factors combining to influence organisational development. This contributes to understanding of this ‘central dynamic’ of the relationship between individuals and their contexts (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2008).

Similarly, although the six teachers whose portraits form the kernel of the study have been selected to ensure a variety of roles and different genders, ages and levels of experience, the positivist logic of direct generalisation from this as a representative sample is flawed. Simons (1996) argues that the strength of a case study approach to research is in the paradox of developing a universal dimension of understanding through examining the details of complex educational phenomena. Fine-grained detail in the teacher portraits, critically examined in relation to their school landscapes, provides rich evidence to support a discussion through individual cases. Through this process, concepts of teacher professionalism, professional identity and human agency are explored in relation to contested ideas of school improvement and organisational change. This detailed, small-scale, qualitative approach enables examination of uniqueness and complexity which would otherwise be obscured by breadth and generalisation. It demonstrates the richness and authentic idiosyncrasy of individual lives and organisational contexts, while recognising that there may be patterns to be

observed, suggestions to be made and new knowledge to be gained on the basis of the analysis.

The importance of narrative for school improvement

Adopting this qualitative approach, in which portraiture is a central element, has demonstrated that narrative individuality and circumstantial detail are essential, not only in investigating school improvement through research, but also in understanding and implementing processes of school improvement, in which teachers are arguably the principal actors. Narrative approaches, when applied to individuals and to organisations, draw out the characteristics of people's ideas, relationships and vicissitudes that may matter more to the people in school communities than national reforms and the latest tactical and strategic manoeuvres of school leadership teams. This study shows that such details, far from being extraneous 'noise' in processes of reform, are often of central importance in school change, conditioning whether and how it actually happens amongst adults, children and young people, as we have recognised in previous research.

What is needed...is an approach that gets beneath the surface of the organisational life of the school and recognises that schools are communities of individuals and they contain a variety of professional cultures. This means that any school improvement plan has to be based on an understanding of these complex interpersonal circumstances.....it is the teachers themselves who are best placed to develop such understanding and to use it to inform their strategic action for change and improvement.

(Frost et al., 2000:7)

This calls for a reinstatement of the experiences, ideas, actions and relationships of teachers, students and other members of school communities, at the centre of school improvement. This study demonstrates a role for narrative, not only as a basis for research methodology, but also in our understanding of and support for processes of organisational change with teachers as central players. This might be able to reach beyond the rhetoric of government mandates that have been deemed ineffective (Priestley et al., 2011) including an acknowledged lack of success in addressing issues of deprivation related to underperformance (DCSF, 2009) where the idiosyncrasies of people and places may have developed overriding importance (MacBeath et al., 2006).

Positioning teachers at the heart of school improvement

In this study, the viability of positioning teachers at the heart of processes of improvement is investigated. In an increasingly fragile professional world (Lunt, 2008) the teacher's role is still championed, but with varying emphases, for example the exploration of professionalism by Cunningham and colleagues (2008a) includes teachers as specialists in learning within a multi-disciplinary agenda (Whitty, 2008), as critical creators and entrepreneurs (Barnett, 2008), as responsive, productive agents who are 'subjects of reform' (Ball, 2008) and as 'imaginative professionals' (Power, 2008). This thesis advocates a proactive, positive view, casting teachers as activists focused on improving learning and democratic experience of children and young people (Sachs, 2003a), at the leading edge of educational change (Bascia and Hargreaves, 2000; Day and Gu, 2010).

Analyses that emphasise professional deficit and therapeutic remedies, deterministic perspectives and oppression, as explained by Power (2008) and as exemplified by titles such as 'Teachers Under Pressure' (Galton and MacBeath, 2008) are contested, noting that the professional condition itself is too often the focus of analysis, with the professional too easily cast as victim. Despite their title, it is significant that Galton and MacBeath finally adopt a position of advocacy for teacher leadership, where 'good' teachers are recognised to cultivate their own sense of agency, initiative and self-belief (2008). This study explores the difference that teachers feel they are able to make to children's educational experiences and outcomes, and the relationship between this and school improvement as organisationally and externally defined. Educational, rather than professional concerns are placed at the heart of the investigation.

The structure of the thesis

Chapter Two establishes a conceptual framework for examining the teacher's professional role and identity in relation to educational change and school improvement. The discussion draws on sociological and psychological perspectives, hinging on the relationships between organisational structure and individual agency (Giddens, 1984; Archer, 2003; Bandura, 1989). It builds on Frost's (2006) discussion of 'agency in leadership for learning' in applying these conceptual frameworks to this study. This is set within a contemporary view of society, exploring the implications of aspects of modernity and post-modernity for the interactions between individual and

organisational, subjective and objective. In seeking to understand organisational change as both the context for, and consequence of, teachers' activity, the discussion explores the relationships between schools as organisations and their wider socio-political contexts. The notion of conjoint agency (Gronn, 2003) assists in understanding how the actions and influences of individual members of the organisation are resolved into educational change, where "...the 'organisation' is as much a structural outcome of action as a vehicle for it..." (p.30). The activities of headteachers and senior leaders, whose influences emerge powerfully through the portraiture, must be taken into account alongside those of the teachers. The summary of this conceptual framework at the end of the chapter is iteratively modified in the summaries of subsequent chapters to represent the development of thinking throughout the research process.

Chapter Three explains how the research design evolved over time, introduces portraiture as the unifying methodological theme and explores some of the emerging methodological issues, including ethical considerations and my own role in the research. In Chapter Four, the methodology of portraiture is explored in greater depth, drawing on an eclectic range of selected sources in an attempt to reach greater understanding of the potential for using insights from artistic processes and products in qualitative research. Portraiture involves elements and adaptations of narrative in a particular representation of case study, with its own distinctive style and analytical process. This employs methodological devices such as identification of critical incidents (Tripp, 1993) and 'critical situations' to explore and interpret individuals' professional roles, experiences, perspectives and identities within their organisational contexts. The portraiture approach has been adapted and extrapolated to capture landscapes of organisational change. Chapter Four explains in detail how the data has been analysed to construct the portrait and landscape texts. These are presented in Chapters Five and Six, prefaced by a 'self-portrait', offering a reflexive view problematising the writing process.

After presenting the contrasting sets of teachers' portraits against the backdrop of two different school contextual landscapes, the critical analysis in Chapter Seven is concerned with the roles, relationships and identities of the six teachers in relation to school change. The evidence is a form of nested case study, contrasting the two different school contexts. The analysis is presented as an 'exhibition' with three 'galleries' representing separate viewings of the evidence, focusing on 'constructing

identities’, ‘contrasting contexts’ and ‘professionalism to professionalism’, each broadly relating to one of the research questions. The evidence for each case shows whether teachers see themselves as subjects or instruments of reform (Ball, 2008; Fullan, 1997), how they work with school improvement processes and how they perceive and respond to organisational and systemic change. The viability of Giddens’ theory of structuration (1984) for enhancing school improvement processes, by illuminating the potential for leadership and agency as key components of teacher professionalism, is tested against the empirical data.

Recognising that the purpose of a relativist study is to generate hypotheses rather than to generalise across situations and cases (Robson, 2002), concepts of teacher professionalism and professionalism are constructed in relation to educational improvement. Bandura’s (2001) agentic theory of imposed, selected and constructed environments is extended in two ways. First, the role of headteachers and senior school leaders is explored in relation to enabling and constricting teacher agency. Second, teachers’ imposed, selected and constructed professional identities are considered in relation to school change, contrasting the two school contexts and individuals’ responses to them in this respect. Chapter Seven makes a case for the re-casting of teacher professionalism to reflect the significance and potential of the relationships between teacher leadership, student learning and organisational improvement. A new model setting out the characteristics of an agentic perspective for schooling is derived from the empirical evidence and conceptual developments arising from the research. This agentic perspective complements epistemological and ontological perspectives, which have contrasting characteristics. The model fleshes out the detail of approaches that enhance agency, affirming the links between a) teacher professional development, b) self-esteem, confidence and self-efficacy and c) teacher performance and effectiveness.

As Giddens (1984) asserts, “All research.... has potential practical consequences for those whose activities are investigated and for others” (p.288), which requires consideration of dissemination beyond orthodox academic methods, in different forms and to a variety of audiences. While this study was not initially conceived as interventionist, Chapter Eight presents implications and applications emerging from the empirical research and parallel conceptual developments, using the model characterising the new dimension of an agentic perspective for schooling. This conceptualises teachers as contributing proactively to school improvement, which

involves nurturing new emphases for professionalism where agency is integral to professional identity. This is not intended to substitute for systemic reform but to signal a critical engagement with externally instigated change, whilst contributing proactively to local and internal initiatives. Here, policymakers and school leaders seek opportunities for teachers to work strategically and collaboratively in accordance with individual values and purposes. These potential tangible applications of the outcomes of the study are set within broader and deeper questions about the contested nature and ownership of educational purpose, which provides the context for school improvement activity. Barriers to change and characteristics of unsupportive cultures are identified from the research evidence, which tend to locate teachers at the restricted, as opposed to extended, end of the teacher professionalism continuum (Hoyle, 1975; Evans, 2008). However there are also encouraging examples of powerful individual agency operating within restrictive, impositional cultures.

This analysis offers some salient messages for policy, practice and research which may be particularly pertinent for school leaders in developing capacity for improvement through powerful, positive professional cultures that enhance confidence, sense of self-efficacy and agency. The practical issues that might be faced by headteachers and senior leaders in applying supportive strategies more widely are suggested, including the problematic nature of the concept of agency for practitioners (Frost, 2006), the challenges of achieving the levels of trust necessary for cultural change (Busher and Saran, 1995; Bottery, 2004) and the need for practical mechanisms and tools to support professional and school development. The empirical research and insights gained from the methodological process, along with the conceptual developments during the research process, support the case for a greater emphasis on reflexive narrative and dialogue, not only for investigative purposes but also in engaging teachers and other participants in ‘meaning making’ within processes of school improvement (Sergiovanni, 2000; Priestley et al., 2011), in order to facilitate the crucial link between agents and structure. In order to do this, teachers may need to learn how to engage with new kinds of qualitative information, in particular individual and organisational narratives. These narratives can be viewed as ‘co-ordinates’ (Lankshear, 1997) through which teachers and others can locate themselves and construct their identities within the discourse of school improvement. This can enhance their understanding about their potential roles and identities, fuelling their ‘professional imagination’ (Power, 2008) and leading to greater self-knowledge and a more powerful sense of self-efficacy. It is vital to keep the stories of educators’ endeavours alive, documenting and

communicating their ‘largely successful’ activity in enacting the politics of curriculum and teaching. Teachers sharing how they have applied their ‘socially and pedagogically critical intuitions’ could inform and inspire other practitioners’ action (Apple, 2009:38). This could improve collective understandings of how conjoint agency within school communities plays out in terms of real change and how it might contribute to improvement. Apple (ibid) sees this as a ‘tragic gap’ that it is imperative to fill.

The extent to which teachers are aware of, or interested in, the intensity of socio-political cross-currents and academic debates around their professionalism is questionable (Bottery, 2004). This thesis supports the argument that through a higher level of ‘research-informed reflexivity’ (Watson, 2008: viii), teachers and other education professionals might make greater sense of changing demands and contexts, discern the values and motivations underpinning their attitudes and actions and understand better the contributions they can make to school change as extended professionals. The methods and tools presented here, amongst other visual and narrative tools, can be used practically with the new model for schooling presented in Chapter Seven, incorporating an agentic perspective, to support teachers and other education professionals in envisaging more clearly their own role in school improvement. They may also prompt critical questions amongst participants about the purposes and processes of schooling.

Reflexive interpretations

The research has the features of a flexible, relativist approach (Robson, 2002). It has been systematically and ethically designed and subjected to scrutiny while allowing for evolution and adjustment of the methodology according to circumstances. The qualitative data represents reality textually as a range of complex perspectives, viewpoints, experiences and voices, including my own as researcher, from which concepts are derived and conclusions are hypothesised. In searching not for a story but for the story (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997), the process of selection and elimination of data for the creation of teacher portraits and school landscapes is subjective and depends on my own values, interests and aspirations as a well-established advocate of teachers as agents of change. Questions of agency are therefore significant in the methodological process as well as in the phenomena under investigation.

The researcher's self is not passively brought into research encounters and analysis, it is situationally created (Reinharz, 1997 in Guba and Lincoln, 2008). The development of self-knowledge must therefore be accounted for in the interpretation of evidence. A reflexive approach throughout the research process is therefore made explicit, interrogating data collection, analysis and reporting with critical subjectivity, recognising the self as enquirer, actor and respondent. Reflexivity is necessary not least because the biographical narrative approaches used in portraiture, and the landscape derivative developed here, do not have inherent truth and authority. Different versions of the same events are constantly, and rightly, accompanied by value judgments by the teacher as narrator and the researcher as listener, by the researcher as narrator and by the reader, involving subjectivities which must be embraced and accounted for, rather than eliminated. The multiple selves of teachers and researcher, as encountered and co-created, result in representation that is "...dynamic, problematic, open-ended and complex" (Guba and Lincoln, 2008: 279), mirroring the realities of phenomena in schools and processes of school change.

Emerging hopefully

In concluding this introduction, it is important to note, for the purposes of this study, that despite the well documented pressures and constraints on the teaching profession, many individual practitioners, school communities, children and young people and their families do progress hopefully. In the face of managerialism they emphasise the 'lifeworld' (Sergiovanni, 2000) of organisations. While building human capital to increase externally demanded productivity and performance, they live fulfilling human lives, central to which is enhancing the lives of others (Fielding, 2011). Apple (1995) suggests a still more active and urgent emphasis:

Ordinary people aren't "crushed". They are actors, individually and collectively, historically and currently.

(p.xiv)

He recalls many examples of resilience, where people take action, engaging in critical and creative work, individually and collectively, historically and currently, to defend an 'ethic of caring, community, social justice and critical literacy'. This harks back to 'old values' of professional service, trust and expertise (Ball, 2008) which may be in tension with the 'new professionalism' of current definition with its emphasis on standards, accountability and performance management.

It seems that teachers, headteachers and schools are not always faced with stark alternatives in ‘resisting the juggernaut’ of performativity (Frost, 2004), of either direct confrontation or being crushed in its path. They may find ways to ride it or subvert it, managing a kind of co-existence, not in order to protect themselves, but in order to introduce radical classroom improvements that benefit students’ learning and wellbeing, as Galton and MacBeath’s research (2008) has demonstrated. Where asset rather than deficit models are adopted either by headteachers and senior leaders or by teachers themselves, members of the school community are less likely to assume the role of villains or victims. They are more likely to believe in their own self-efficacy and find opportunities to take initiative as agents of change (although they may not recognise this language). They can do this within, around and sometimes despite the current systems of high stakes accountability and continued surveillance, particularly if the organisational culture encourages and nurtures such a mindset. This study investigates whether the selected teachers have found and exploited opportunities to ‘make hope practical’ and whether their schools, in turn, have ‘resources of hope’ (Wrigley et al., 2012) that can contribute to improvement

In undertaking this study I have therefore heeded Apple’s (1995) warning that significant evidence can be missed if we simply view people, through our use of language and our cultural perspectives, as ‘human capital’ or as structural forces, for example in relation to the implementation of reform. If we do not believe that teachers can have real agency, we may not look for it; the story we listen for, record and report may be a different one. He urges the importance of local sites of analysis, where we can examine taken for granted situations from new perspectives, as in this study. This includes investigating ‘relations of dominance’, where those with power and those who are ‘ruled’ must reconcile and make meaning of their situation. It also involves working along with, not counter to, multiplicity, rejecting binary analysis in favour of weaving together similarities and differences that cannot be separated (Lingard, 2009). In so doing, the researcher creates “...the possibility of the existence of difference”, including identifying and reporting people’s “desire for alternative futures” (Schostak, 2006: 178).

Crucially for this research, Apple (1995) urges that a focus for analysis beyond pedagogy, towards relationships and actions that can result in structural change, requires a post-modernist, post-structuralist emphasis on identity politics, multiple and contradictory power relations and non-reductive interpretations. In applying this to

complex practice and policy environments, the research explores what it is like to live in, work in and experience schools as day by day 'sites of struggle' (Apple, 2009; Schostak, 2006), where teachers and others can, and do, contribute to the transformation of society.

Chapter Two

Teacher identity, professionalism and school improvement: developing a conceptual framework

This chapter discusses initial development of a conceptual framework for this investigation into teachers' experiences and perceptions of their role in school change, incorporating theories of teacher identity, professionalism and school improvement. The framework for the investigation is reflexively and iteratively modified in subsequent chapters, in a narrative representation of continued conceptual development throughout the study, drawing upon the empirical data and further reading. The methodology for the research focuses on exploration of the relationships between individual teachers and their organisations, giving the study both psychological and sociological dimensions. The individual psychological aspects involve the study of human behaviour and motivation, focusing particularly on phenomenological and hermeneutic perspectives. These are concerned with teachers' understandings and interpretations of their experiences and conceptions of self and identity, influencing the ways in which they respond and contribute to school change. Sociological perspectives involve theories of organisational development and the ways in which the teacher's role and identity is conceived in relation to these. Psychological and sociological perspectives are employed with a resolutely educational emphasis, since the research is ultimately concerned with how teachers and schools improve the experience, achievement, education and wellbeing of children and young people.

In order to contextualise the discussion of teacher professionalism, this chapter begins with a critical discussion of the current socio-political context for school improvement and examines some of the current issues for schools, headteachers and teachers. The conceptual, methodological and political relationships between the parallel and contested approaches of school effectiveness and school improvement are critically examined. Arguments and models within the school improvement discourse, particularly, are considered, since they frame and illuminate the role of teachers in organisational development. In relation to this background, theories of teacher professionalism and professionalism are explored, including issues surrounding teachers' lives, identities, experiences, perceptions and activity in the current climate

for education in England. As already explained, a central idea within this discussion is that the revitalisation of schools and sustenance of change cannot happen without the contribution of teachers, not only as participants and implementers but also as leaders. More contentiously, it is asserted that all teachers can be leaders in both formal and informal roles, particularly given supportive organisational conditions (Lieberman and Miller, 2004; Murphy, 2005; Frost et al., 2000; Frost and Durrant, 2004; Crowther et al., 2002). However, this teacher leadership capacity is often latent in schools (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001). Part of the value of this study is in contributing evidence to demonstrate how teacher leadership can be effectively supported and how it is hindered, both by organisational conditions and by individual propensity. The concepts of agency and structuration help to illuminate the relationships between teachers and organisational change that are of central concern for this research. As explained in Chapter One, these relationships are best understood through narrative methodologies, while a postmodern stance to analysis suits both the themes and the contexts of the research.

The nature of the policy landscape surrounding the study gives rise to powerful global and national trends, patterns and forces that influence the nature and direction of school change. It is appropriate therefore to consider the recent and current climate of education reform in England to which I have already alluded, since it provides the broader socio-economic and political context within which schools and teachers work. This broader context influences the psychological and sociological relationships between people and their organisations. National reforms and accountability systems, often themselves influenced by global pressures and forces, are the driving force behind much school change. They influence and affect schools and teachers in practical terms, and thereby interpretations of the concepts of teacher professionalism, professionalism and identity. Although impetus for change may also be derived internally, for example from the headteacher's personal vision, from localised factors and circumstances, or from individuals' ideas and innovation, these are inevitably set within wider political and systemic purposes and processes.

School improvement and the 'apparatuses of the state'

The state's powerful role and unique position in defining, distributing and dominating knowledge creation and transmission, also using it to shape power relations, is recognised by Carnoy and Castells (2001). They note that those who want to acquire

new knowledge, which is created in universities, still have to pass through the 'apparatuses of the state', where knowledge is 'transmitted' to the young (p.11). State control of both curriculum and pedagogy is well established in England. For the last few decades, schools have been subject to continuous reform that is reflected in global trends and has been the focus of much critical commentary. Reform is widely agreed to be embedded in three 'policy technologies': the market, managerialism and performativity (Ball, 2003). Policymakers have a vested interest in improving the aforementioned apparatuses of the state for political, ideological, economic, social and moral reasons. Global expectations have focused predominantly and relentlessly on measures of student performance, for political reasons of international comparison.

The focus on raising academic standards for global comparison, combined with political objectives to improve education, resulted in the introduction of league tables of school performance in England. A punitive regime, known as the 'National Challenge', was introduced by the inspectorate (Ofsted: the Office for Standards in Education), for those schools that did not reach the minimum target of 30% of children achieving 5 A*-C GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) grades at 16. This created spectacular anomalies, for example where a school could both fail to meet the National Challenge threshold (DCSF, 2010) and be graded as an outstanding school by Ofsted (Times Educational Supplement, 2010). Schools stand or fall by their examination results. For the policy architects of New Labour this meant that the profession needed to move from the 'uninformed professionalism' followed by the 'uninformed prescription' of Thatcher's Conservative Government, towards the 'informed prescription' of evidence-based practice, allegedly culminating in an 'informed professionalism' (Barber, 2005), a model which Whitty (2006, after Dainton, 2005) cites as a crude and inaccurate analysis. National Strategies were 'rolled out' by Local Authorities, driven by the government's Standards and Effectiveness Unit, with an unrelenting focus on numeracy and literacy. Meanwhile the privatisation of public sector schooling was progressed through the academies programme, shifting responsibility for standards whilst maintaining accountability. Amongst many improvement initiatives, the Building Schools for the Future programme (see DfE, 2011a; Partnerships for Schools, 2011) committed to the investment of £45 billion over 15-20 years in redesign and rebuilding of secondary schools, starting with the most disadvantaged areas, with the aim of improving learning environments and raising aspirations as well as replacing substandard buildings. This

was a foundation for the redevelopment of the secondary school in this study and the backdrop to its improvement efforts.

Expectations placed on schools have thus increased as education has been commodified, commercialised, consumerised and centralised (MacBeath et al., 2006). For some schools, this is an uncompromising and relentless regime within which those in the most challenging of circumstances, usually in the greatest areas of social and economic deprivation, can be trapped in a spiral of demoralisation and decline, as the research by MacBeath et al. (2006) has shown. This tends to create an ‘apartheid’ of ‘performance training’ in areas of disadvantage, contrasting with the professional learning communities of higher performing schools which tend to reflect socio-economic advantage (Hargreaves, 2003). Some would argue that the current centralised and punitive system is still “...saturated with negativity and an ethos of threat” (Wrigley, 2009a:4). Success in school improvement is particularly attributable to school intake in selective systems such as the regional regime within which the two schools in this research are located.

While schools have been the principal unit of measurement and accountability for many years, one shocking case of abuse and neglect led to the development of an influential agenda arising from the Government Green Paper ‘Every Child Matters: Change for Children’ and subsequent Children Act (DfES, 2004; Every Child Matters, 2010). This was intended to integrate provision for health, social care, wellbeing and education around the child and ensure early intervention for vulnerable children. This is explained briefly in the following section, as it affected the policy emphasis of the two schools in this study by making schools accountable for a broader set of outcomes, thus affecting the improvement agenda and the resulting demands placed upon teachers.

Every Child Matters

The Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda required widespread restructuring of Local Authorities into integrated Children’s Services. The policy is significant here in that it required radical changes in the way in which education services were organised, calling for ‘extended’ schools with accountability for five areas of outcome for children (safety; health; economic wellbeing; enjoyment and achievement; making a positive contribution). It is difficult to disagree with any of these priorities for children,

although many teachers commented on the irony of the implication that, suddenly, ‘every child mattered’. There was no relaxation or substitution of the performativity agenda; schools were being asked to do more and to connect more widely. The ECM ‘outcomes framework’ detailed over 100 National Indicators drawn from the 198 across all government departments against which schools’ provision had to be measured, reinforced by a new inspection framework. At its inception, it was a daunting prospect for many headteachers, since it radically altered their terms of reference for accountability, although some found new recognition for their priorities for education ‘beyond subjects and standards’. The ECM agenda became a major driving force for change, with multi-agency working and, later, community cohesion becoming priorities in the school improvement agenda. These emphases clearly underpinned leaders’ vision in both schools in this study. With the change of government during the course of this research, the multi-agency agenda ostensibly disappeared from policy, but left a powerful structural and cultural legacy in schools and Local Authorities.

This political episode highlights philosophical tensions within education that are keenly felt by teachers and explored through this research, where learning and social care clearly interrelate and are difficult for professionals to separate. Many commentators find that these intended strands of outcome can be contradictory. Bourdieu (in Lingard, 2009) asserted that the performativity agenda was pulling against the provision of welfare and care, with teachers expected to manage and mitigate the problems of society, in schools acting as ‘social garbage bins’. Apple (1995), too, saw caring teachers acting as social workers, ‘holding communities and lives together’ in the face of enhanced inequalities caused in part by the education systems within which they were working. Galton and MacBeath (2008) found evidence that while teachers agreed with inclusive values and principles, their expertise and resource to support this agenda was often seriously lacking: burdensome assessment, bureaucratic systems and paperwork overwhelmed their interactions and relationships with students, who needed a range of tailored approaches to give them access to learning.

Recent criticisms of a ‘rise in therapeutic education’ (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2008) tend to over-polarise opinion, where it is argued that learners are encouraged to cast themselves as victims within a culture where emotions can be credited as equal in importance to ideas. Clearly there is a shifting of emphasis, manifest in policy,

influencing pedagogy and curriculum and conditioning accountability frameworks. Ideas about emotional intelligence and literacy (Goleman, 1996) and the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) (DfE, 2011b) have certainly gained greater influence in schools in the past two decades. These ideas are important to this research in understanding the social and emotional aspects of the teacher's professional role, in classroom teaching and in leadership (see Day, 2004; Day et al., 2007; Bottery, 2004). This need not necessarily involve therapy either for teachers or for students. Galton and MacBeath (2008), as previously mentioned, argue that good teachers refuse to accept a victim mentality and still look towards radical change that makes a difference to the lives and learning of children and young people, beyond subject teaching and academic results. This study investigates whether these ideas have currency in schools, and the extent to which they are embedded in government and local policy.

Devolving responsibility, maintaining control, reducing resources

Even those purporting to support the standards agenda were admitting, from around the mid to late 1990s, that reforms focusing on standards, broadened to include the wider Every Child Matters outcomes concerned with health, social care and wellbeing, had not closed the achievement gap, creating a gulf between affluent and impoverished students and localities (Wrigley, 2009a; Harris, 2004; MacBeath et al., 2006; Clarke, 2009; Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001). No panacea has been found for low academic achievement amongst the most disadvantaged. The alchemy of successive reforms has continued to fail many children and young people (Clarke, 2009), unable to derive gold standards of achievement from the base metal of unpromising local contexts and crippling family circumstances. Schools still battle with poor motivation and behaviour, suggesting that significant numbers of students are disenfranchised, not necessarily from learning, but certainly from their schooling. The persistent achievement gap, ostensibly the driver for reform, has been attributed directly to the factors of choice and competition, autonomy and performativity, centralisation and prescription (Ball, 2001).

The Labour government's own veiled admission of this towards the end of their term came at a time of economic crisis, heralding a process of greater devolution of power and responsibility to schools, with concomitant reduction in financial resources. Privatisation into academies focused on schools in the most challenging circumstances,

providing the context for improvement in the secondary school in this study. Significantly and predictably, the White Paper of June 2009 (DCSF, 2009) signalled a shift from centralised control, national strategies and blanket reforms to greater control and responsibility for schools, but with unrelenting centralised accountability for schools and for individual teachers. As the economy faltered and resources dwindled, Local Authority power and capacity was decimated by cuts and restructuring, heightening the focus on schools as the main unit of accountability. As one primary headteacher was told by her Local Authority adviser at the time of the 2010 General Election, ‘You’re on your own now’.

This decentralisation of responsibility has been continued by the Conservative – Liberal Democrat coalition (DfE, 2010) which came to power towards the end of the period of this study. The heralded decentralisation is not necessarily matched by release of central control and accountability and has been accompanied by drastic reductions in funding. Teachers are positioned as central to school improvement, yet much funding for professional development has been withdrawn altogether (Training and Development Agency, 2011a; 2011b). Headteachers and Local Authorities are required to achieve more with fewer resources in a time of significant budgetary cuts. Schools are said to have been released from the constraints of centralised direction, yet school achievement thresholds have risen to the point where the definition of an ‘underperforming’ secondary school is widening to include all those achieving less than 50% A*-C GCSE passes including English and Mathematics (Wintour and Watts, 2010).

It is the new government’s intention that the curriculum should be transformed, maintaining rigour in assessment and qualification (DfE, 2010). Yet its narrowing to the ‘English Baccalaureate’ of English, Mathematics, Science, a language (classical or modern) and either history or geography has been criticised as a “remorseless push back to the 19th century” which shows “...a lamentable lack of understanding of the type of world we’re all living in and how schools work” (Robinson, 2011: 15). In some secondary schools, there are no students currently achieving grade C in these 5 core GCSEs. In the secondary school in this study only 1% of students crossed the new threshold, the other 99% are deemed to have failed. A significant contributory factor in non-selective secondary schools is that the more practical and vocational BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) courses, formerly considered as the equivalent of four GCSEs, are now worth only one. Although it is rumoured that the

Education Secretary has stated that there is no requirement for schools to change their curriculum to meet the requirements of the English Baccalaureate, many secondary schools are now restricting vocational choices at age 14 to focus on academic subjects, with a wary eye on their position in school league tables. Schools have not yet confronted the issue of significant numbers of students who have been manoeuvred into this more academic curriculum failing to achieve the all-important C grades, leaving them with nothing. The first summer affected will be 2012.

Meanwhile, economic cuts have been biting hard. The 'Building Schools for the Future' programme, source of great promise for one of the schools in this study, was halted by the coalition government (DFE, 2011a), leaving some schools rewarded with the prospect of brand new buildings after months of uncertainty and some with the promise withdrawn, depending on the stage of the process they had reached when the axe fell. Price (2009) comments that this turnabout will result in greater apartheid, creating "... one of the most vivid examples of 'haves-and-have-nots' in the public sector that you could ever wish to find". The secondary school studied here endured months of uncertainty but was eventually spared the axe. Meanwhile the academies programme has been expanded to include the most successful schools as well as the disadvantaged, prompting the leader of one County Council (unreferenced for ethical reasons) to email all school governors arguing that nothing can be gained from academy status and urging them to consider remaining with the Local Authority. There will be a radical shift of teacher training into schools which has dramatically altered the relationship with Higher Education. Other curriculum initiatives such as Creative Partnerships sponsored by the Arts Council (Creative Partnerships, 2008), which has involved over a million children and thousands of schools in creativity projects and enquiry-based change, including both schools involved in this research, have had funding completely withdrawn over the academic year 2010-11. This project was a central strand of the improvement strategy for the special school in this study, which is now forced to continue its work on creativity without the benefit of these additional resources.

In summary, the research has taken place within an unpredictable policy environment where headteachers are forced to play a strategic game around targets and performance, for funding that cannot be guaranteed. Schools' status and success, and the focus of their school improvement activity, depend on benchmarks that have contestable origins and validity. The next section of this chapter explores how teachers

are required to reconcile their own values and beliefs about educational content, purpose and process in relation to these ever-changing requirements and professional demands.

Education or production? A crisis of purpose

The ‘production motif’ that characterises this performative, marketised culture requires that the ‘soft services of human interaction’ are rendered into ‘hard services’ that can be standardised, quantified and measured (Ball, 2003). Where those in power aim to develop educational conditions to maximise international competitiveness, profit and discipline, Ball argues that the result is a series of strategies that can be disastrous and divisive for organisations and communities. Knowledge is legitimated through pragmatic optimisation and control rather than speculation and emancipation (Ball, 2003 after Bernstein, 1971), which has created a dependency culture. It results in a loss of citizenship capacity, leading to a ‘crisis of education itself’ (Bernstein, 1996, in Lingard, 2009). In a climate of monumental reduction in financial resources, any remaining ‘soft services’ will probably be first to be jeopardised. A system designed primarily to ensure compliance and control does not seem to have encouraged the essential widespread enthusiastic engagement with learning that is required in a society concerned more with knowledge and information than with commodities, as Fielding (2006) suggests. There are concomitant effects on teachers as strategies for professional development and enhancement of status are overridden by performance management and top-down reform.

With the narrowing and central direction of the curriculum comes a reduction of critical thinking, cognitive demand and intellectual depth (Apple, 1995). This is not least because universal, imperialistic application of policy forms a disjunction with the ‘local, situated, specific and contingent’ characteristics of pedagogy. Lingard (2009) argues that greater emphasis on pedagogy is needed in relation to teacher identities. According to Robinson (2011), policymakers have left pedagogy more to teachers’ discretion than curriculum or assessment. There are examples of central control that have reached into this dimension, for example the English National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (Lingard, 2009). However, the Department for Education’s website advised that the National Strategies website “...will close on Tuesday 28 June 2011” and materials will be archived, as the Department is “...unable to maintain the

level of technical and educational resources required to support its live operation...” (DfE, 2011c). Having explicitly encouraged dependency, compliance and conformity in order to achieve ‘informed professionalism’ through prescription, the government is now removing the scaffolding to leave schools to their own devices.

In apparent contradiction of blanket prescription and control, ‘personalisation’ is another lever often used to raise standards and improve results by individualising learning (DCSF, 2008). However, whilst the changing demands of economic effectiveness within the knowledge society are rapid and unpredictable, Fielding (2007) identifies a ‘crisis of the human person’ resulting from the pressures of such external reform, ostensibly personalised. Alongside an emphasis on student choice and voice, the personalisation advocated at the time of this study is expressed in targets and trajectories, the language of business or even warfare.

Performativity does not address the purpose of strengthening public trust, but works through both organisational and individual pressures and targets which diminish trust (Ranson, 2008). This involves both a destruction of the public’s and government’s trust in teachers, and a lack of trust in government on the part of teachers (Bottery, 2004), which by any reckoning gives a shaky foundation for reform. In concentrating on external indicators, social outcomes are corrupted. As Gunter (1997, after Wheatley, 1994) points out, organisations are not machines, but process structures; trying to control them as machines leads to a ‘treadmill of effort and life-destroying stress’ in which professionals are ‘despised and distrusted’, with concomitant effects on children’s education. Robinson (2011: 14) argues, more colloquially,

Often people think that human organisations are like mechanisms... But human organisations aren’t at all like mechanisms, they’re like organisms. They grow and thrive in certain conditions, they wilt and shrivel in others. You can’t improve education by imposing conformity on processes that thrive on diversity.

This is clearly an argument against national reform in which Robinson (2011) rejects the mutually exclusive binaries favoured by governments, enshrined in the rhetoric of policy and beloved of the media (for example traditional / progressive; factual / creative; didactic / constructivist; autonomy / collegiality).

This discussion shows that the initial research questions needed further development to incorporate further depth and detail in the light of the review of the literature, which demonstrated the highly contestable nature of teacher professionalism and the socio-

political uncertainties of educational purpose as well as process. Considering the role of teachers in school improvement, the research needed to explore the ways in which individual teachers mediate the mechanical and structural conditions and limitations of their professional environments as human beings. How do they carve out a territory between these extremes, navigate uncertainties, tackle dilemmas and accommodate the mystery and excitement, joy and satisfaction, trauma and frustration of their personal professional journeys? Faced with a rationale for change that may be based on intellectual argument and order but equally may reflect political inconsistency or decision making that is lacking foundation in evidence, how do teachers interpret and mediate this? How do they manage the ‘passion and panic’ of real life (Clarke, 2000) with intuition and insight? What kind of knowledge do they need and how is it operated and validated by the systems around them? It is helpful to turn to some models and frameworks that can be used to structure this thinking in relation to organisational development.

The quest for school effectiveness and school improvement

School improvement, as a distinct body of theory and a focus for advocacy by groups of academics, policymakers and practitioners, emerged relatively recently in the 1970s and 80s and is concerned with qualitative studies of educational change. Its proponents advocate development processes of “...collegial engagement based on principled discussion ... self-evaluation and professional reflection...” (Wrigley, 2009a:6). There is an emphasis on change management, self-evaluation and ownership, tending towards democratic principles and inclusive processes. More recently, research has increasingly been directed towards systemic improvement (Hopkins et al., 2011). However the loose, fragmented and variable connection with student learning outcomes has drawn criticism (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001). School improvement has been contrasted ideologically, theoretically and methodologically with the school effectiveness movement, which is concerned with quantitative studies, particularly of performance measures, and a quest for the identification and transmission of ‘what works’ (Wrigley, 2003). School effectiveness research has been criticised for producing a tautology of platitudinous factors or recipes (Elliott, 1996), for a technicist and reductionist approach and for disallowing alternative viewpoints (Thrupp, 2001), resulting in reinforcement of its own development (Fielding, 2007).

Nevertheless, school effectiveness approaches may have had some value, focusing attention on data gathering and evidence (MacBeath, 2004) and providing sets of headings for analysis, with recent emphasis on the classroom putting teacher effectiveness in the spotlight. Beyond this, it is essential that the school effectiveness perspective is acknowledged here because it reflects the alignment of current policy. However, where the alchemy of raising attainment and reaching targets has been achieved, Fielding (2007) suggests that this may be despite, rather than because of, policies based on effectiveness. The school improvement perspective is predominant as a broad framework for this study, since it offers more explicit models, analytical frameworks and insights for investigation and discussion of processes of school change, with which this thesis is concerned. This study addresses aspects of the current and future research agenda, including investigation of the interactions of different levels of leadership and application of global understandings at local level. It contributes to exploration of the notion of ‘capacity to improve’ in relation to teachers’ professional roles and identities.

Lifeworld and systemworld: capital and capacity for school improvement

The ‘capital theory of school effectiveness and improvement’ proposed by Hargreaves (2001) provides a theoretical bridge between the prevailing methodological and political approaches driven by a quest for school effectiveness, and understandings of school improvement processes. Here, school effectiveness is understood to mean the ability of the organisation to produce both intellectual outcomes, involving the creation and transfer of knowledge, and moral outcomes which rely on trust and collaborative working as within professional networks. Recognising that the concept of outputs has been reduced to testing the results of academic knowledge, Hargreaves (2001: 493) offers the following warning.

In the conventional model of effectiveness and improvement – and current public policy – the impact of the moral excellences and the underpinning social capital on the optimisation of intellectual capacity remain badly neglected.

Hargreaves goes on to emphasise the importance of balancing intellectual (academic or performance) outcomes with the moral outcomes of wellbeing and ‘virtue’ that lead people to become good citizens. Improvement is a process of increasing the quality of those intellectual and moral outputs, in other words it is a changing state as opposed to

the static state of effectiveness. A central concept for linking school effectiveness and school improvement within Hargreaves' (2001) theory, and for examining teachers' roles in school improvement within this study, is capacity for improvement, that is, the ability to manage change successfully, both in relation to reform and in negotiating periods of instability. This is the commodity upon which a school's ability to improve depends (Frost and Durrant, 2004). Stoll (1999) suggests that it involves developing and maintaining the culture, strategies and conditions whereby the school can define a direction for change and set organisational goals, maintain stability and momentum and engage in self-evaluation. Hargreaves (2001) asserts that building this capacity into definitions of effectiveness is more helpful than invoking additional variables in order to define the capacity separately.

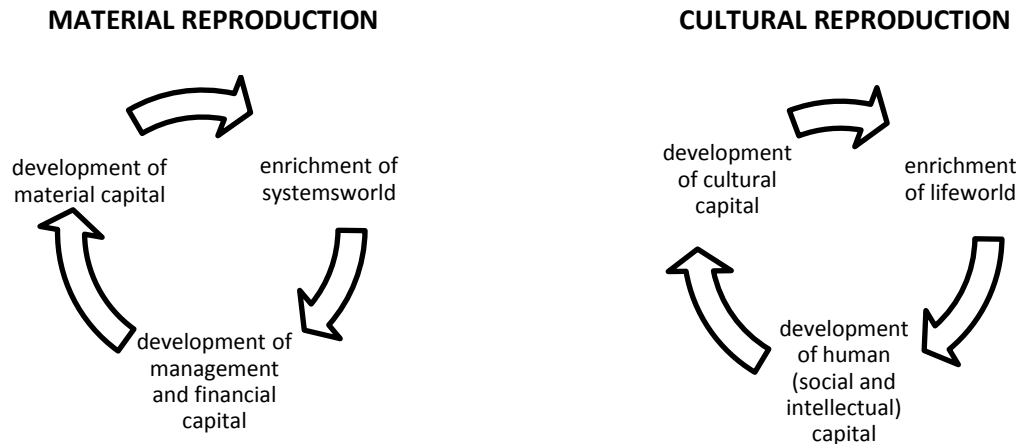
The dynamic notion of capacity for improvement is elucidated further by Hargreaves with reference to the concept of 'leverage', whereby teachers' input, in terms of the energy they invest in change, is compared with quality and quantity of output. This research focuses on practical as well as ideological and philosophical issues for the teachers concerned. For Hargreaves (*ibid.*), if teachers are not sufficiently equipped with the understanding and language to manage leverage effectively, school improvement is impaired. The notion of 'capital' is central to this discussion. Here, capital of different kinds provides the resources that are the foundation of capacity for improvement and contribute the raw materials for leverage.

Sergiovanni (2000, after Habermas, 1987) identifies distinctive and related cycles of reproduction of material and cultural capital in schools, which offer a valuable point of reference. The systemsworld of management and organisational capital of the school is balanced and supported by the lifeworld of cultural capital. The cycle of material reproduction in the systemsworld develops management and financial capital which contributes to development of material capital. The cycle of cultural reproduction in the lifeworld develops human capital, both intellectual and social. These cycles are contrasted in Figure 1, below, to show the distinctive and complementary elements of capacity building.

Hargreaves (2001) views the development of social capital - the building of trust and professional networks - as a 'lubricant' for the knowledge creation and transfer that builds intellectual capital. This leads to the development of cultural capital through which people understand their values and make meaning of their professional lives and identities, which are a key focus of this study. It is argued that both 'worlds' are of

value and of importance to the school and should be properly balanced to enhance one another. In order to be mutually beneficial, Sergiovanni (2000) argues that the lifeworld must provide the driving force, or foundation, for the systemsworld. This means that decisions about structures, processes and policies follow from the school's purposes and values.

Figure 1: Reproduction of the systemsworld and lifeworld (from Serigiovanni, 2000)



However, echoing Habermas's (1987) analysis, Sergiovanni (2000) warns that there is a danger that the systemsworld becomes the driver, resulting in domination of school purposes by system requirements, narrow determination of 'what counts' and imposition of values and ideals on members of the school community. The research questions for this study are concerned with the extent to which the relationships and processes around individuals' activity in relation to school change are perceived by teachers as deterministic, conditioned by school structures and policy frameworks, or rely on teachers' individual agency and sense of self-efficacy, as discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Furthermore, this emphasis on the rationality of the systemsworld risks denial of the micro-political dimension with its norms of uncertainty, diversity, conflict and dispute (Morley, 2008), whose definitions tend to be expressed in the vernacular of the lifeworld. This involves

...relationships rather than structures, informal knowledge rather than formal information, identities rather than roles, skills rather than designated organisational positions and, most importantly, talk rather than paper

(Morley, 2008, p.102).

Idiosyncratic power relations, that may be to do with personalities or unique circumstances more than hierarchies and roles, may dominate activity at this scale. Micro-political factors may therefore be as important, if not more important, than macro-political forces in analysing the relationships between school contexts and teachers' perceptions and actions. This is another reminder of the importance of guarding against models, which are simply analytical tools, being regarded as empirical reality (see Lane, 2000). While it is helpful to use models as an analytical frame for thinking and analysis, the methodology here is based on narrative both in data gathering and in interpretation and representation, in order to capture the complexity and 'fuzzy logic' of reality. This may also help to provide counter-cultural perspectives that are concerned less with 'technical' recipes for change based on notions of increasing human capital for productivity and more with the hope and promise of social justice, equity and human flourishing. The research provides opportunities to explore people not just as a resource or mechanism by which school effectiveness can be achieved, but as the very purpose of school improvement. Tensions in the related definitions of school effectiveness and school improvement are explored in the next section.

Making meaning of school effectiveness and school improvement

While attempts have been made to link the two movements of school effectiveness and school improvement, Wrigley (2009a) attests that this is something of a 'marriage of convenience'. Further, our understandings of the connotations and implications of 'school improvement' vary from place to place and over time. It is been argued that school improvement has increasingly been 'colonised' by school effectiveness (ibid.), reinforcing the dominance of the systemsworld. Harris (2002), who acknowledges the importance of the influential 'Improving the Quality of Education for All' project in developing her understanding, distinguishes the school improvement movement from other reform efforts in that it has a "...focus on student outcomes in academic performance as the key success criteria" rather than relying on teacher judgements, that it involves teachers "...aiming for a clearly defined set of learning outcomes or targets..." and that the "learning level" is the key focus for change, requiring clearly defined "instructional frameworks" (p.31). According to previous definitions, it is interesting that this places her exposition firmly in the school effectiveness tradition.

According to Hopkins and Reynolds (2001), a ‘third wave’ of school improvement has targeted student outcomes more clearly; they conclude that this increased emphasis provides a useful setting for the study of school improvement. The model they describe, while still attending to school structural and cultural development, focuses on the ‘learning level’ of classrooms and the ‘instructional behaviours’ of teachers through ‘utilisation’ of research findings and dissemination of ‘best practice’ with the aim of “...implementation across all organisational members....” (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001: 463). While we may accept Hargreaves’ (2001) assertion that his theory bridges school effectiveness and school improvement approaches, this language of capital and capacity is more attuned to the domain of effectiveness and the systemsworld, to measurement and growth of assets and productivity, to the mechanical analysis that Robinson (2011) and Gunter (1997) reject. The focus is relentlessly epistemological, focusing on the generation and assessment of knowledge.

The importance of people and relationships in the improvement process is widely agreed (Harris, 2002; Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001). However, while democratic, distributed and transformative leadership cultures are said to build trust and inculcate a shared sense of ownership, such ‘empowerment’ often seems to be conceived as a device to achieve compliance in delivering effective teaching and learning according to external criteria. In short, teachers and their students are ‘empowered to do as they are told’ (Gunter, 2001). Qualitative processes of collaboration and shared leadership are generally accountable in terms of ‘hard’ performance outcomes, although in some cases a broader range of outcomes is acknowledged, particularly where policy-driven (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001).

Within this climate, teacher leaders, according to Harris (2002), have key roles in ‘brokering’ and ‘mediating’ change and ‘guiding’ and ‘affiliating with’ colleagues. They are not encouraged to ask questions or take risks; they are not ‘disturbed’ into action (Capra, 2011). Schools are exhorted to develop ‘from within’ (Barth, 1990) but in practice they may interpret this by harnessing the energy from external reform for external purposes as they strive to deliver raised standards through effective implementation of imposed strategies. The extent to which teachers’ involvement constitutes ‘professionalism’ is contestable (Whitty, 2006). Teachers’ values, criticality, innovation, enterprise, creativity and voice can become de-prioritised in relation to performance, compliance and effectiveness. Here, practitioners’ discussion

of educational purpose is rare, beyond improving learning and teaching in relation to national targets and benchmarks, which can seem to be adjusted at whim.

Thus in two decades of attempted reform, questions about educational purpose have been effectively silenced. Wrigley (2009a) concludes that managerialist approaches to school improvement have "... little to offer educators whose passion for improvement is grounded in a commitment to social justice and democratic citizenship" (p.7). MacGilchrist et al. (2004) suggest that there is a habitual glossing over of social and political issues of equity and diversity, complex processes of school and systemic change and uniqueness of context. At the same time they are concerned about neglect of the fine-grained details of classrooms and the day to day concerns of teachers. Fielding (2011) expresses this loss of plot succinctly on his webpage: "If we forget history or marginalise purposes we may get somewhere faster - but not where we need to go".

It is perhaps for this reason, according to Mitchell and Sackney (2009), that the development of schools as professional learning communities has not lived up to its expectations of 'breathing new life into teaching and learning' in the two decades since the concept was introduced (see also Clarke, 2009). The rhetoric of the professional learning community as a 'living system' (Harris, 2002) does not necessarily translate into reality, according to Mitchell and Sackney's (2009) research; they do not see the 'deep rich authentic learning' promised by the learning community discourse, but find initiatives being implemented in the same way, with the same results. Mitchell and Sackney previously advocated the development of professional learning communities as a means to 'profound' school improvement (2000). They now contend that while the concept of learning communities should still be valuable, the implementation of the ideals has been flawed because of inappropriate emphasis on managed systems of efficiency resulting in production of output. They are arguing for an alternative, more appropriate and more sustainable emphasis on living, organic systems of human activity that result in growth. This strongly echoes Sergioivanni's (2000) dualism of systemsworld and lifeworld and emphasis on the importance of the latter. Such communities would support interconnectedness and sustainability in an ecological as well as educational sense (Clarke, 2009). However, the difficulty of this must not be underestimated, since it has to be understood and enacted at the profound level of people's values, beliefs and assumptions about educational purpose and process.

This is the subsurface realm of school improvement to which Stoll (1998) urges practitioners, policymakers and researchers and reformers to attend – intangible, immeasurable, yet fundamental to organisational and individual learning. It has an ontological emphasis, as opposed to the epistemological focus of school effectiveness. Understanding this requires transformation in its true sense, of viewing the issues through new lenses (Clarke, 2009), as opposed to tweaking and re-labelling tired approaches to reform. It may sometimes challenge schools, policymakers and society to let go of the relentless quest for better results, instead of seeking new ways to achieve them.

An alternative script for educational change

For living, organic systems, Mitchell and Sackney (2009) develop an alternative script based on Capra's ideas (2011), in which change is no longer a matter of implementation of 'so-called best practices'. Instead, change is a response to 'meaningful disturbances' which call individuals to actions that make sense in relation to their own lives, working towards collective benefit. This may explain the disappointment and disillusionment of failed initiatives and systemic reform. It is not about the relative success or failure of one initiative or another, or even about restructuring or re-culturing (Mitchell and Sackney, 2009). It is about what people decide to do and manage to do, in order to fit better with their own lives and identities, so that the world makes better sense. Essentially, 'people talk to each other and then do stuff' (Clarke, 2009), in a process of 'democratised disruptive initiation' at a local scale (Hannon, 2009). These ideas are central to this thesis. Teachers may embody these ideas by conceptualising their professional roles and identities in terms of individual agency to influence educational change, both internally and in response to policy initiatives.

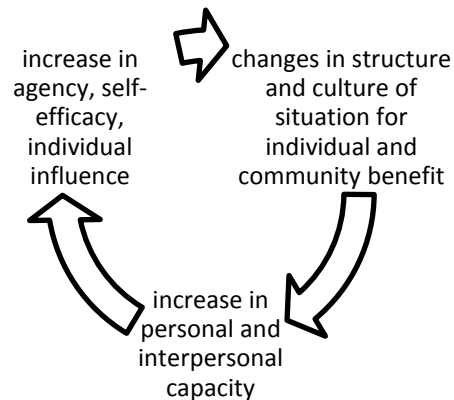
This new script rewrites what change is about, but also what it is for. Consideration of the extent to which these understandings fit with teachers' perceptions and experiences is therefore needed. This perspective is not restricted to knowledge creation and transfer (as explored by Hargreaves, 1999; 2003) but involves knowledge 'translation' so as to make personal meaning of the information available (Mitchell and Sackney, 2009; Sergiovanni, 2000), enabling others to do the same. Capacity for improvement, here, is determined by the extent to which people can engage in this meaning-making

and take action to contribute to the continued growth of the organisation, with mutual benefit for the whole community. It may involve an emancipatory process of person-centred learning (Fielding, 2006; 2007) in which people value one another equally through reciprocal relationships. In Mitchell and Sackney's (2009) script for these organic systems, capacity is 'the ability to manage change successfully' (Hargreaves, 2001) but it rests less on conformity and more on individuals' moral purpose, creativity and agency.

Here, another cycle of reproduction can be identified, which seems to progress beyond Fielding's (2007) person-centred learning, towards a less deterministic view of community where people are habitually and actively involved in changing their situations, in this case their professional contexts, rather than simply inhabiting and adapting to them. This process builds personal and interpersonal capacity, through the process of structuration (Giddens, 1984) in which people exercise individual influence in order to change their situations for individual and collective benefit, as shown in the diagram, Figure 2, which offers an additional dimension to the cycles of material and cultural reproduction in Figure 1. In contrast with the lifeworld's cultural reproduction through the resource of human capital (see the second diagram of Figure 1), structuration involves people as both the purpose and the means for change, building their capacity as change agents and decision makers in their own and each other's lives. Here they work critically and proactively within the macro-and micro-political context. Through transforming situations by their own actions, teachers can pursue a fuller and more authentic humanity. They not only balance top-down with bottom-up change, but engage with it and mediate it in sophisticated ways, as Fullan (1994) suggests as a result of his conceptual and empirical investigations contrasting centralised and decentralised reform. This cycle of reproduction does not necessarily reinforce the status quo; instead, it creates opportunities for people to shape their situations and circumstances, contributing to an organisational dynamic with change at its heart. The extent to which this cycle can develop and be sustained is a function both of what is expected generically of teachers and of individuals' beliefs and priorities. These in turn are dependent on personal background as well as professional experience (Beijaard et al., 2004).

Figure 2: Reproduction through structuration

STRUCTURAL REPRODUCTION



Research has demonstrated that developments of personal capacity and interpersonal capacity are pre-requisites but can also be outcomes of teacher-led development. Frost and Durrant (2002) suggest that personal capacity might include the following:

- pedagogical knowledge and skills
- professional knowledge such as micro-political literacy
- strategies for professional learning such as enquiry and reflection
- personal attributes such as reflexivity, emotional awareness, self-awareness and self-confidence
- clarity of purpose and commitment.

Thus personal capacity is about people ‘learning to be and learning who they are’ (Point, 2009) but also ‘learning where they want to go’. Interpersonal capacity, in contrast, is about ‘learning how to get there’, which might involve the following

- participation and involvement
- skills in building and maintaining professional relationships
- strategies for collaboration
- leadership skills

(Frost and Durrant, 2002).

Gaining or improving these attributes through active contribution to leadership of school change, in other words working as ‘change agents’ (Fullan, 1993), enables teachers to contribute more powerfully to school improvement. These ideas are considered in more detail later in the chapter in relation to teacher professionalism.

This kind of capacity building requires a fresh model for professionalism. This is particularly worthy of consideration at a time when schools are being moved from dependency on external funding, support and strategy, towards continued

decentralisation within a climate of social, economic and political instability. A transformational approach to school leadership involves those who hold the greatest power, normally headteachers, using this power to inspire collective aspirations for the school community (Durrant and Holden, 2006). Senior school leaders would also aim to secure a commitment to change from members of the school community, nurturing amongst them “...personal and collective mastery of the capacities needed to accomplish such aspirations” (Leithwood et al., 1999:9).

In practical terms, this involves developing a culture in which teachers and others expect, as well as are able, to develop such professional knowledge and skills. The extent to which the schools in this study may have achieved this is explored through this research. Six professional ‘requirements’ for educators suggested by Bottery (2004) are relevant here, since they emphasise characteristics that make the necessary connections for teachers and other education professionals to underpin involvement in change, evidence for which is explored within the empirical data for this study. These include a critical understanding of context, vision building based on moral purpose and social responsibility, scrutiny of practice and commitment to change. In more detail, the professional requirements are as follows:

1. an ecological and political awareness of factors both within and outside the school which influence practice;
2. espousal of a notion of the public good: a sense of moral purpose, responsibility for others, social citizenship;
3. an extended, proactive and reflexive accountability contributing to a rich conception of education;
4. constituency building by involving and educating stakeholders in supporting a vision for the public sector within society;
5. embracing an epistemological provisionality, recognising different points of view and challenging both relativism and absolutism in educational practice and in society;
6. increasing self-reflection including critical questioning of their own role and situation in relation to debating wider educational purposes, in order to validate practice and contribute to change

(summarised from Bottery, 2004: 189-195).

These suggested professional requirements are exceptionally challenging, possibly threatening, but perhaps refreshing for those subject to cultures of sustained managerialism, performativity and central accountability, as described at the start of this chapter. They offer scope for teachers to engage with questions of educational purpose as well as process, and also require them to challenge central accountability. As such, they offer ideas about how teachers address the interaction between

themselves as individuals and their organisational and wider educational contexts. This suggests possible avenues of enquiry in relation to the questions posed on p. 34, concerning how teachers interpret and mediate their professional environments and the kinds of knowledge and skills they find valuable and are able to validate. Bottery (2004) casts teachers as more than cogs in the implementation machine, suggesting they contribute as self-conscious and active professionals within an educational community of practice (Wenger, 1998) following a more ecological model (Mitchell and Sackney, 2009; Clarke, 2009). They are involved in managing the boundaries of the organisation and continuing to shape its role in changing society. They perceive themselves less as implementers and more as interpreters of policy, as participants in critical professional and organisational discourse and development. The issues, tensions and contradictions of teacher professionalism, including those inherent in this assertion and its practical manifestations in professionalism, are discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Postmodern interpretations: professionalism and professionalism

Although education theory and practice is founded on the modernist tradition (Usher and Edwards, 1994), the analysis of teachers' roles and identities in relation to school change undertaken for this study defies distillation and categorisation into one clear and definitive framework. As already explained, a postmodern and post-structuralist approach is most appropriate here, paying close attention to aspects of identity politics, multiple and contradictory power relationships, multiple interpretations and recognition of complexity. This involves non-reductionist, non-linear, non-causal analysis, resisting neat conceptual frameworks and typologies (Usher and Edwards, 1994; Apple, 1995). A portraiture approach has been chosen in order to capture the nuances of individual teachers' activities and perceptions within the professional landscape (Beijaard et al., 2004) of their changing organisations. This allows for multiple (parallel, nested and successive) interpretations of complex and potentially contradictory narrative evidence. This methodology is explained and discussed in detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

Despite its resistance to categorisation, it is necessary to offer some definitions for key concepts in relation to teacher professionalism. Evans' definition of professionalism provides a starting point:

...an ideologically-, attitudinally-, intellectually- and epistemologically-based stance, on the part of an individual, in relation to the practice of the profession to which she belongs and which influences her professional practice

(Evans, 1999:39).

Significantly this clearly distinguishes professionalism from practice, as an influence upon it. In examining historical perspectives on professionalism in education, Crook (2008: 16) identifies a number of definitive characteristics of professionalism including

- extended and systematic preparation with an intellectual component, taught in an institutional setting that upholds quality and competence;
- expectation that members will observe norms and codes of conduct;
- emphasis on service to others ahead of personal reward;
- expectation that members will demonstrate a high level of personal integrity.

Overlapping and competing discourses about the nature of professionalism and professionalism in education have led to sustained debate, which is due in part to the artificiality of the construct. This has led to a plurality of understandings and definitions, the only consensus being that it is a 'shifting phenomenon' (Crook, 2008). A tussle over the extent to which teachers have autonomy, authority and judgement raises questions of scale - whether restricted to the classroom or extending beyond. It also concerns relative power - whether decisions about core aspects of teachers' work, such as curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, are made at school or national level and the implications where a range of stakeholders may join the educational debate. By 2005 a 'managerial professionalism' had emerged, setting expectations which diminished teachers' autonomy and marginalised their voice (ibid). As discussed earlier in this chapter, deficit views were promoted in which teachers as a professional body were said to be 'uninformed', lacking in the necessary knowledge and skills, were trained and required to deliver the National Curriculum and were expected to achieve externally imposed outcomes. As already discussed, the performativity agenda has resulted in prescription, surveillance and dependence, with pay related to 'performance' where the key indicators are academic results.

Teachers may well resent a 'new professionalism' where their identities have been reconstructed and their professionalism is reconstituted as a form of occupational control with defining traits (Lingard, 2009), with policy as the main driver (see Sykes, 1999). In terms of influence on practice, reductionist and technicist approaches to pedagogy have been used to serve the narrow goal of creating a 'knowledge economy'.

There is a shift from professional accountability to 'neo-liberal accountability' where curriculum and classroom practice are centrally specified, with policy reaching into the core work of teachers (Ranson, 2003).

For Ball (2003), the problem is not so much experienced in terms of greater surveillance, but arises where the changing demands and judgements result in teachers asking whether they are doing enough, whether they are doing the right thing and whether they will measure up amidst contradictory purposes and motivations. Here, teachers themselves have become the subjects of reform. He argues that this is immensely destructive of self-worth. Teachers' terms of reference slide beneath their feet and they are subject to 'values schizophrenia' and 'bifurcated consciousness', becoming 'segregated selves' (Ball, 2003 after Smith, 1987 and Miller, 1983), as commitment and experience are sacrificed for impression and performance. While some teachers may manage these contradictions satisfactorily and achieve authenticity in their practice, others are threatened by stress, illness and burnout, an assertion supported widely by recent research (see for example Galton and MacBeath, 2008; Day et al., 2007). Thus Ball (2003) conceives of a 'post-professional' who is armed with formulae of 'what works' suited to every eventuality and externally imposed requirement (see also Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001). He argues that the pinnacle of professionalism has become an enhanced adaptability to necessities and vicissitudes of policy. Thus the teacher's role as 'knowledge worker' is not legitimated through grand narratives of speculation and emancipation but in the pragmatics of optimisation, by the creation of skills rather than ideals, working for instrumental purposes as both Ball (2003) and Fielding (2006) have argued. This is a disconnected, disembodied, disenfranchised professionalism. Arguably it is not professionalism at all.

The strand of the professionalism discourse previously discussed, in which teachers are regarded as 'change agents' (Fullan, 1993) and 'activists' (Sachs, 2003a) is acknowledged by Crook (2008). This, if realised in practice, creates a new 'democratic professionalism' where teachers work collaboratively with a range of stakeholders for educational change. It fits with Mitchell and Sackney's (2009) notion of organic, humanly driven and motivated systems. Sachs (2003b) suggests that while a 'managerialist professionalism' emerges from policies of accountability and effectiveness, giving teachers an 'entrepreneurial identity', she has also identified a 'democratic professionalism' emerging from teachers themselves, giving them an 'activist identity', a positive effect less subservient to central accountability structures

and regimes, instead engaging with and interpreting externally driven and internally mandated change. However, while teachers may combine these identities and shift emphasis from one to the other in different circumstances, teacher activism may become subsumed under the dominance of managerialist regimes, focused on economic effectiveness and the growth of human capital. Individuals and organisations faced with managing these tensions may be led towards fabrication and opacity as they articulate themselves “... within the representational games of competition, intensification and quality” (Sachs, 2003b:244).

Evans’ later discussion (2008) is most helpful in this respect. She agrees with Crook (2008) that the very concept of professionalism is constantly changing and being redefined, resisting ‘old-school’ interpretations and ‘colonisation’ of the term in the name of professional development. Postmodern principles are embraced, emphasising the “norms which may apply to being and behaving as a professional within personal organisational and political conditions” (p.25) and the status-related aspect of teachers’ professionalism (after Hoyle, 1975). Professionalism is defined as the ‘singular unit’ of professionalism. This reflects the knowledge, skills and procedures constituting the teacher’s practice (again after Hoyle, 1975) which condition the individual’s stance in relation to professionalism as collectively defined. Evans goes on to explore redefinitions of professionalism. Recognising the pressures of competing agendas and the need continually to reconcile the individual stance in relation to organisational and external requirements, she understands that professionalism may be experienced as ‘demanded’, ‘prescribed’ and ‘enacted’, noting that it is only the third aspect, enactment, that is meaningful in terms of the ‘reality of daily practices’. This study is concerned first with professionalism, in that it focuses on individual teachers’ accounts and explores their perceptions, identities, attitudes, ideas and responses in relation to school change. However, it also explores aspects of professionalism, particularly with regard to investigating how teachers define their expected role in school change. It teases out what is demanded within each school in the context of national prescription and organisational development and investigates the extent to which these requirements are enacted, enhanced or subverted.

Towards the post-professional

Recognising the pervading education climate as explored above, where policy development is located with the Treasury and subject to the steering mechanisms of

economic policy, we see that teaching has developed as a form of 'state professionalism' (Lingard, 2009). Ball (2003) contends that teachers are subject to a 'form of violence' in which their practice is remade under surveillance, according to rules, criteria and targets for delivery. The person within structures and communities is valued primarily as an instrument of progress, while moral obligations are frequently subordinated to economic obligations. The 'targets and testing regimes' linked to a broader audit culture, are said to erode the very soul of the teacher (Ball, 2003; Fielding, 2006). However, Ball points out that performativity can have positive or negative effects – it can either inform or deform professionalism and individual professionalism, as teachers organise themselves to respond to targets, indicators and evaluation. This may involve setting aside personal beliefs and commitments, resulting in conflict, lack of authenticity and resistance. However it might mean success for some as they learn to become 'promiscuous', enterprising and with a passion for excellence as externally defined.

Working in these sophisticated ways, within supercomplex contexts, requires education professionals to adopt new ethical codes, since positivistic and rational paradigms are no longer sufficient (Lunt, 2008). Echoing Bottery's (2004) professional requirements as discussed earlier, this requires teachers to embrace the ethics of provisionality, searching for truth and exhibiting humility and humanity in unpredictable situations. It is recognised that professionals make culture-bound and value-laden judgments for which they must understand a range of opinions, respect and empathise with other people, cultivate dialogue and empowerment and cope with the ambiguity and discomfort associated with complexity (Lunt, 2008).

Here, 'not knowing' is seen as the start of learning, not a failure of learning (Claxton, 2008). The post-professional exists in the ontology of the lifeworld, where she can make meaning of the complexities of culture, process and context weighed against personal and professional values. Yet the accountability systems and structures surrounding teachers' professional activity, and to which they are answerable, pull towards the reductionist, linear, quantifiable, resolvable epistemology of the systemworld in which there is pressure to value what we can measure (MacGilchrist et al., 2004). Thus there is often a gulf between professionalism as demanded and as enacted (Evans, 2008). The resulting dilemmas and issues cause teachers to mediate widely held professional theories according to their own personal theories, values and beliefs (O'Hanlon, 1993). Teachers and headteachers may engage in 'ironies of

adaptation' by working around the prescriptions in order to meet the perceived needs of their students. They may also develop 'ironies of representation', where they contrive ways of demonstrating that they are meeting the accountability requirements, even when they are not sure that they are doing so (Evans, 2008).

There are therefore many layers of understanding and interpretation involved in considering the initial research questions, which must be taken into consideration. Teachers' constructions of their roles and identities in relation to school improvement are likely to vary over time and with situations and circumstances. The way they present their perceptions of this may depend upon who is asking and why, leading to inconsistencies of evidence and interpretation. They may have alternative interpretations of the concept of 'school improvement' and myriad experiences and interpretations of organisational change. These may include that which is instigated by external reform, that which is generated internally, and that which is unsystematic, serendipitous and happenstance. Recommendations about how teachers might be supported in contributing to school improvement are likely to be complex and, even if carefully focused, cannot neatly structure conformity and compliance, but must instead embrace this complexity. The next section of this chapter discusses sociological theories that can offer some insights into how this support might be conceived.

Reproduction, evolution or subversion?

In considering the extent to which teachers influence and contribute to school change, as opposed to the extent to which they are themselves influenced by change or respond to it, Mitchell and Sackney (2009) warn that dominant organisational narratives may tend to appear to people as 'objective reality'. They therefore tend to slot subconsciously into the prevailing organisational discourse, reflecting Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus' in relation to the 'field' of the school context (Margolis, 1999). According to this idea, teachers are socialised into an evolving set of roles, relationships and legitimate opinions. They thus internalise relationships and expectations for operating within that domain: they develop a 'sense of the game' that is expressed in dispositions of opinion, taste and predilection of behaviour and view. Predominant ideas are therefore seen to reproduce themselves within the organisation and the system, which can be used as a form of social control.

This research investigates the extent to which this kind of development occurs continually amongst teachers at a level of tacit understanding (Hargreaves, 1999) and practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984) which reproduces the system. Concomitant with this may be a certain level of guilt when this is at odds with personal values and beliefs (Elliott, 1998). Teachers may conceive of their professional work in this way, maintaining the system and working within the current policy framework while striving for excellence in classroom practice. However, they may be able to articulate becoming complicit members of their organisations, socialised into the norms of the school at a level of discursive consciousness (Giddens, 1984).

Elliott argues that the development of discursive consciousness amongst teachers is the foundation for changing the nature of their practical consciousness (1998). It enables teachers to increase their self-awareness with regard to their own and others' roles within their unique organisational contexts. They can then conceive of new ways in which they can exercise their individual agency, that are more in line with their values and beliefs. They may retain their own values, beliefs, dispositions and behaviours, resulting in more independent and less socially conditioned behaviour, becoming radical and even non-compliant, as Galton and MacBeath (2008: 15) assert.

Good teachers have always known how to be educationally subversive. They have refused to underestimate their own sense of agency and have been able to perceive the scope for radical change within their own classrooms and within their own schools. They refuse to collude with the victim mentality which relinquishes initiative, self-belief and a sense of agency.

It is most likely that there is a combination of these influences depending on circumstances, resulting in a reciprocal, interdependent relationship between teachers and their contexts. Here, the structure of the organisational context is both the medium and the outcome of the knowledge and consciousness of the individuals involved (Elliott, 1998). The exercise of their agency is supported and empowered by senior leaders "...who understand that schools learn and change from the bottom up" (Galton and MacBeath, 2008:115). These relationships between structure and agency lie at the heart of this thesis.

Beneath the surface of school change: agency and structuration

Structure and agency are mediated, according to Archer (2003), by an 'internal conversation' which echoes the practical consciousness described by Giddens (1984).

Archer argues that people's actions can be enabled or constrained by society, resulting in advancement or frustration of their plans, respectively. An internal, reflexive conversation enables the person to monitor themselves within, and distinct from, their societal context. She suggests that they are therefore able to be 'ontologically distinct' from their context, rather than understanding themselves to be part of the organisational mechanism and are consequently able to exercise their own agency in relation to the structures around them.

The concept of human agency is complex and requires caution in its interpretation. Day et al. (2007: 110) define agency as "...intentional acting aiming at self-protection, self-expansion and mastery of social reality". This definition includes intention to modify the environment, driven by the individual, but suggests that this control can be selfishly or altruistically motivated. Teachers may be concerned to change the conditions that influence their own lives, but they may be more likely to be motivated by a concern for educational purpose and effectiveness, rather than a desire to improve personal professional conditions, expectations and outcomes. Bandura (2001) considers agency to be the essence that defines human beings such that they are able to achieve their desired outcomes through organising, enacting and regulating their own behaviour. He identifies four core features of human agency that distinguish it from more straightforward professional action, having a clear, planned and evaluative process linked to values and personal goals, which could include educational outcomes. These core features of agency provide a valuable element of the conceptual framework for this study:

- intentionality: a proactive commitment to actions that may bring about desired outcomes;
- forethought: the ability to self-motivate in anticipating consequences of actions and adjusting them to achieve desired outcomes and avoid undesired ones;
- self-reactiveness: monitoring progress towards fulfilling desired outcomes and regulating actions accordingly;
- self-reflectiveness: thinking about and evaluating motives and actions in relation to values and life goals.

Within the distinct research area of professional identity (Beijaard et al., 2004), the complexities of teachers' lives and identities and the many facets of their context in relation to their sense of agency, their well-being, resilience and performance, are relatively well understood and documented in the English context. Day et al. (2007)

consider identity as a key factor influencing teachers' sense of purpose, self-efficacy, motivation and commitment. They contend (with Nias, 1998) that while notions of self and personal identity are used in educational theory, critical engagement with teachers' cognitive and emotional selves is rare, yet necessary to raise and sustain standards of teaching and contribute to teachers' effectiveness. The orientation of this argument clearly accords with Wrigley's (2003) understanding of conditions and factors contributing to school improvement being used for narrow purposes of effectiveness. There is a danger here that teachers' agency is 'tamed' towards externally determined purposes and aims, or therapeutically directed towards improving their own self-worth and wellbeing so that they are more able to work effectively and compliantly. This research is additionally concerned with the extent to which teachers can conceive of their professional identity in terms of using their agency structurally. This involves not only addressing processes of teaching and learning within their classrooms, but also critiquing and confronting educational purposes and changing ways of being and acting in school communities, articulating this through discursive consciousness as discussed earlier. It examines the management of personal experience and individual professionalism, living with contradictions and tensions while ensuring individual effectiveness. In addition, it explores how teachers can take action to contribute to the direction, as well as the implementation, of educational change and how they may be supported.

While agents clearly act subjectively, Archer (2003) contends that society and structure are objective. Organisational science offers us structures, roles, formal information, accountability systems and hierarchies: the components of the systemsworld. However in this study it is recognised that the organisational context comprises subjective as well as objective components, not least other agents and their influences. Organisational science aspires towards mutual consent, shared values and vision, decision making and motivation towards certainty. Micro-political perspectives must also be reckoned with, where uncertainty, diversity, conflict and dispute are the norm (Morley, 2008).

The concept of agency can be particularly ambiguous for practitioners themselves. Encountering this issue, Frost (2006) sets out to clarify it in terms of the relationship between leadership and learning. Here the practitioner is far from 'ontologically distinct' from the organisation as Archer (2003) would have it. Indeed Frost (2004; 2006) consistently places teachers at the heart of organisational change, as activists

within their schools (Sachs, 2003b). Teachers' knowledge and reflexivity are crucial in monitoring and evaluating actions and making practical and moral choices, where they define themselves, explicitly or subconsciously, as agents within the organisation. In relation to Bandura's (2001) core features of agency – intentionality, foresight, self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness - Frost (2006) argues that people's internal regulatory influences can be seen as working in parallel with, or as part of, external influences of structure. It is possible, therefore, for teachers to develop greater agency through a positive cycle where they influence structures in order to support their own contributions and influence. In another positive cycle, they work on themselves to develop positive emotional responses to experiences such as failure and setback, capitalising on successes leading to a greater sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy (Frost, 2006, after Bandura, 1989). In other words they can use their own agency to develop more opportunities to influence their contexts and generate greater capacity to act. They embody Giddens' (1984) dualistic conception of structure as both shaping, and shaped by, human agency. As Frost et al. (2000) suggest, the key to teacher morale may not be in therapeutic approaches focusing on reducing stress and improving morale, but in a distinctive conceptualisation of professionalism, in which teachers' agency and sense of self-efficacy are cultivated so that they can 'make a difference' as Fullan (1993) has powerfully argued in his book 'Change Forces'. This is conceived not only in terms of influencing educational effectiveness but also in contributing to the development of cultures, strategies and conditions that create capacity for improvement and human agency.

The conjoint agency of people within organisations (Gronn, 2003) may or may not be conceived of as 'leadership', for example when the activity is deliberate but not necessarily strategic. It is likely that collective influence is more powerful when orchestrated in a particular direction, usually by the headteacher (Angus, 1989). Examining the activities of teachers within their changing schools offers an opportunity to examine some of the forces at play within schools over time and to consider the perception of individuals concerning their contributions to school change, including conjoint agency within their sphere of influence. This requires consideration of the relationships between the activity and agency of individual teachers, the headteacher's influence and that of other members of the community, which may include teaching colleagues, support staff, parents and students themselves in planning, action and evaluation. It is widely held that leadership is more effective and capacity greater when dispersed among people within the school community (Harris and Muijs,

2003). The extent to which leadership is ‘stretched’ across members of the school community (Spillane, 2003; Harris, 2002) can be examined, both from the headteacher’s view and from the perspective of individual teachers. Some of the practical strategies whereby headteachers can support teacher leadership have been identified through previous research (Frost and Durrant, 2002; 2004), providing further insights to illuminate the research evidence here.

By using a narrative approach to distil the essence of people’s activity within organisations, the micro-political forces at work can be examined alongside, and in relation to, the wider context for school reform as outlined above. An important theme for this study is the extent to which teachers exercise their own agency in their classrooms, in the school and in relation to particular areas of responsibility or interest. As Frost and Harris (2003) point out, activity and leadership can be considered in relation to both formal roles and responsibilities and informal activity that might be taken up out of concern or interest. Tactical, strategic and capacity building aspects of improvement have been identified, all of which may be called into play by people within organisations (Gray et al., 1999). Tactical approaches concern the short-term measures many schools employ to increase test scores according to the shifting goalposts of policy. For example, Morgan (2010) describes short term interventions to raise mathematics scores in a National Challenge school, a scenario that would be familiar to many practitioners. She additionally questions whether these and the resources upon which they depend can be sustained; strategic measures may be effective in the medium term but not sustainable. Long-term, sustainable improvement returns to the concept of capacity building introduced earlier, involving development of an organisation’s resilience and flexibility in leading change. This must encompass the subjectivity of teachers’ and others’ individual and collective agency. It must also take into account the diversity of micropolitical forces and perspectives within organic as well as managed systems.

Exploring beneath and beyond the performativity agenda

It is important to recognise the problematic nature of concepts of shared leadership. The so-called ‘old values’ of professional service, trust and expertise (Ball, 2008) can be said to exist in tension with the ‘new professionalism’ of current definition with its emphasis on standards and performance management (Walker et al., 2011). Effective education requires creative leadership, in which a culture is created where everyone is

given permission to think differently and have ideas, while credit for this is shared. Robinson (2011) argues that this increases engagement in education and promotes the qualities upon which we depend for the future. This may be difficult within a high stakes performativity culture. As Goleman (2011) asserts, creativity flourishes in ‘uninterrupted spaces’ and needs to be nurtured; it cannot be summoned or ‘squeezed out of people’. It can be difficult to find such uninterrupted spaces in today’s schools. A significant element in encouraging creativity, whether in school students, teachers or senior leaders, is to enable people to understand for themselves where and how they work best and to ‘loosen the reins’, so that they can exercise their agency in leading and contributing to change.

It is difficult to argue with Robinson’s assertion that change that improves children’s learning and life chances depends upon teachers “...engaging and energising every single student in the system...” (2011: 15). School change will not happen unless teachers make it happen, but there is an important question of scale. While some would apparently restrict teachers’ influence and action to their classrooms (Harris, 2002), or expand this to changing structures, processes and cultures, teachers may also be involved at the level of discursive consciousness (Giddens, 1984; Elliott, 1998) in debating and influencing the purposes, aims and priorities of school change at systemic level (Clarke, 2000). Practitioners’ contributions to improvement are made in a ‘liquid’ age of ‘supercomplexity’ (Barnett, 2008), in which they must work habitually and creatively within norms of uncertainty and unpredictability, as organisations and systems change around them.

A summary of the conceptual framework

This chapter has explored the relationships between individuals and organisational change within the specific context for school reform in England during the period of study. The resulting conceptual framework that informed the data collection and analysis comprises three main elements: the organisational, the individual and the components that bridge between organisations and individuals. Each of these is summarised below.

1. Organisational components

The study is concerned with a series of conceptual contrasts which are explored through the empirical evidence. These include the following contrasts and concomitant questions that have been applied in the situations investigated:

- The contrasts between centralised and decentralised reform: how are tensions between national education policy and localism interpreted?
- The contrasts between school effectiveness and school improvement: has the latter subsumed the former, or do they co-exist?
- The contrasts between systemsworld and lifeworld influences, concerned with material and cultural reproduction: what are the dominant drivers for change?
- The contrasts between imposed and constructed organisational environments: how do external and internal forces govern perceptions and actions in relation to school development?
- The contrasts in leadership styles: how do headteachers and senior leaders influence processes of school change and does this build capacity for improvement?
- The contrasts in epistemological and ontological emphasis: are the espoused purposes and intended outcomes for school change concerned with knowledge and attainment, or do they include more holistic notions of personhood and wellbeing?

2. Individual components

Within each of the two organisational contexts explored in this study, an investigation of teacher professionalism and identity in relation to school change has been undertaken. This is concerned with the following concepts:

- Professionalism and professionalism, including restricted and extended interpretations;
- Demanded, prescribed and enacted professionalism, with ironies of adaptation and representation in relation to school change, navigation and deployment of educational discourses;
- Changing professional definitions and requirements and corresponding ethical codes;
- Narrative understandings and expressions of self and identity, including postmodern interpretations concerning multiple, contested and shifting notions of situated selves.

3. The relationship between individuals and organisations

The organisational and individual components above are brought to bear in exploring the symbiotic and reciprocal relationship between teachers and organisational change. Central to this investigation are concepts of agency and structuration. This requires consideration of whether teachers conceive of themselves as change agents, activists engaging in discursive consciousness and proactively contributing to change, or implementers responding to change at a level of practical consciousness. Thus the nested case studies of individuals within organisations allow exploration of the extent to which teachers' professional and wider organisational environments are constructed by them, or imposed by external and internal forces, or a selected blend of the two, in the contexts and various circumstances presented. Mediation and management of change by headteachers and senior leaders is recognised to be highly significant in determining the nature of these relationships between individual teachers and school change.

Teachers at the leading edge of change?

At the start of this chapter, the educational emphasis of the research was emphasised and the discussion began with consideration of models that can be applied to organisational change. However, as Giddens (1984) asserts, institutional analysis does not comprise the whole of sociology. Any patterns or changes, whether uncertain and unexpected or routine and predictable, do not happen despite practitioners, but “...are ‘made to happen’ by social actors...” (p.285), working through conjoint agency as part of the organisation. While there may be unintended consequences and unrecognised forces at play, practitioners can develop sophisticated skills for co-ordinating their own social contexts at different scales. Conditions and consequences therefore have to be understood in relation to people's ‘intentional conduct’ as Giddens (1984) suggests.

This research investigates the extent to which selected teachers are at the leading edge of change, intellectually, socially and emotionally (Bascia and Hargreaves, 2000) and explores the extent of their perceived influence in relation to the complexities explored in this chapter. It is set, perhaps ironically, against a backdrop of policy emphasising ‘the importance of teaching’ in a paper of that name (DfE, 2010), placing teachers at the heart of the school improvement rhetoric. Evans (2011) argues that this policy document represents a ‘lop-sided’ professionalism focusing “on teachers’ behaviour

rather than their attitudes and intellectuality” (p.851). As Whitty (2006) has argued, de-skilling and de-professionalism may have been over-emphasised in the academic discourse where reform can, in some circumstances, give scope for extending rather than restricting teachers’ professionalism. On the other hand, earlier analysis by Sachs (2003b) and Ball (2003) suggests that successive governments in many countries have come to see the professional as one who meets standardised criteria efficiently and effectively and contributes positively to school accountability. This is still contended despite the contemporary rhetoric of localism in the English Department for Education (see Thomas, 2012). The development of the methodology for the investigation within this complex political and professional milieu is discussed in the following two chapters.

Chapter Three

Developing a methodology: learning to trust the qualitative paradigm

This chapter concerns the initial development of a research strategy for the investigation into the role of teachers in changing schools. It focuses on the conception and framing of the research as a form of case study and the evolution of methods to explore teachers' perceptions of their professional roles and identities within their changing school contexts in relation to school improvement. Following exploration of narrative approaches to enquiry, the notion of portraiture as a methodology emerges and the discussion includes a reflexive consideration of the problems and challenges arising during the qualitative research process.

To recap, the initial aims of the study were to investigate the following research questions:

1. To what extent do teachers construct their professional roles and identities in relation to school improvement?
2. How do teachers conceive of, and respond to, organisational change and contribute to school improvement?
3. How can schools and policymakers create supportive conditions to encourage and enable teachers to contribute positively to school improvement?

The research questions were developed further, as discussed in Chapter Two, in order to recognise the qualitative, subjective and interpretative nature of the relationships between individuals and organisations. The focus was not on simple cause-effect relationships, but on individuals' perceptions and understandings of their roles and identities in relation to those situations. This included the meanings they made of them, the ways in which they sought to mediate and influence them (Giddens, 1984; Sergiovanni, 2000), the ways in which they interacted with others (Blumer, 1992) and the ways in which they shaped their own notions of professional identity and resultant professionalism. The significance of school senior leaders, particularly headteachers, in influencing these aspects, was recognised and built into the development of the methodology.

This chapter recounts a challenging process of methodological development during which I found I had to learn to trust the qualitative paradigm (Ely et al., 1991) to a still greater extent than in my research hitherto. In this chapter I account for the research process, introducing and problematising the focus on narrative enquiry within a form of ‘nested case study’ (Thomas, 2011) to frame the selection of individuals in their organisational settings. Also discussed are the ethical tensions that arose as responsive, flexible research designs and my own purposes and intentions rubbed up against systems and structures in the school settings and in my own professional role, resulting in adaptation and adjustment of the planned research design. The evolution of methods for gathering the data is explained, leading to the introduction of portraiture as a challenging but potentially valuable and unifying methodological approach.

Researcher and researched

A narrative approach to the methodological explanation is helpful here because a discussion of the self as an investigator within the research process is integral. Later it also became important in taking seriously the notions of the ‘researcher as artist’ (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997) and the ‘researcher as storyteller’ (Apple, 2009; Vickers, 2002). Narrative is necessarily personal and interpretative; its eventual form excludes other possible stories as we search for the stories we want to tell (Thomas, 2011; Schostak, 2006; Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997). Sometimes it becomes as much the researcher’s own story as that of their subject, often using the well-worn ‘journey’ metaphor, sometimes with profound effect (see Delamont, 2002). However, having explored my own role and identity in some depth in previous research (Durrant, 1997), I did not want to over-emphasise ‘me-search’ (Ely et al., 1991). Nevertheless, relevant elements of my own story are included within the methodological development, acknowledging the need for a reflexive approach to my own role as researcher and my influence on the nature of the study.

Central to this personal development was engagement with particular texts which have informed, fascinated, inspired, intrigued, goaded and challenged me. A dimension of the challenge of scholarly progress is that I have been surprised by the particular authors who have moved to the fore. They have coloured my thinking in unexpected ways, raising important questions about my identity as a researcher and the paradigms with which I wish to identify. They include Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis

(1997) whose exposition of portraiture was a revelation; Thomas (2011) and Robson (2002) for explanations and guidance in plain English about ‘real world research’; Delamont (2002) for passion, conviction, humour and criticality; Schostak (2006) for his commitment to ‘inter-views’, recognition of ‘otherness’ and the quest for ‘difference’ and Ely et al. (1991) for forcing me to face up to both the concepts and the practicalities of qualitative research.

Towards an appropriate methodology

A methodology was required that allowed for representation of the complexity, provisionality and subjectivity of human situations within multiple, overlapping and changing organisational discourses. This required a ‘double hermeneutic’ (Giddens, 1984; Elliott, 1993a), whereby teachers’ interpretations of their world were in turn interpreted. The research questions for this study took a deliberately phenomenological stance, where teachers’ interpretations – what they think – were as important as the technical and instrumental dimensions of their work – what they do and how they behave. Bruner (1991) considered it “...curious how little effort has gone into discovering how humans come to construct the social world...” and its “...rich and messy domain of human interaction...” (p.4). The starting point for methodological development was Bruner’s assertion that people have a natural disposition towards narrative construction of reality, where their thinking is mediated through cultural products such as language and symbols. An important foundation for the research was therefore an understanding of the notion of teachers’ stories and their role in the research process.

Teachers’ stories

Narrative enables exploration of particular events, for example through discussion of critical incidents (Cunningham, 2008b; Tripp, 1993), and conveys a sense of time. Characters can express ‘intentionality’ (‘aboutness’) in and through narrative, including their beliefs, desires, theories and values about teaching. Thus narrative deepens listeners’ or readers’ understanding of factual information, making tacit and intangible phenomena explicit. This kind of reality is concerned with verisimilitude - the ‘truthlikeness’ of stories and interpretations that are nuanced (Murphy, 2005),

context specific and negotiated with audience (Bruner, 1991). Here, people can be 'knowledgeable agents' in their own situations (Giddens, 1984), where theory is developed "...only through a succession of interpretative acts and not through some detached contemplation of universal essences which exist independently of our interpretative consciousness" (Elliott, 1993a: 202). More recent studies using narrative methodologies have explored teachers' interpretations of their professional landscape (Beijaard et al., 2004, referring to Clandinin and Connelly, 1999). Professional knowledge landscapes comprise the forces and factors that condition how teachers think and act, and these are understood narratively, "...by the stories teachers live and tell" (Anderson, 1997: 131). However, according to Beijaard et al.'s research (2004) teachers' stories showed more concern for professional identity than for professional roles and action. It has been argued that teachers define their identities by a narrative thread that draws together their interactions with their 'professional knowledge landscape' into living, personal theories. Some would argue that the only way to know teaching and understand the local phenomenon of practice is through story (Doyle, 1997). Against this, teachers can discover and shape their identity and sense of self, both individually and collectively through dialogue (Beijaard et al., 2004; Bruner, 1991; Giddens, 1991).

However, teachers may not only express conflicts and uncertainties through narrative, but also develop 'cover stories' to meet external requirements (Clandinin and Connelly, 1997) in the 'ironies of representation' discussed in Chapter Two (Evans, 2008). There is therefore a potential empirical dichotomy between the professional language of story and the contextual 'language of abstraction' that comes from "...a place littered with imposed prescriptions...other people's visions of what is right for children..." (Clandinin and Connelly, 1997:25). For this study, it is significant that these discussions about narrative tend to play down teachers' agency in shaping their own professional knowledge landscapes, emphasising contextual influence on what teachers think and do, rather than teachers' influence within and upon their own contexts. Nevertheless, although data generated by narrative enquiry may be governed more by convention and practical necessity than by a sense of logic or empirical worth (Bruner, 1991), the value of stories for the testing of conceptual frameworks and the importance of conceptual frameworks for testing stories are recognised (Anderson, 1997). However, while the value of drawing on forms of teacher narrative for this study was evident, it was important to recognise the problematic nature of narrative enquiry.

Problematising narrative enquiry

Narrative enquiry involves narratives being elicited for the purposes of the research, within a formal research framework (Fenstermacher, 1997). The ‘truth’ of narrative forms of data is an elusive concept, given the complex layers of interpretation and presentation already discussed. It may reside more with “literary, artistic truth” than with “empirical, qualitative truth” (ibid: 21, after O’Dea, 1994), where people re-story themselves with different levels of self-awareness and reflexivity, for example according to their self-concept as victim or hero. This reflexivity may itself be heightened deliberately through the research process. It is affected by levels of trust and power relationships between narrators and researcher and the extent to which there is shared understanding of the functions of the narrative in the research context.

For Kelchtermans (1997), narratives are not explanations in themselves, but they do form the ‘backbone’ to our interpretations, combining moral, emotional and political perceptions and judgments, memories and thoughts (McEwan, 1997) as well as practical elements. Crucially for this study, they give insights into power relationships in professional settings and the ways in which the web of influences on teachers’ actions is interpreted into practice. The process by which narratives told, heard and interpreted become empirical evidence within a research framework is complex and involves considerable risk (Marble, 1997); concepts of what constitutes research, and of what it is used for, may be broadened. Decisions are made about the style, medium and content of the research account. Where narrative is concerned with the vicissitudes of lives and circumstances, the researcher “... must determine how much of what they know will be meaningful, useful and even acceptable” (ibid, p.62).

In this study, narrative was of central value, but as McEwan (1997) points out, it did not comprise the research per se. The qualitative research process involved ongoing attention to ‘conceptual work’ (Ely et al., 1991) and an ‘ecological’ evolution and adaptation of the research design throughout the period of study which cannot be reduced to sets of discrete variables, factors and linear causal relationships but is itself most appropriately expressed in narrative form (Thomas, 2011). The methodological explanation in this chapter and the next therefore has a storyline to represent these developments.

Developing a research strategy: the study of cases

The overall aim of the research was to gain insights and achieve greater understandings in relation to the research questions from the study of a small selection of teachers within their schools, rather than to generalise, predict and control. This is an argument that has been well rehearsed (see Thomas, 2011; Simons, 1996; Ely et al., 1991). The research was conceived as case study, using a variety of sources of qualitative evidence, including teachers' narratives, to build a rich representation of particular instances. Case study can involve different methods for data collection within different methodological paradigms. Significantly, as Robson (2002) argues, it is therefore neither a method nor a methodology for exploring a particular theme or situation, but a research strategy. The boundaries of each case do not pre-exist, but must be constructed and may be negotiable. Careful consideration of research theory and method clearly cannot be neglected. The products of the study, far from being born of a straightforward, vernacular process of enquiry and analysis, are in fact 'highly artful' (Atkinson and Delamont, 1993), involving selection, analysis and interpretation akin to the artistic process. Later, this notion helped to construct the conceptual bridge between case study and portraiture, as explained later in Chapter Four.

The intention for the research was that a rich picture of teachers in their school contexts would be developed in order to illustrate, illuminate and attempt to explain their perceptions of their roles and identities in relation to school change. There was no intention to develop even 'fuzzy generalisations' (Bassey, 1998), although hypotheses, insights or ideas might emerge from the analysis. Rather, it was understood that a small scale study has the potential to "clarify with specificity" what we might tend to "obfuscate with the abstractions" of grand theory, larger scale studies and reductionist methods (Thomas, 2011:7). A research design was needed that, rather than being limited by my prior knowledge and subjectivity, would draw upon my theoretical sensitivity (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) to gather, analyse and interpret the data. There was an explicit intention to use my own insights and understandings to try and get close to the holistic reality and complexity of teachers' perceptions of their situated activity within their settings.

It is generally agreed that the quality of the research depends less on the viability of case study as a strategy and more on a systematic, rigorous and reflexive approach (Robson, 2002) to the study of the particular, including recognition of its limitations. I was mindful of Atkinson and Delamont's (1993) criticism that "...methodological

sophistication is not a marked characteristic of the genre...” (p.208) and that case study researchers are better at defining what they are not doing than at offering a positive, rigorous and self-aware defence of their strategies. To counter charges of ‘ad-hocery’ that have been levelled at case study (Hargreaves, 1993), the research therefore needed a clearly conceived structure, a reflexive methodology and method, as well as a thematic conceptual framework, to enable the synthesis of different levels of empirical and theoretical analysis.

The threefold notion of the ‘case’ suggested by Thomas (2011) is helpful here in setting some parameters for investigation through narrative enquiry. He explains that a case is

... a container setting boundaries for the unit of study, which here involved identifying a number of teachers in each of two schools;

... an event or situation under scrutiny, concerning here the investigation of the individual - organisational relationships involved in teachers’ perceptions of their roles and identities in relation to school change;

... an argument to be constructed and evidenced, concerning here the role that teachers could and should have in school improvement and the implications for practice and policy.

Bearing in mind that no rules exist to determine the specific scope of such studies, the initial intention was to select four schools and to undertake a ‘diachronic’ study over time, “...one that shows differences as it, itself, proceeds...” (Thomas, 2011:149). In terms of the container for the case – Thomas’s first point above – each school would comprise a ‘nested’ case study where three teachers, as individual cases in themselves, would be considered within the context of the school as the larger unit of study. This would afford opportunities to compare and contrast between individual teachers and between schools, not with the intention of generalising, but in order to explore issues and illuminate experience for these cases (Thomas, 2011). The boundaries of the case were flexible in the sense that physical boundaries might be less important than webs of relationships, as described by teachers and emerging in other data (Schostak, 2006). This might extend beyond schools, for example into local communities, and include definitive individual characters, for example students and colleagues appearing in teachers’ narratives would thereby be defined as part of the individual case.

This approach resonated with aspects of interactionist ethnography (Hammersley, 1999; Hargreaves, 1993), the relationships between individuals and their context over

time being the situations under scrutiny, according with Thomas's second dimension of the case. However, the study needed to be clearly focused on the research questions regarding individuals' perceptions of their roles in organisational change, rather than recording everything that was encountered in situ and allowing grounded theory to emerge through iterative analysis, as would be more appropriate in an ethnographic study. According with Thomas's third dimension, this would enable an argument to be constructed and evidenced about the role and professional identity of teachers in relation to change. As well as contributing to the academic discourses of school improvement and professionalism, the insights gained might also be of practical value to teachers and schools. The relevance to my own professional role as a teacher educator was recognised from the outset. The extent to which this constituted knowledge creation, as championed consistently by Hargreaves (e.g. 1993; 1999; 2001), will be considered in later chapters.

Selection of schools: flexibility and compromise

Drawing on my own experience, as an academic involved in postgraduate education programmes and school improvement consultancy and as a former teacher, I used local knowledge, discussions with professional contacts, recent inspection reports and school websites to identify 'moving' schools according to Stoll and Fink's (1996) typology. More broadly, they were interesting schools to which I thought I should be able to gain access, but where I had never worked. There are, as Stoll (1999) notes, different kinds of moving schools, some extremely high performing according to the government's league tables and inspection frameworks, while some make tremendous progress in the most difficult of circumstances. Moving schools are generally characterised as "effective in 'value added' terms and for a broad range of pupil outcomes", while people in them are "actively working together" with a shared sense of direction and purpose, "to respond to their changing context and to keep developing" (Stoll, 1999:38). The four schools originally identified as sites for this study were two secondary schools (for students aged 11-18), one primary school (for students aged 4-11) and one special school (for students aged 4-19 with profound, severe and complex learning difficulties).

Following initial correspondence, I planned to visit headteachers and, after explanation of the research, ask them to select three teachers from their schools and invite them to

participate. The intention was to select three teachers from each school, with varying ages, roles and teaching experience, including at least one male and one female.

Maintaining the momentum and structure of the research in progress proved to be challenging. This should not have come as a surprise. Ely et al. (1991) counsel the need for a flexible stance, a trust that process will lead to product and an ability to create 'structure in progress' in qualitative research. They acknowledge in particular the difficulty of gaining *entrée*, but also the awkwardness of intrusion and the difficulties of communicating clearly across the cacophony of a busy institution. School-based research becomes 'clouded by compromises' (Ely et al., 1991:46) requiring resilience, persistence and flexibility. Thus it is important to report not only what happened, but also what did not.

Of the four schools, one secondary school was abandoned as a research site early on, because after an initial very positive email response from the headteacher (albeit several months after my initial enquiry), my emails were not answered, demonstrating that the necessary commitment had not been secured. More progress was made with the primary school, following several encouraging discussions with the headteacher, who was keen to support the research, but after a long interview with the headteacher and selection of teachers, circumstances conspired against the research over a six month period. A series of visits were cancelled and rescheduled due to heavy snowfall; volcanic activity disrupted flights of staff returning to school after holidays abroad and finally the headteacher was affected by personal bereavement. I judged that I should allow space for recovery. A later tentative enquiry was never answered and I concluded that I should not trouble the headteacher again. The headteacher interview was therefore regarded as a pilot for the organisational dimension of the research. It was formative in my thinking, raising interesting and significant issues with regard to school change that were pertinent to the research questions. The evidence was not used in the final analysis.

In the other two schools, the special school and a secondary school that had recently become an academy, data from teachers and school contexts was gathered and supported the use of insider understanding to assist in making a purposive selection of three teachers from each school. The headteacher from the special school and the assistant headteacher to whom the liaison was delegated in the secondary school were enthusiastic about the research and concerned to facilitate its aims. It was clear that they wished to give access to authentic and balanced evidence within the scope of the

study, while understanding that this was not intended to be representative of the teaching profession as a whole, or even of their schools. I trusted their guidance and depended upon the arrangements they made on my behalf.

Even here, this did not follow the intended pattern for both practical and methodological reasons. Practically, I was hampered by my own professional pressures, mirroring those of the teachers and schools with whom I was working. This clearly reflected the political agenda so accurately described by Ball (2008), where performativity requires not only satisfying external and internal targets but ‘work on oneself’. We are incited to become more effective against externally determined productivity and quality targets and “...to feel guilty or inadequate if we do not” (Ball, 2008:51). My work was becoming more ‘proletarianised’ (Barnett, 2008, after Halsey, 1992), characterised by a series of new, more stringent rules and regulations and ever-increasing surveillance in the form of auditing, data checking, performance review and reporting within internal and external accountability frameworks.

Amidst ‘swirling discourses’ (Barnett, 2008) reflecting political change and financial uncertainty, the Faculty developed a strategy to enable the University to meet further external requirements, this time for the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework (HEFCE, 2011). This served to balance the demands of performativity in different dimensions of my academic role, by recognising research as well as teaching, enabling me to find support, space and time to prioritise this study. By this time, my data gathering had already become much more fragmented than I would have liked and I felt it was necessary to re-set the parameters of the research, concentrating on the rich data already gathered from the two remaining schools, involving six teachers, three from each school. The balance of their individual characteristics is tabulated in Appendix 1. In the special school the data are derived from two encounters with each of the teachers, at the beginning and end of an academic year. In the secondary school, evidence is based on one encounter with each of three teachers, after which contact was unfortunately lost with two of them. My senior contact in the secondary school, the assistant headteacher who was my means of access and also one of the three teachers interviewed, resigned from her post and repeated attempts to communicate with the other teachers in order to arrange further visits were not answered.

How much data is ‘enough’?

Although this was far from satisfactory, such disruptions are normal in qualitative and school-based research and the priority is to ensure that the aims and requirements of the research are met. The emerging situations and continuing negotiations surrounding them are integral to the methodology as significant elements of the phenomena being researched (Delamont, 2002). There were two significant factors in the decision to base my study on this much more limited set of data. The first was that I was wholly convinced of the richness and value of the data already collected, which was reinforced in discussions with colleagues and supervisors. Given that I was not striving for generalisation, this data provided plenty of opportunity for discussion, comparison and contrast in relation to my research questions.

The second reason for contentment with more limited data than originally envisaged was that the data collection as the study progressed largely reinforced what had been covered during the first meeting. I concluded that although there was a focus on change, the richness of the dialogue and the trust that had been built mattered more in relation to exploration of the research questions than building up several encounters over time. No teacher was visited more than twice, but where there were second encounters this served as much to probe deeper and test assumptions as to give a transitional picture of the teacher’s role in relation to their changing context. It was clear from the taped conversations that the notion of capturing developments over time was overridden, since teachers’ narratives themselves had a strong temporal quality, ranging back and forth over their experiences. While the schools were subject to continual change, there was an element of ‘time standing still’ in classrooms, as the business of learning and teaching continued. It sometimes appeared that teachers were less focused on discussion of national reform and organisational initiatives than might have been imagined, so there was an element of ‘saturation’ as well as continuity in their responses, as they returned to previous points and reiterated ideas and opinions. Sometimes they returned unprompted to previously described events and incidents, underlining the personal significance of these.

Although the reinforcement of previous data may have been due to my own inadequacies as an interviewer, I felt that forcing more discussion on change and pushing the teachers’ discussion into different territory seemed in danger of introducing ideas, words and emphases that were not necessarily there. The emphasis the teachers themselves conveyed, including what they chose not to discuss, was part

of the data. I concluded that it was less important than first envisaged to engage teachers in several meetings over the period of study. These stories of teachers within their changing schools would be not definitive, but illustrative; the value of the rich narratives emerging from the encounters that I had managed to organise therefore superseded any concerns about not following my original plan. I felt I had gathered sufficient information about these two ‘exemplary’ school cases (Thomas, 2011) and the six teachers concerned, to support a critical discussion of my research questions.

I found this suppression of my latent positivist leanings to be surprisingly liberating, given that I already knew of widespread support in the qualitative research literature for analysis focused on detailed narrative data (see for example Dadds, 1995 and the examples in West, 1996). Here as elsewhere, the case studies of individuals within their settings could clearly yield new understandings and offer valuable insights.

Insiders, outsiders and the possibilities of co-construction

The methods developed for this study fitted the aim of revealing and reporting teachers’ narrative voices, experiences and stories in relation to the complex relationships within their changing organisational contexts. This lent itself primarily to methods based on interviews - talking to people to find out how they “understand their world” (Delamont, 2002:7) - but I was concerned that conducting and reporting semi-structured interviews with teacher respondents would be too limiting, since they might not yield the range of information needed to explore teachers’ perceptions of their roles and identities in relation to their changing contexts. I was also mindful of the imbalance of power relationships in interview-style encounters, where the researcher asks the questions and teachers respond, against a cultural background of ‘structurally tense’ relationships between teachers and educational researchers (ibid).

The individual world of teachers is complex; their practice is shaped by many voices and is an expression of multiple realities, selves and minds (Holly, 1989; Somekh and Thaler, 1997). Holly (1989) contends that ‘outsider’ researchers can be ‘theory-bound’, finding difficulty in interpreting, describing, explaining and understanding experiences and motives, and are in danger of overlooking teachers’ personal theories and cognitive complexity. This study concerns teachers’ multiple perspectives, identities and ‘theories-in-use’, requiring that teachers’ tacit knowledge be made visible (Holly, 1989; Hargreaves, 1999). While not deliberately developmental, the potential for this

to be an emancipatory experience had to be acknowledged, as a possible subtle intervention in teachers' reflective practice.

The problematic nature of the relationship between 'outsider-researchers' and 'insider-practitioners' has been explored by Elliott (1988), who notes the distinctive assumptions and beliefs associated with each concept, linked to associated research styles. There are tensions between theory and practice, in which social knowledge is thought to be applied by practitioners but "...generated by a research process which is independent of them" (ibid, p.155). Goodson (1999) cautions further that methodologies giving prominence to teachers' voices, and to their narratives as valid research data, contrast with political restructuring that emphasises prescriptive reform and marginalises teachers' values and concerns. He argues that political validity in methodology is as important as academic recognition. Elliott (1988) suggests the introduction of democratic negotiation and ownership of the research process and outcomes, enabling participants to assume a more critical stance such that they can become actors, with the researcher, in the investigative process.

In order to explore the interactionism at the heart of relationships between professional identity and change, I wanted to try another angle, to engage teachers' intellectual creativity by employing my own, as Delamont (2002) suggests, by introducing additional methods for gathering data within the semi-structured interviews. Drawing on some of the pedagogic techniques I was already using in my own teaching and consultancy to engage teachers in reflection, I knew that there was opportunity here to explore new dimensions by employing tools that broke the traditional mould of sets of questions. I wanted, if possible, to make the research enjoyable for participants, hoping that as well as building trust and opening up the conversation, the research might be of some interest and benefit to them. I was interested in whether this might reveal a different kind of data, albeit within the confines of semi-structured research encounters.

Developing elicitation tools to explore professional roles, values and identities

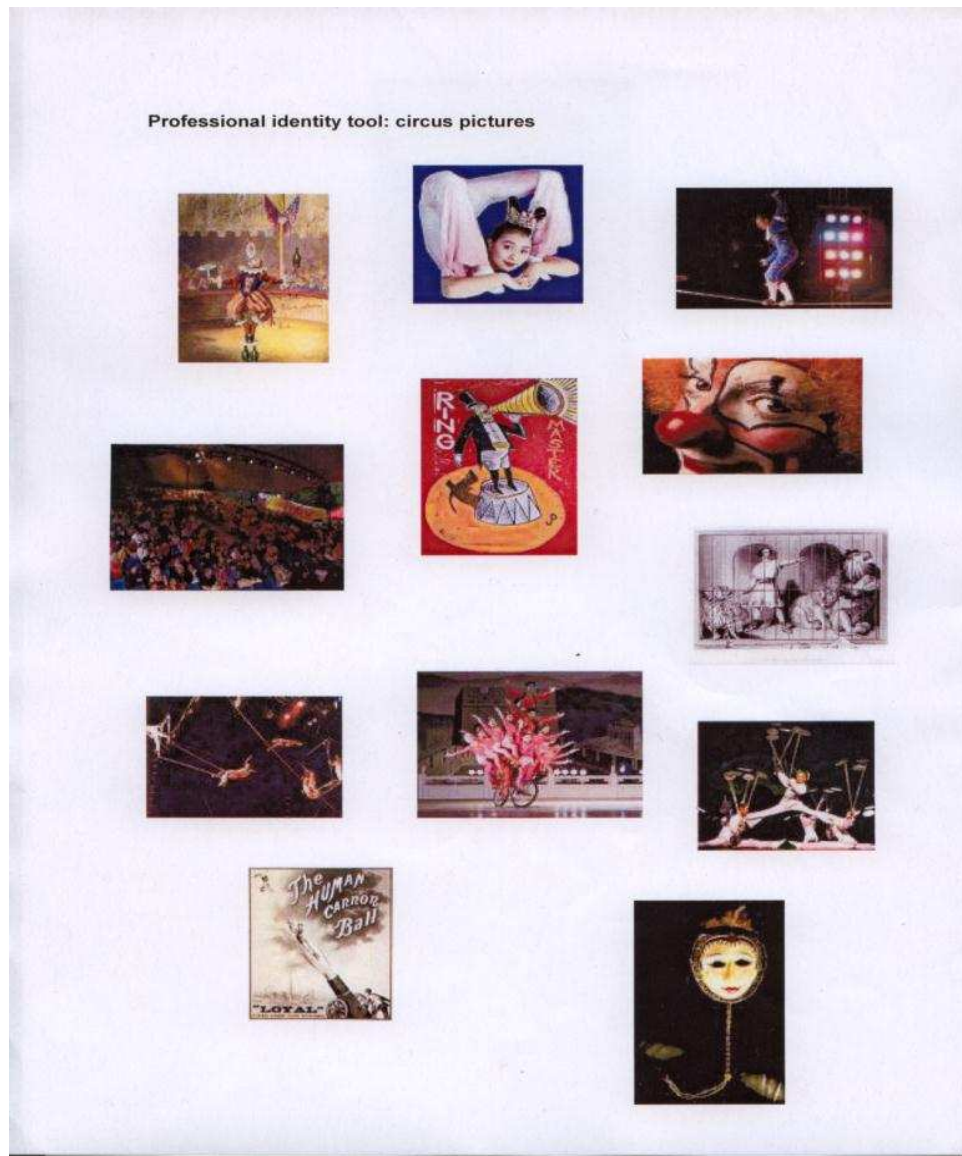
I felt that a set of questions used to frame the first encounters with teachers could be enriched in order to explore teachers' perceptions, roles and identities in relation to school change. There was opportunity to employ creative approaches that might capture participants' imaginations and take researcher and participants into unexplored

territory, embracing both scientific and artistic dimensions of interpretation. It seemed particularly interesting and pertinent to explore the ways in which images and diagrams, as well as verbal stimuli, might open up new possibilities for reflection and dialogue. The set of questions therefore incorporated tools that were inserted at appropriate points, having been piloted. At the time, my ideas were grounded in pedagogical developments with my postgraduate groups, rather than in understanding of methodological techniques. It was only later that I discovered that such elicitation techniques were well established in ethnographic research (see Whitehead, 2005; Borgatti, 1999).

Two studies were particularly influential in this development. Sachs' (2007) use of picture postcards to research and represent teachers' professional development was captivating, while Stronach (2007) in his analysis of newly qualified teachers' experiences conveyed imagery such as 'juggling' and time distortion. The combination of these ideas prompted the creation of a set of twelve images of circus acts (Figure 3, see also Appendix 2) which were tested with groups of teachers within professional development programmes and to stimulate discussion in my postgraduate teaching sessions. Teachers were asked the simple question, 'With which image do you identify most strongly, in your role as a teacher?' This activity was powerful, fascinating, challenging and often moving for group participants. Importantly, while it seemed to be universally enjoyed, as teachers played with the metaphors, it also prompted lengthy reflection and careful choices, suggesting that it was valued and taken seriously.

Many teachers in my teaching groups portrayed themselves as plate spinners and jugglers. Some chose acrobats and pyramid cyclists to show the importance of working in teams. A new Head of Department felt he was a ringmaster, both in the classroom and with colleagues. There were often different or surprising interpretations of the same image. Teachers interpreted the human cannon ball picture not in relation to danger and lack of control, as I had suspected, but as representing the adrenaline and excitement of classroom practice that they loved: one said with relish, "Each lesson, you go in and you never know where you are going to land...". Poignantly, a newly qualified teacher chose the mask, because she had struggled to work feeling ill.

Figure 3. Professional identity tool: circus pictures

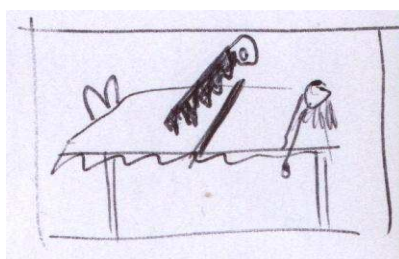


Meanwhile, colleagues to whom the tool was demonstrated asked if they could use it themselves with postgraduate students, giving it further ‘internal’ validity through peer scrutiny (Somekh, 1995; Ely et al. 1991). The set of circus pictures, printed onto a sheet of A4 paper as in Appendix 2, was therefore built into the research design with confidence, while recognising the limitations in that it does put ideas into people’s minds which might emanate from my own assumptions and biases in creating the tool. I needed to allow space for thinking and explanation and to record any commentary during the exercise.

Using the picture stimulus with the six selected teachers in this study seemed to offer more opportunities for freedom of thought and expression than might be gained from a formal and more abstract question such as ‘How do you see your role?’ Humour and the element of ‘play’ seemed to encourage trust even in a first meeting. Using metaphors allowed teachers to talk about their real work, in their own language, rather than perplexing them with detached, theoretical or ambiguous questions which, as Hargreaves (1993) notes, may close down conversation as teachers struggle to fathom their meaning.

This opportunity to talk about serious issues in figurative ways seemed to be less personal and less embarrassing, even intellectually intriguing. Teachers chose how to portray themselves, in effect a briefly sketched self-portrait. They worked hard at this challenge and qualified their responses carefully and in some detail, making their tacit understandings explicit as intended. In response to the permission for creative as well as factual thinking, two teachers in this study entered further into the spirit of the exercise by inventing their own images. The image in Figure 4 was drawn by one teacher, ‘Christine’¹, who felt that she was ‘sawn in half’ in her different roles across split locations at Castlegate Special School. Her colleague, ‘Michael’, developed other metaphors later in the discussion, describing himself as a ‘sponge’, absorbing negative pressures and influences that might otherwise affect his class. He also felt ‘under the hammer’ from accountability measures (see Chapter Six).

Figure 4. ‘Sawn in half’ (drawing by ‘Christine’, Castlegate School)



Two other tools were developed and piloted with groups and individuals (Durrant, 2006). A card sorting exercise comprised statements about professional priorities which could be ranked according to a simple set of criteria: ‘central to my practice’; ‘part of my practice’; ‘not part of my practice’. Again, I later found that card sorts are a recognised elicitation technique (Whitehead, 2005). When piloted, it was found that retaining sorted piles of cards at the end of the interview and recording the ranking

¹ All names of individuals and schools have been changed

later was risky and cumbersome, so for ease and speed this was converted into a grid (Figure 5, see also Appendix 3) where teachers could write the rankings 1-3.

Figure 5. Professional priorities tool

Making a difference to children's lives	Sharing my practice	Challenging and shaping organisational structure and culture
Addressing shortcomings in my own practice	Being part of a professional community	Getting good test or examination results
Building the school community	Cultivating a positive environment for learning	Being an excellent classroom teacher
Implementing policy	Leading learning	Contributing to current and future society
Supporting effective learning	Helping colleagues to improve their practice	Caring for children's wellbeing
Making links with the local community	Keeping order in my classroom	Being an effective learner
Making learning interesting, enjoyable and fun	Evaluating learning and teaching	Meeting school performance targets
Testing research in my own classroom and school context	Meeting my individual professional targets	Contributing to school improvement planning
Improving my practice	Supporting the head in realising her / his vision	Belonging to a learning community
Keeping up to date with subject knowledge	Investigating my practice	Applying findings of educational research
Reflecting on my practice	Contributing to knowledge of learning and teaching	Taking a leadership role in relation to the curriculum
Being a role model for pupils	Taking a pastoral leadership role	Supporting development of children's self-esteem

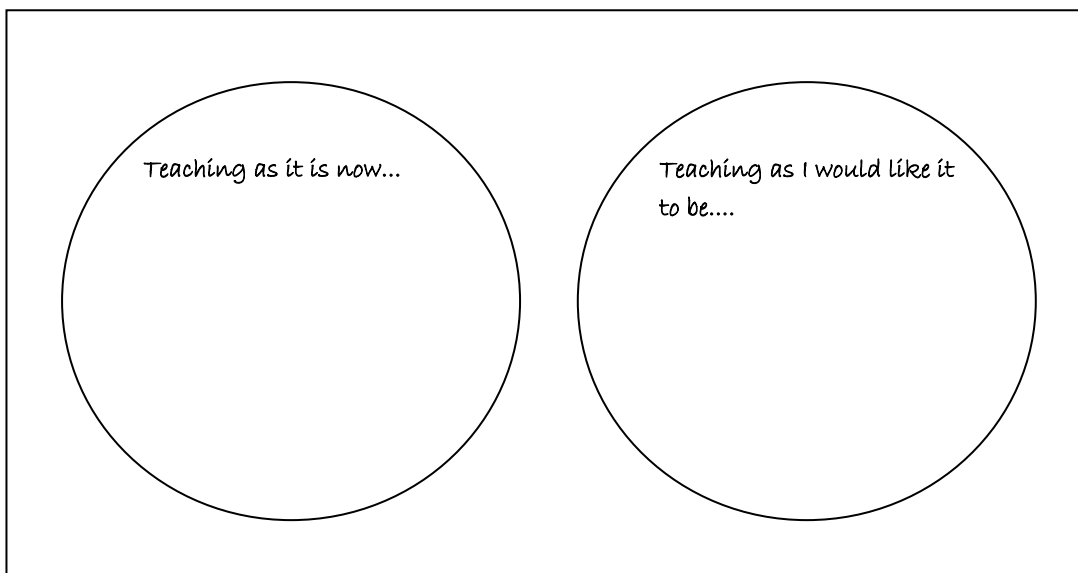
Rank: 1= central to my practice, 2= part of my practice, 3= not part of my practice.

This revised approach worked well, as teachers could see all the statements at once and achieve a level of comparison. In analysis, the rankings could be totalled and averaged to give an indication of the highest priorities. While this could not be construed as any

kind of generalisation for the profession, as previously explained, it might be worthy of comment.

Finally, teachers were asked to write words and phrases in circles labelled ‘teaching as it is now’ and ‘teaching as I would like it to be’, in order to explore their personal professional values and aspirations (Figure 6, see also Appendix 4). Again, this information could be collated for all the teachers, not in any statistically significant sense but in order to give an impressionistic backdrop to the analysis. The ‘Wordle’ tool (Wordle, 2010) was becoming increasingly fashionable for this purpose, often used in conference presentations for instant communication of a set of ideas or to draw out emphases in complex data. Experimentation with the results from a small number of responses indicated that this would be worthwhile, which was confirmed when the visual representation generated interest when reported in interim papers (Durrant, 2010a; 2010 b).

Figure 6. Professional values tool



These three tools were incorporated within the sequence of semi-structured interview questions at appropriate points, resulting in the final schedule (Appendix 5) which was piloted with one teacher (‘Beth’) and used in the first series of encounters with teachers. Here, the aim was to establish their perceptions of professional identity, values, priorities and roles and to introduce discussion about school change. The encounters with teachers were recorded, with their permission, including during the use of the three elicitation tools. I also took handwritten notes for each question on an

expanded version of the schedule, as a back-up measure. The processing of this data will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Capturing organisational contexts

In considering how to approach the data collection as the basis for depicting the organisational context for individual teachers' narratives, it was important to take into account local circumstances and characteristics. These included the school structure and culture, the changing socio-economic community, the national political context, including current policy drivers and initiatives and representation in the media. This has not always been taken into account in research concerning narratives, but arguably this interactionist perspective is imperative in their interpretation (Goodson, 1999; Hargreaves, 1993) and is particularly pertinent to the research questions here.

Visits to the schools, and any encounters with staff, headteachers and senior leaders who facilitated access to the two schools, offered access to information about the changing schools over the period of study, but this had to be extended beyond the researcher's subjective commentary, making an effort to avoid privileging certain views. Over-reliance on my own observations, might create a 'circular definition of truth' in which the account can only be validated by itself (English, 2000). I was aware of the necessity to produce research data rather than a journalistic account. Clearly data from a range of sources was needed, attending to details that might normally be filtered out by 'gatekeepers' such as the headteacher (Ely et al., 1991). This additional information might include both general observations and information and 'critical incidents' that on reflection or in discussion were judged to be significant and indicative of the organisation (Cunningham, 2008a). My own theoretical sensitivity (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) was particularly important, given the limited opportunities for access to the schools. Essentially I was trying to capture the context with as much breadth, depth and detail as possible, without the intensity that would be expected of an ethnographer engaged in participant observation (Hammersley, 1999; Robson, 2002).

I began to consider collection of data from a variety of sources, mainly qualitative, as expected in a school case study, but I recognised the need to approach this systematically and reflexively, with due regard for analytical frameworks and factors affecting the nature and integrity of the data. A set of ten indicators within four perspectives was selected (Figure 7), to give an analytical framework upon which the

interpretation of the school context could be based. Indicators deliberately balanced more formal sources of evidence with other sources and perceptions to explore all facets of the context that might affect the culture of leadership and improvement, where evidence could be cross referenced and compared, for example to show systemsworld and lifeworld aspects of the school's culture. For expediency, the indicators did not include internal documents, so that all information was relatively readily available without additional negotiation. In the special school, Castlegate, the headteacher gave a detailed interview (conducted using the schedule in Appendix 6, summarised in Appendix 7) and hosted a tour of the school including visits to classrooms. This evidence became prominent in analysing the school context, but was mediated by the tabulated data from other sources and perspectives.

In the secondary school, New Futures Academy, the process was more difficult and complex, involving an initial conversation with the executive headteacher, followed by a more detailed discussion with the assistant headteacher to whom my negotiations of access for the research were delegated. The schedule in Appendix 6 was therefore used more loosely across these encounters to elicit information which was included in the tabulated data for this school. I was guided to different parts of the school, so was able to make some observations on the way to visit teachers. The comparisons of observations during visits, the school's publicity materials and external views from inspection reports and the media as listed in Figure 7, used alongside teachers' narratives, offered substantial opportunities for exploration and comparison.

A summary of the sources eventually used within each of the ten indicators is in Appendix 8. The evidence itself has not been included for ethical reasons, as much of it is so specific and detailed that it would reveal schools' identities and to eliminate these details would render it meaningless. For each indicator, the evidence from the sources listed in Appendix 8 was chronologically organised to facilitate an interpretation over time. This proved to be extremely effective as a basis for the final accounts and analysis, as will be demonstrated in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

It is worth noting that the headteacher and senior leaders from respective schools were enthusiastic and valuable informants. The research engaged them in reflection about the changes that were happening in their schools and their testimonies reveal deep professional and emotional commitment to their organisations and to members of the school community, which is often echoed in teachers' comments. The account of 'Martin', the headteacher of the special school, Castlegate, in particular, emerged very

prominently within the school contextual evidence. He offered valuable insights about processes of school change of which he was the main orchestrator (Durrant and Holden, 2006; Gronn, 2003).

Figure 7: Ten indicators of school culture and context

Perspective	Indicator	How the information might be obtained
The headteacher's view	Headteacher's perspective	Interviews at start and end of period of study
	School improvement plan	As explained by headteacher
How the school presents itself publicly	School prospectus	Available in schools and from internet
	School website	Internet
How the school is judged	Most recent Ofsted report	Internet
	Representation in the media	Local newspapers; any information supplied by the school
How the school is observed	General school environment	Observations when visiting schools
	School reception area	Observations when visiting schools
	Students' appearance and attitude	Observations when visiting schools
	Staffroom	Observations when visiting schools

There was an urgency and passion in telling his own story, as a leader bound up with the story of his school, which was born out of genuine interest in discussing and understanding school change. This element of the data collection offered understanding of the school's trajectory and in particular the espoused vision and moral purpose (Fullan, 1993) underpinning change and decision making, the processes, influences and outcomes of which were also recounted by the teachers. In the secondary school, New Futures, it was more difficult to discern a powerful leadership narrative,

notwithstanding the fact that at the start of the research period, the school had just become an academy and senior leaders were finding their feet and concerned with operational matters. This became significant as evidence in its own right, when analysing the processes of change within the school, as will be seen in the accounts in Chapter Five.

Maintaining an ethical stance within a flexible research process

My anxiety to develop an ethical approach to the research was a barrier to progress in the early planning stages, due to my concern to avoid exploitation of teachers and my wish to find a way of representing them and their schools accurately through my interpretations. Serious thought was therefore given to ethical issues from the outset (Robson, 2002) and this needed to be intrinsic to the research as it progressed, since the design evolved over time.

Ethical principles in relation to participants are widely understood to concern access and communication, including informed consent, elimination of discomfort, damage or disadvantage for participants, confidentiality and safeguarding of privacy and quality of reporting (Robson, 2002). Thomas (2011) provides a useful set of questions for ongoing and summative reflection, which concern respect for participants and their institutions and for the relationships with the researcher: they ask who benefits from the research, whether the researcher has the right to take up people's time and energy, whether privacy or comfort are compromised and whether participants are disadvantaged in any way within their communities.

Teacher participants' positive and often enthusiastic responses to the opportunity for discussion and reflection suggested that they generally enjoyed and benefited from the research encounters and that sometimes the conversations were professionally and personally cathartic. The pilot interviews with 'Beth' and the primary headteacher and the testing of tools with my own teaching groups gave initial confidence in this respect. Although in Castlegate School the teachers were directed, rather than invited to participate, all were willing to give their time and energy to the process. In order that they were not inconvenienced, the time they had available was checked at the start of each separate encounter, with opportunity to withdraw. One meeting, with 'Pam' at New Futures, took place after school; she seemed reluctant for the encounter to finish

and more than willing to give her time. No-one demonstrated discomfort, although teachers were assertive when they had to return to their classes.

In compiling individual and organisational accounts, pseudonyms have been used for teachers and their colleagues and the schools have been renamed. Even so, some matters disclosed at participants' own volition were sensitive and necessitated a conversation or decision about how these would be reported, if at all, in order to protect privacy. Occasionally teachers would note something that they wanted to be 'off the record', normally to protect colleagues, the headteacher or their school. Particularly sensitive issues are only discussed in general terms in the analysis, to protect identities of schools and individuals. Even where individuals have not felt the need for caution, I have felt it necessary to omit some details which would reveal identities and might compromise participants or their schools on publication. Although I had had some experience of the power of fictional narratives (Frost et al., 2000), I concluded here that the very specific nature of the sensitive material disclosed would be difficult to fictionalise in a meaningful way and that it would be too complex and misleading to convey 'truth' comprising a mixture of both real and fictionalised information. However, this might be an interesting avenue for future exploration in considering potential applications for narratives in supporting professional development and school improvement.

I followed the University's procedures to secure approval from a Faculty Ethics Committee, via submission of a form detailing my intentions, but this was undertaken with the knowledge that such procedures are problematic where the research design is evolutionary, methods may be adapted and even the research questions themselves may change as the study progresses (Ely et al., 1991). Schostak (2006) contends that ethical protocols, in the form of checklists of rules and procedures such as those designed by University ethics committees, "...speak of law, perhaps politics, but not justice and thus not ethics" (p.138). More important than the tick boxes was a genuine commitment to the interests - 'otherness' (Schostak, 2006) - of participant individuals and institutions, so that they were not overridden by the research in progress and in publication.

In relation to my own role in the process, Lacan's notion of 'extimacy' is helpful (Miller, 1994). Although not becoming 'immersed' as a participant observer or ethnographer, and not expecting to form particularly close relationships with the teachers during limited encounters within a busy school, I nevertheless hoped to

become a trusted listener ‘on the day’, an ‘outsider within’. I needed to approach this reflexively (Delamont, 2002), not only in order to understand its effects on the data, but also to ensure that the research remained ethically sound as its process evolved. In this situation, beyond the approval of the initial plan, I would need to act as “...both judge and jury” in ethical matters (Robson (2002:65). The research involved arriving at a point where I, the researcher, could express an authentic, honest and enduring account (Schostak, 2006), within the limiting structures of the research design and the constraints of everyone’s professional contexts, including my own. Thus I hoped to earn sufficient authority to report the research in a particular way amongst the many possible views and interpretations.

Ethical considerations in negotiations of entree and access

I prepared a briefing sheet for headteachers (Appendix 9) which could be used with teachers if necessary, but found that the trust necessary to gain access to the schools was based far more on discussion face to face. In the event, headteachers were quite dismissive of the details of the printed sheet, seeming to rely on an intuitive, rather than an intellectual or bureaucratic response. First meetings with teachers in both schools indicated that they had been briefed rather sketchily along the lines that, ‘a researcher from the university is coming to talk to you about school change’. Concerned that teachers might have been coerced into participating, I began quite tentatively, explaining the purpose of the research, answering questions and securing their individual permission to proceed. Any anxieties were dispelled by their willingness to talk (although ‘Jess’, in particular, was self-effacing about whether she would have anything valuable to contribute). I noted positive responses during and after the first encounters: ‘Michael’ said spontaneously, “I love this! It’s great, I’ve enjoyed this so much, it’s really good...” halfway through the first interview. Teachers on the whole seemed relaxed, smiled and laughed. They were sometimes intrigued (‘Christine’ exclaiming, “Oooh, interesting!” on seeing the circus pictures) and often thoughtful.

In the special school, Castlegate, teachers had much less time available for the second series of meetings than for the first encounters. Although I was able to work intensively with them to update and add considerably to the first set of data, these interviews felt much more pressurised from my point of view. At the same time these

circumstances prompted further insights into their busy school day and the nature of their roles, therefore in this respect also, they reflected and reinforced the information I had gathered previously.

My own professional distractions thwarted my attempts to keep my promise to return each term. Despite repeated attempts to make contact with the secondary school teachers from New Futures Academy, both directly and via the school office, the two teachers remaining at the school never responded. I had to conclude that they were unwilling or unavailable, despite their positive reaction to the first research encounter. I later found that one had left the school. In the second series of meetings with the special school teachers, it was clear that the time lapse had not impinged upon teachers' consciousness at all. It was, after all, my research. A measure of trust seemed to have developed, supported by the headteacher, and they were happy to participate on the terms presented on the day. Headteachers and senior leaders, too, clearly had far more pressing things to worry about. This taught me a valuable lesson in humility: despite my position of advocacy, my research was of minimal significance in relation to the teachers' lives or the organisation's activity.

An appropriate unifying methodology

After exploring the methods that would be used in the research design, and whilst beginning to implement them, my attention turned to planning the processes of analysis and interpretation that would be used to interrogate the qualitative data, i.e. moving from the subject of the study to developing its analytical frame (Thomas, 2011). A balance had to be struck between providing sufficient structure to maintain the focus on teachers' role in change, while resisting the imposition of rigid analytical processes and codes that might stifle participants' responses and constrain analysis and interpretation. A robust, yet empathetic method of processing and presenting the data was needed, that would enable teachers' identities and voices to emerge authentically and provide a vehicle for the interpretative dimension of my role as researcher.

Feeling that the traditional academic boundaries of subject disciplines were limiting, I was inspired and encouraged by Elizabeth Chapman Houlst's presentation of her award-winning thesis on representation of resilience in adult learning (2011). I witnessed her use of analysis of works of literature to develop conceptual understandings and frameworks against which empirical data from interviews could be tested. Tools based

on images and fictional texts could be used as stimulus for profound reflection, opening up rich and playful discussion around people's concepts of professional and personal identities. The analysis cross referenced academic disciplines, with applications in diverse contexts and cultures, rooted in feminist post-structuralist thinking that challenges traditional academic hegemony (Chapman Hoult, 2011). I was reassured by other researchers that attributes such as curiosity, serendipity, creativity, intuition and imagination could be considered valid dimensions of qualitative research (Thomas, 2011; Delamont, 2002; Ely et al., 1991). Having drafted a research strategy and considered methods for data collection early on, these new ideas began to take on greater significance as I sought to develop an appropriate extension of my methodological framework.

Conceptual summary and implications

In the course of this methodological discussion, aspects of the conceptual framework have been illuminated and extended. The decision to use a nested case study approach strengthens opportunities to explore the symbiotic and reciprocal links between individuals and their organisations in contrasting contexts, rather than simply investigating individuals alongside their organisations. The acknowledgement that teachers have narrative understandings of reality gives credence to a methodology which may elicit elements of truth that are more artistic than literal, with a triple hermeneutic involving teacher participant accounts subjected to researcher's and readers' interpretations. The establishment of a methodology focusing on insights to be gained from the study of the particular, rather than on generalisation, has important implications for policy with regard to professional development and school reform. Since teachers understand their professional contexts and express their professional identities narratively, it is conceivable that support for organisational and individual development may also have to be expressed and organised and expressed in narrative terms.

Towards an authentic methodology

'The Art and Science of Portraiture', as described by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis (1997), was immediately appealing in the search for an appropriate way of exploring, organising and representing teachers' stories. In their exposition,

portraiture is concerned with the crossing of boundaries, the navigation of 'border territory', the inhabitation of multiple selves, changing roles and identities in transition, themes with which I had become interested in earlier work (Durrant, 1997, drawing on MacLure, 1996; Somekh and Thaler, 1997). These concepts are central to the lives and work of teachers, as discussed earlier (see Day and Gu, 2010).

The concept of portraiture became a pivotal aspect of the research methodology and led to some tentative but formative forays into the discipline of art, the applications of which are explored more fully in Chapter Four. For the purposes of this chapter concerning the methodology of this study, portraiture is concerned with 'listening for the story' emerging from teachers' narratives and crafting it into a piece of writing that captures and conveys to the reader the 'essence' of their professional role and identity in relation to their organisational contexts. As such, the tension between the dynamic dimensions of individual narratives and presentation as static text within the research account is explicitly addressed through the concept of constructing portraits. This is extrapolated such that the 'nested case study' consists of teacher portraits within school landscapes derived from the evidence from the ten indicators in Figure 7. This is a creative process in which researcher, participants and audience can be conceived in different ways as 'actors' in the investigative, analytical and interpretive process, which is again explored more fully in Chapter Four.

Adequacy and insufficiency: learning to trust the qualitative paradigm

In bringing the data gathering to a close, I continued to fight hard against what Ely et al. (1991) would refer to as my 'demons'. I was anxious that I did not have 'enough' data (despite the thousands of words emerging in the interpretations of each person and setting), that it did not accurately represent the truth (despite being convinced of its authenticity), that I was an inadequate qualitative researcher (despite substantial experience, including funded projects and academic publications). Whatever the sum of the data and my interpretations of it, there would be imperfections, doubts and unfinished business; the research would be both completely adequate and wholly insufficient. I took heart from Ely et al's (1991) advice that it is only possible to do what one has time for, taking account of the practical factors that tend to influence end points. I reached a position of truce with my positivist demons, employing any unease

to heighten criticality. I believe I have thus achieved a more advanced stage in 'learning to trust the research paradigm' (Ely et al., 1991: 32) of qualitative research.

While I might have imagined and planned an intensive, interactive experience over the period of study and felt an affinity with the rhetoric of co-construction and emancipation, I had to accept a pragmatic retreat to the more traditional dichotomies of 'researcher – respondent', 'outsider – insider' and, later, 'artist – subject'. While teachers responded willingly, it would be disingenuous to call the data or the methodology co-constructed. Nevertheless, rich data was gathered through an ethical process. I hope that the research design helped me to be a responsive researcher and trusted outsider, involving and engaging participants in an interactive and meaningful process to elicit their authentic ideas and views. The concept of portraits of teachers in landscapes of schools, as a form of nested case study for each of the two settings, is discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

Portraits of teachers in landscapes of change

In this chapter, the portraiture methodology and its extrapolation of the artistic analogy to depict school landscapes is explored in more detail. The researcher is characterised as an artist and ‘bricoleur’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008), using the materials and information that come to hand, albeit within a systematic research framework, to build holistic interpretations of the teachers within their schools under investigation and to communicate them in accurate and engaging ways. In this chapter, I explain how the evidence gathered was processed and analysed, to create textual portraits of teachers within school landscapes in order to present the data for the two nested case studies of contrasting schools. The methodological issues arising from this approach to the study are explored, within the broader implications of the narrative paradigm. This includes consideration of the potential for such methodologies in recording ‘the marvellous tales of others’ (Delamont, 2002), in order to investigate the relationships between teachers and their organisational settings. Particular attention is given to the importance of creating texts that have authentic language and meaning, so as to be accessible to a range of audiences, converting dynamic individual and organisational narratives into static portrait and landscape texts. In later chapters I consider the possibilities for extending the use of the ‘portraits and landscapes’ methodology and other narrative approaches, to support professional development and school improvement.

Bricolage and the bricoleur

It was impossible and unnecessary to develop a comprehensive knowledge of other disciplines for the purposes of this research, but I have made deliberate forays across traditional borders of academic disciplines and research paradigms. This has offered insights that have deepened understanding beyond that which could be gleaned from pursuing a more standardised and bounded approach. Interdisciplinary features are an inherent feature of methodological bricolage (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2008), requiring awareness of the social, historical, political and cultural dimensions of the researcher’s construction of knowledge. The literature referred to in this chapter may

be neither seminal, nor necessarily contemporary and is certainly not comprehensive; it has been derived from internet searches, instructional texts, popular literature, fiction, exhibitions and conferences as well as academic sources, investigating whatever caught the eye as potentially interesting and applying what seemed relevant for theoretical and practical development of the study. Not all has been necessary, but all has been formative, not only for this research but also in thinking beyond it, towards its implications and applications, which will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

Developments in the research process have been negotiated from available ideas, information and resources, crossing and inhabiting disciplinary, theoretical and methodological boundaries, margins and borders. Such bricolage is counter-hegemonic in its action and expression, enabling it to contribute a particular form of criticality (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2008). This enables questioning of the purpose, process and subject of research, leading to new understandings in these respects as the elements of the enquiry are combined into new patterns, using the form of the nested case study as a structural framework.

Recognising the multi-method focus of qualitative research, the bricoleur – literally a ‘handyman’, also a ‘quilt-maker’ – gathers ideas using aesthetic as well as material tools, “...deploying whatever strategies, methods, and empirical materials are at hand” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:5). For research, this may involve invention, adaptation or new juxtaposition of tools or techniques and development of interpretive practices as the research proceeds, depending on what is possible and what is available in the research setting. In the process it may be necessary to develop new ontological awareness. For example the complexity of viewing multiple aspects from multiple perspectives undermines the notion of triangulation, since the elements of common ground for comparison are unreliable. Triangulation is an inappropriately reductionist concept, where collecting data into a bricolage representing a small number of teachers in two unique settings. Rigour is sought not in scientific comparison, but in awareness of the implications of different ways of seeing complex phenomena authentically in their changing environments (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2008). In Chapter Three, I discussed development of new tools of elicitation within semi-structured interviews and a framework for gathering information, yielding a range of data about individuals within their distinctive contexts. In this chapter, the focus is on the development of interpretive approaches that concern the ‘aesthetics of representation’, where information is blended into a ‘new creation’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). This

communicates ideas, associations, images and interpretations into a montage that brings unity, as in a narrative formed from a series of interspersed film images, or a quilt created from disparate fragments, both of which may have artistic and practical value. The researcher as bricoleur seeks trustworthy ways of processing evidence into something that has new meaning, from which understandings can be drawn. Here, the artistic analogy of portraits and landscapes has been used to frame the process.

The art and science of portraiture

Portraiture, according to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis (1997), is a 'bridging and balancing' methodology, which immediately resonated with the technical and artistic elements of interpretation required for this study. It counters the problem- and blame-centred analysis prevalent in sociology and the limitations of an academic audience,

...embracing both aesthetics and empiricism, appealing to intellect and emotion, seeking to inform and inspire, and joining the endeavours of documentation, interpretation and intervention.

(Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997:xvi).

The authors write of the counterbalancing effects of rigorous discipline in art, against creativity and improvisation in research, with a view to capturing not an exact copy, but rather the essence of an image within a portrait, as has already been described. A hopeful and creative disposition was appropriate for this study, in seeking to draw out teachers' stories of change and narratives encapsulating their professional identity. I sought to do this without imposing restrictive or judgmental frameworks that might blinker the evidence collected and its interpretation, the dangers of which I have noted in previous research (Durrant, 2009).

Portraiture here is understood to be derived from semi-structured interviews that scaffold the development of a dialogue with the participants, using the specially developed elicitation tools (Appendices 2, 3 and 4), taking additional 'cues' from the surrounding context. The building of relationships was not as central to the study as in Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis's work (1997), as explained in Chapter Three. Nevertheless, the distinctive language and ethos of the methodological approach suggested that a form of portraiture would be most appropriate for the purposes of this study. Two aspects of the portraiture approach are particularly pertinent in this respect.

First, portraiture is distinctive in its purpose, in that it challenges orthodox research methods and a positivist mindset, offering a counter-cultural, boundary-seeking stance which resonates with that of the bricoleur. The researcher aims to find truth in the particular, Simons' 'paradox of case study' (1996), by capturing the 'essence' of people and phenomena. For this study of teachers in their organisational and socio-political settings,

...portraits are designed to capture the richness, complexity and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context, conveying the perspectives of those who are negotiating these experiences...

(Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997:3)

Second, portraiture is distinctive in its process in that, as far as possible, there is reciprocity between researcher and participants in co-constructing the portrait. The process is intentionally generous, although not blindly so since the researcher must maintain a proper level of criticality, communicating honestly and transparently, with respect for both participants and audience. While the portraiture for this study was not intended to be deliberately interventionist and transformative as others might envisage (ibid), it nevertheless offered opportunities for teachers to reflect and articulate their views, ideas, aspirations and experiences. In that sense, there were clear indications that participation in the research was beneficial and affirming. An element of co-construction could be achieved even in the moments of brief research encounters, as participants began to present portraits of themselves, including details of background, both temporal and locational.

There is a distinctive role for the researcher in listening not to the story, but for the story (ibid), taking a rather more active stance than in the ethnographic tradition. Clearly tensions exist between capturing dynamic narratives and the more static concept of the portrait. The researcher is still an 'instrument' of the research (Delamont, 2002), as observer, listener and analyst, but also an 'artist', using creative knowledge and skills, along with prior knowledge and understanding, in order to interpret what is discovered, observed and understood and to present it coherently. This process needs to present complex and problematic phenomena with narrative coherence (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997). Guba and Lincoln (ibid: 279-80) suggest that

One way to confront the dangerous illusions (and their underlying ideologies) that texts may foster is through the creation of new texts that break

boundaries...that seek to create a social science about human life rather than on subjects.

They go on to expound the value of ‘messy texts’ (after Marcus and Fischer, 1986) in which researchers, by breaking down the barriers between science and literature, seek to ‘portray the contradiction and truth of human experience’. In so doing, they may deliberately deviate from a more conventional narrative account, interrupting more obvious trains of thought that would lead to a tendency to rewrite ‘scripts of domination’ and focus on the ‘vernacular of the particular’ (Goodson, 1999). It was appropriate here, therefore, to enter such a reflexive struggle in order to deconstruct the “tyranny embedded in representational practices” (Guba and Lincoln, 2008:280) and, moreover, to pay due attention to the relationship between teachers’ accounts and their socio-political contexts, the relationship that lay at the heart of this investigation.

In considering forms of representation, I needed to offer the reader a static snapshot representing the complex milieu of teachers’ selves, practices and contexts. The teachers’ own accounts did not follow smooth chronological narratives, but moved from theme to theme as thoughts were triggered and ideas were explored. Reconstructing this into a straightforward narrative account in the name of truth would have been misrepresentative, introducing a false dynamic, in danger of moving “backwards into constrained consciousness” (Goodson, 1999:125). Therefore, while it might be agreed that teachers understand their worlds narratively, as discussed in Chapter 3, their accounts and voices are not necessarily best represented in a pure narrative form. The notion of interrupting and interrogating the interview data by way of a creative analytical process, followed by using portraiture for representation as initially understood, was convincing in relation to the intentions for this study.

The elements of eclecticism, reciprocity and creativity of purpose and process allowed themes to be drawn out and relationships and phenomena explored in relation to the research questions. It was important to recognise the significant element of experimentation that would be involved and that, while the portraiture approach was distinctive, it had a strong narrative dimension, weaving together the teacher’s account and the researcher’s interpretation. Further explorations of the concept and method of portraiture were made through some tentative but fascinating forays into the discipline of art, glimpses of which are offered in the next section of this chapter. The insights gained from these interdisciplinary explorations were extremely powerful in informing and developing personal confidence in the conceptual and analytical process that led to

the construction of the portraits, by drawing artistic analogies into the realm of research in the field of education. The first application of this is in notions of duality and likeness in representations of teachers in their unique settings.

Portraiture: mimesis and duality

It is recognised that all portraits show an idealised, distorted or partial view of the sitter, but portraiture as a genre is historically tied to the idea of likeness or ‘mimesis’ (West, 2004). Thus the process of constructing portraits and landscapes could be described as ‘mimetic’ (Schostak, 2006). This notion of likeness or imitation has historically caused the art form of portraiture to be dismissed or reduced in status, “a medieval exercise rather than a fine art” (West, 2004:12). However, West’s (2004) exploration of the genre shows that the intention of portraiture is more sophisticated than imitation of a physical likeness.

Portraits are concerned with dualities, for example of bodily likeness compared with identity, of individuality and archetype, of personhood and cultural setting. Whatever the stance of the portraitist in relation to any dualistic typology, there is rarely a direct comparison between portrait and sitter, whether individual or generic, therefore “... our impression of likeness is one that comes through the skill of the artist in creating a believable model of a real person” (West, 2004, p.29). At different points in history, portraiture has fulfilled a spectrum of purposes, representing idealised to naturalistic forms, physical and psychological characteristics, appearance and character (West, 2004).

Some analysts represent the duality in portraiture as a continuum, for example between a specific likeness and a generality of type. Others consider these together, in that the portrait may be said to show at the same time what is in common with humanity and what is different from the rest of humanity (West, 2004, after Panofsky). Walter Kuhn’s ‘Wisconsin’ is a portrait of a man during the American Depression of the 1930s. The man is gaunt and sallow, his eyes sunken, his shirt and black hat worn and dusty, his expression not unkind, mixing determination, weariness and resignation; a generic image is conveyed as an individual (National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, 2010a). Similarly, August Sander considered that his portraiture was an objective representation of the world and used this in a documentary style to depict ‘archetypal’ occupations through photographic portraiture in Germany in the 1920s. In his portrait

of the pastry cook, he may have attempted to minimise individuality and context, yet the man's personhood and sense of self is conveyed powerfully in the picture (Fallis, 2011). The lines of reasoning used by Kuhn and Sander are inappropriate for the purposes of this research. The textual portraits in this study are not intended to be archetypal representations of 'teachers', conveying a generalised view. Portraiture gives an opportunity to portray individuality in relation to teaching; the portraits are of teachers as people, not people who happen to be teachers. This encompasses a different kind of duality. Teachers' day to day activity, representing their professionalism, is contrasted with their professional identity, values, intentionality and aspirations, that could be said to represent their professionalism (Evans, 2008; Hoyle, 1975; Ozga, 1995), as explained in Chapter Two. Thus the methodological approach of portraiture is appropriate for representation and analysis of concepts that are at the heart of the research, distilling the narrative evidence to present an interpretation of the essence of professional lives within complex and multi-faceted school and political settings.

Each of the portraits constructed for this study represents an individual teacher. The analysis therefore draws insights from each of the examples and illustrations rather than generalising about 'teachers'. Ideas about 'the teaching profession' are derived from different standpoints, influenced by each person's role, experience, circumstances, opinions and perceptions as interpreted into the textual portraits. The intention is not to generalise, but to learn from the complex interplay of self and identity in context for teachers as people. Again, it is helpful to explore how this is achieved through art, to illuminate the construction and interpretation of the textual portraits of teachers, recognising that this requires insight and creativity as much as it demands a technical and rational approach.

Dualities of self and identity

Since an artist seeks to interpret the duality of both the 'referent' (a person's living presence, their body) and the 'signified' (their identity or true self) (West, 2004), this elicits an emotional as well as an analytical response in the interaction between subject, artist and audience, where the subject can also become the observer. This is captured evocatively in the artist Roma Tearne's novel 'Mosquito' (2007), when Theo, a writer, first looks at the girl Nulani's painting of him, before they have begun to develop a spoken relationship, and is intrigued by her perceptions:

She had begun to paint him against a curtain of foliage. There were creases in his white shirt, purple shadows along one arm. She had given his eyes a reflective quality that hinted at other colours behind the darkness of the pupils. Was this him, really? What this what she saw? In the painting he paused as he wrote, looking into the distance. Aspects of him emerged from the canvas, making certain things crystal clear.

(p.23)

The static, two dimensional form of the finished painting not only captures identity as well as bodily likeness, but a sense of time and experience. The distinction between executing descriptions and communicating interpretations is expressed succinctly by contemporary artist Tracey Emin (2009) who, like the fictional Nulani, uses line drawings to convey powerful images and ideas of selfhood: “It took me years to understand the magic of drawing. For years, I tried to make things look how they are - instead of being what they are” (my emphasis). This ontological as well as epistemological focus seems to reflect Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis’s ‘essence’ (1997). The significance for this study is that ‘reality’ is as much about the interplay of perceptions and emotions with critical scrutiny elicited in the observer or audience by the creative representation, as it is about an objective ‘face value’ portrayal of a subject by the artist, novelist or researcher, a point that will be returned to later in this chapter. As a researcher, I was challenged by the suggestion that economy of detail in the text, as in the sparsity of the artist’s line drawings, may be advantageous in conveying powerful messages and identifying the key details of people and their situations. I undertook the discipline of editing each textual portrait to between 3,000 and 4,000 words and found that, rather than sacrificing detail, the process crystallised issues and ideas into a crisper representation. Richardson (2000:934) finds an internal validity in such postmodernist textual crystallisation.

Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colours, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose..... Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of “validity” (we feel how there is no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves); and crystallisation provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic.

The portraitist, whether artist or researcher, is involved in “negotiating the problems of representing identity” (West, 2004, p.21). Details of contrast and setting can be used deliberately and creatively to convey the essence of the person. Concepts of ‘truth’ and ‘accuracy’ are bound up with ‘meaning’ in the layers of interpretation by the artist or

researcher and the observers of the finished portrait, who, as previously mentioned, include its subject. Clearly, where portraiture within research is concerned, demonstration of an ethical and reflexive stance is particularly important in accounting for the authenticity of the likenesses presented and in acknowledging and accounting for the impossibility of objectivity (Guba and Lincoln, 2008).

A device that has helped to safeguard the authenticity of the portraits is the identification of ‘critical incidents’ (Tripp, 1993; Cunningham, 2008b) from teachers’ narratives. Cunningham (ibid) suggests that these can often be drawn out in considered, reflective dialogue, with the researcher working in a mentoring kind of role. In this study, teachers often returned to incidents previously described, underlining the personal significance of these stories. They also identified ‘critical situations’ – scenarios from their daily work that were typical or illustrative rather than isolated happenings. A more active identification of these critical situations at the analytical stage in writing the portraits helped to bring the strands of narrative together, much as an artist uses a ‘focal point’ to make sense of the whole. Griet, the ‘girl with a pearl earring’ in Chevalier’s novel, identifies the earring as a necessary ingredient of her own portrait, which makes sense of the disparate parts of the picture. The painter Vermeer, says to her,

You know, the painting needs it, the light that the pearl reflects. It won’t be complete otherwise.

Griet recounts,

I did know. I had not looked at the painting long – but I had known immediately that it needed the pearl earring. Without it there were only my eyes, my mouth, the band of my chemise, the dark space behind my ear, all separate. The earring would bring them together.

(Chevalier, 2007: 206)

I found the image of the pearl earring helpful in writing textual portraits and it resonated with audiences when discussing work in progress (Durrant, 2010a; 2010b). In all forms of qualitative research, certain phrases, events and characteristics can be definitive in depicting the essence of people and their contexts (Ely et al., 1991; Delamont, 2002; Hammersley, 1999). Critical incidents and critical situations, identified from the dialogue with teachers and headteachers and from observations in schools, have been used as unifying devices, to illustrate, authenticate and illuminate themes within the stories, as will be seen in Chapters Five and Six.

Self, subjects and subjectivity

In ethnographic texts, we read about the researcher's experiences, perceptions, feelings and versions of reality in a selective account. In Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis's portraits (1997), subjectivity is arguably heightened further than in ethnography. The researcher may even become the subject. Leading a seminar exploring the portraiture methodology, I have reflected with colleagues on the portraitist's intentions and our response to the following descriptions:

I find it impossible not to notice Cheryle's wonderful costumes; they are such bold declarations. This morning she is wearing an emerald green and black striped silk skirt and blouse, trimmed – around the bodice and in a wide band at her waist – in black leather. Sheer black stockings and black patent leather shoes, again with three inch heels, complete the picture.

... and later...

...she kicks off her high heels, stretches her long legs under the coffee table and sits with me on the soft rug. "I'm a floor sitter", she explains. With the tape recorder set up between us on the glass table, and both of us on the same level, facing each other, Cheryle is ready to begin.

(Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997: 58-9)

Reactions to these texts have generally ranged from indignance to unease and discomfort, concerned with the presumptions upon which the descriptions are made and questioning the value and implications of the emotional reactions they conjure; one described the writing as 'soft porn'; others have been outraged that such writing should be considered legitimate in a research account. All have been intrigued and challenged. In such boundary-crossing texts, a high level of reflexivity ensures that the researcher's subjectivities are discussed within the portrait.

These subjective and researcher-focused dimensions of portraiture may appear over-extreme. They can clearly only be read in the context of a study that concerns, indeed revels in, the relationship between the researcher as 'artist' and the sitter as 'actor' and focuses on 'me-search' (Ely et al., 1991), an emphasis which I had already rejected. Although important to include a developing understanding of my own viewpoint and the cultural background of experience, knowledge and understanding that I bring to the study, the relationships with teachers were not of the same intensity as in Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis's work and the same understandings cannot be claimed, therefore a more neutral, less reactive style has deliberately been used in the narrative

texts. Nevertheless, it is impossible to attain objectivity in such an analytical process and there is undoubtedly creativity and an element of risk involved in identifying and portraying the key characteristics of people and elements of their situations. The portraits in this study engage the reader in versions of reality constructed from perceptions, narratives, observations and evidence that might contradict. The intention is to draw the reader into the situations and encounters in order to illuminate the relationships between teachers and their settings. Whilst wishing to avoid extreme and over-opinionated interpretations and use of language as in the above examples, it is important to recognise that the texts are certainly open to layers of interpretation between what the subjects, participants or informants choose to convey, the processing and communication of this by the researcher or artist and the response from audience.

In postmodern analysis, identity is inseparable from the interpretation, whether in pictorial or written portraits (Woodall, 1997:13) therefore the kinds of knowledge represented are seen as interdependent. The physical resemblance is inseparable from a sense of the living presence, social being and human agency of the person created by the interaction of the three perspectives of viewer, artist and subject. However the postmodern conviction that closely nuanced information and ideas cannot be externally validated at all, but can only be interpreted and given subjective meaning as Lyotard would suggest (Williams, 1998), can be moderated to a certain extent through a systematic and reflexive research strategy.

For each of the textual portraits of teachers for this study, the intention was to create both a physical and a metaphysical presence with respect to the teacher's role and identity in organisational change. Unlike August Sander, whose portraits in his single-minded documentary project gave no indications of the political upheavals surrounding the subjects (Fallis, 2011), the purpose is to reveal connections to the teachers' organisational contexts. As well as revealing these details through individual textual portraits, it was therefore necessary to turn attention to the depiction of their settings, the school landscapes.

From portraits to landscapes

Portraiture of schools, as opposed to individuals, is a well-established methodology (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983), but while the portraiture of individual teachers is a reasonable methodological interpretation of the painting analogy, capturing an

organisation's characteristics and culture for the purposes of this research seemed to require broader scope and to encompass more layers and variables than a portrait. In order to clarify this distinction between individual accounts and organisational context, so as to examine the relationships and forces between them in relation to school change more clearly, I developed the notion of 'portraits of teachers within landscapes of schools'. While the teacher portraits would be drawn from encounters as described above, following a semi-structured interview format incorporating the additional elicitation tools in the first instance, the organisational complexity of schools required a staged, multi-faceted approach. Having identified ten indicators which would be used to gather evidence, as explained in Chapter Three, the notion of organisational landscapes mirroring the portraiture methodology gave unity to the presentation of these complex contexts, giving a background to the individual teacher portraits for each nested school case study.

East's early explanation of three distinct stages in landscape painting was helpful in exploring the stages of development of these textual landscapes:

1. the sketch aims to capture first impressions such as colour and tone
2. the study attends to "truth of form"
3. the picture unites the first impressions with the accuracy, detail and understanding embodied in the sketch

(East, 1910:1).

These stages fitted well with the research process where I envisaged the gathering of impressions through visits and discussions, followed by a more systematic collection and organisation of data from different sources and viewpoints, culminating in representation of this in the final written form as an 'organisational landscape'. I was struck by sometimes remarkable parallels between methodological and the artistic processes, which gave reassuring insights. MacPherson (2006) conceives of the artist as an enquirer, who needs to ask the right questions in order to find the answers. The landscape artist is exhorted to "...explore, experiment, innovate..." (p.10), to take risks and let intuition rule, while there is at the same time a systematic approach in documenting the emotional and academic process meticulously with a series of sketches and notes. This reflexive combination of art and science, where there is space and need for both creative and systematic dimensions, resonates strongly with Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis's (1997) exposition of textual portraiture. I aimed to capture the 'essence' of organisations, as with individuals, interpreting the

fieldwork by working over the ideas and evidence ‘in the studio’ (my study), which I hoped would culminate in a ‘thoughtful and powerful statement’ (MacPherson, 2006) about the organisational landscape.

I noted that, as with portraiture, the parameters for choice and decision making in interpretation are broad. I was struck by the ways in which themes in landscape art paralleled the themes in my study of organisational contexts. Although I did not feel it was necessary to explore art literature in depth, additional ideas and insights were gleaned from some forays into an explanation of American landscape painting (National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, 2010b). The discovery that landscapes in the colonial era were introduced as the backgrounds to portraits in order to give additional information about the subject made the connection in art that I hoped to achieve for my own research focus. As with portraiture, landscapes could be manipulated by the artists and patrons to make particular political or conceptual points which might be in tension. In the 20th century, impressionistic landscapes conveyed not only physical forms but moods, atmospheres, relationships between people and settings and emotional responses. Significantly for this study, landscape studies could carry a social commentary and agenda for change, for example Edward Hopper’s paintings documenting the deficits, loneliness and isolation of American society between the World Wars (National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, 2010b; de Botton, 2002). More recently, we get closer to the landscape as a context for social (or anti-social) activity, shaping its inhabitants’ experience and shaped by their agency. I have tried to work towards this kind of interpretation, conveying conceptions of the schools, based on systematic but not comprehensive enquiry and acknowledging reliance on my own interpretation.

Realistic and subjective responses to environment

The subjectivity of landscape painting is investigated by de Botton (2002), who travels in search of the landscapes of Van Gogh. Disillusioned by previous painters who depicted the landscape of Provence according to the expected complementary pastoral pastels of brown and green, Van Gogh called into question the mimesis of their work – the extent to which they were depicting reality, compared with their culturally conditioned conceptions of it. The landscape in Provence is in fact characterised by vivid, contrasting primary colours and nuanced shades, due in part to the unique

climate but also heightened by people's use of the environment, as de Botton (2002) attested on his own exploratory visit. Van Gogh described the richness of colour to his sister:

When the green leaves are fresh, it is a rich green, the likes of which we seldom see in the North. Even when it gets scorched and dusty, the landscape does not lose its beauty, for then it gets tones of gold of various tints: green-gold, yellow-gold, pink-gold...And this combined with the blue – from the deepest royal blue of the water to the blue of the forget-me-nots; a cobalt, particularly bright blue...

(Van Gogh, undated, in de Botton, 2002:200).

Even the stars were not white dots on black, as shown by previous Provençale painters, but in Van Gogh's eyes some were "...citron-yellow, others have a pink glow, or a green, blue and forget-me not brilliance" in a deep blue, violet or even dark green sky (de Botton, 2002:201). Artists see different realities but can also make different selections and choose to communicate different elements in particular ways, for example by depicting scenes where colours contrast – orange buildings against blue sky, red poppies in a green field, fields of purple lavender and golden wheat. De Botton (2002) began to see the landscape afresh as his eyes were opened by the paintings and the artist's writing. Both Van Gogh and his audience came to new understandings through the creation of the pictures, suggesting the illuminative potential for such interpretive approaches through creation and engagement with research texts based on accurate observation combined with situational understanding.

Simons (1996) makes clear connections between these analyses of interpretation and the researcher's approach to the study of unique cases. Cezanne's paintings of trees illustrate how one person's interpretation of reality can lead us to a deeper understanding of the phenomena in question, through the artist's unique perspective. Distinguishing from a journalistic approach, the qualitative researcher, working with a conceptual framework, makes analytical negotiations, personal insecurities and methodological issues and inconsistencies transparent as part of the study (Ely et al., 1991; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). The use of the landscape analogy in this research has helped to make this process of representation more explicit, developing reflexivity to reinforce authenticity and therefore validity. It is intriguing and important that the tensions between particularity and universality and in representation and interpretation that lie at the heart of case study (Thomas, 2011; Bassey, 1998; Simons, 1996) are also present in the academic discipline of art. Portraits and landscapes are interpretations of

individual and organisational cases. For this study, this analogy is deepened by nesting the teacher portraits within their organisational landscapes, much as historic portraits placed subjects in their unique cultural as well as locational settings.

Mimetic narrative

Portraiture and its derivative in landscape are mimetic processes, the intention being to create 'likenesses' or realistic representations. It is recognised that the texts, and therefore the researcher, have to 'work harder' as representational practices including narrative and literary forms are problematised in the light of postmodern and post-structural understandings, rejecting traditional frameworks and binaries of meaning (Guba and Lincoln, 2008). Fundamental to this research is the acknowledgement that, as explained in the introduction, there are many stories that could be told and many interpretations that could be made, but effort and attention has been paid to using portraiture to enable teachers within their school contexts to 'speak for themselves' (Ely et al., 1991; MacBeath, 2003; Vickers, 2002). This narrative process involves the use of a 'rhetorical razor' to select the story from the non-story, the relevant from the irrelevant, the included from the excluded, such that large parts of reality are inevitably obscured by de-selection (Cronon, 1992), by teacher and headteacher narrators as well as the researcher. People may not only verbalise and situate experiences through narrative to display self and identity, but also use the narrative process in construction, expressing their 'agentic and epistemic selves' (Schiffrin, 1996) through the research.

However, at the same time careful focusing was required for this study in order to enable exploration of teachers' roles, identities and experiences in relation to school change, rather than simply developing a freely formed narrative about their lives and work, so that key questions, lines of enquiry, evidence and insights related to the research questions were not overlooked (Hargreaves, 1993). Narrative is not simply a means of expressing interpretations of experience, it is also the medium through which the interpretations are constructed by symbolising, displacing and transforming experience into socially and culturally situated stories (Cronon, 1992) within a web of organisational discourses (Estepa, 2006) and overlapping communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). The stories of teachers and schools investigated in this research necessarily and overtly include overlapping threads of narrative and accounts of multiple realities, because this reflects the complexity and multi-faceted nature of the

research focus, of people's identities and roles in relation to change. In seeking to understand this complexity within the narrative paradigm (Fisher, 1989), artistic analogies have again been helpful.

The bricolage of truth and meaning

An artist friend's descriptions of his creative process have been particularly illuminative in this respect. Peter Messer's paintings are ostensibly immensely detailed landscapes, portraits and still life studies, of familiar and well-trodden places, but depict an inner life, an imaginative world of 'mystery and magic' on his doorstep. Messer (2007) acknowledges his sensitivity to layers of narrative and experience, which for him are concentrated within the close confines of a few roads and lanes in the South-East market town where he lives and works. He sees and feels in the same sentence, enjoying, "...being surprised by everyday splendour, layers of light, emotion and memory" (Messer, 2007:4). His description of how his paintings come about resonates with the creative bricolage used to develop portraits and landscapes through encounters, observations and insights mediated by experience, situational understanding and theoretical sensitivity (Elliott, 1993b; Strauss and Corbin, 1990):

My paintings come about in a variety of ways, often triggered by a title or phrase, either read, overheard or invented. My sketchbooks contain more words than drawing. Indeed, words can pin down an atmosphere more acutely than a drawing at this stage. I keep scrapbooks. I take bad photographs with an old 35mm compact camera, process them weeks later and enjoy being surprised at what I've got. Seldom much more than a hint or a circumstantial detail, but enough to start on. I do some drawing, scribbled planning, from life or made up in the studio, or both. If I make a nice figure, sometimes I trace it and move it around the composition, looking for the optimum position. Or else I just know where it belongs.

(Messer, 2007: 50)

Roma Tearne's intuitive fictional artist, Nulani, informs her paintings with a similar busy gathering of evidence from different sources, which represent a mustering of narratives:

For now, she told Theo, he could look at her sketchbooks... Once again she gave him the fragmented stories she had collected. And again they fell from the pages in a jumble of images.

(Tearne, 2007:41)

Although the artist gathers pictures and sketches, Nulani and Theo recognise them as ‘stories’. Moreover, they are not gathered at random. For Nulani, “Light that moved...was what interested her...” (ibid); themes of fascination are explored through threads of visual enquiry.

While research must be concerned with representing what is ‘real’ this is not confined to the physical presence. A symbolic interactionist stance (Blumer, 1992; Hargreaves, 1993) investigates the reality of people’s perceptions, ideas, aspirations and other intangibles, which are based on their responses to their situations and broader contexts, responses that are inevitably subjective, emotional and historically and sociologically situated. Delamont’s ethnographic narratives (2002) exploring situations and themes of contrast, Simons’ (1996) unique case studies, van Gogh’s landscapes and Messer’s realist and surrealist paintings (2007) are doing the same kind of methodological work in begging questions about the nature of reality and our response to it.

‘Making the familiar strange’ is Messer’s art and his craft, in a process which parallels Delamont’s (2002) sociological approach. As the painting starts to gain form and colour and the texts start to gain coherence out of detail, the references in the shallows are abandoned for the deeper water of creativity. Control is seized and released; continued brushwork obscures previous layers in an editing process. When no more can be done, the finished paintings can be sold and the texts can be published. While it is only the artist and the author who can own the making (Messer, 2007), the meaning-making in encountering these familiar details at close quarters belongs to the audience.

The artistry of analysis and interpretation

As with any representation of narrative enquiry, textual portraiture can be written in such a way as to gain perspectives over time, looking back and forth over events and relating them to other accounts and information from the organisational context. The flexibility of the research design in this study offered opportunities to explore and revisit through the interviews what was important to the teachers in both their personal and professional lives, drawing this out in the crafting of the portraits in an attempt to distil the aforementioned ‘essence’ of their professional identity as Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis (1997) explain. This might help to address ethical research aims: it could nurture relationships and create connections through understandings gained within the school, with no sacrifice of analytic rigour (Featherstone, 1998, in

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997). Participants' social and cultural context was a "resource for understanding" (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997:12). This enabled a holistic interpretation, from which authentic portraits of teachers within their organisational contexts could be created and then interrogated to contribute to a central analysis of teacher professionalism and change in relation to the research questions.

The methods used for the processing of evidence had to account for the fact that the phenomena under scrutiny were complex and locally or individually constructed in multiple ways. Interpretations needed to be grounded in a growing understanding of the way that relationships and interactions actually happen in practice and how elements are assembled and embedded in organisational patterns, paying systematic and rigorous attention to details of human experience and social activity. The analytic process of the writing of portraits required a hopeful disposition as Apple (2009) suggests, a 'search for goodness' (Chapman, 2005), seeking strengths as well as over-problematizing or digging for deficits to give a balanced view:

... there is never a single story – many could be told. So the portraitist is active in selecting the themes that will be used to tell the story, strategic in deciding on the points of focus and emphasis, and creative in defining the sequence and rhythm of the narrative..... The effort to reach coherence must flow organically both from the data and from the interpretive witness of the portraitist.

(Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997:12, my italics)

While the aim is to capture the essence of people within their settings, the portraitist must be aware of what they themselves omit or conceal (English, 2000), in the same way as they are aware of the selective and socially situated constructions of participants' narratives (Cronon, 1992; Schiffrin, 1996; Estepa, 2006). Therefore as a researcher working in the interpretive tradition, I was aware that I must develop a 'hermeneutically trained mind', embedding criticality and, reflexivity not through impossible neutrality or 'self-extinction', but through a "conscious assimilation of ... fore-meanings and prejudices" (Gadamer, 1979:238) to allow the evidence to 'assert its own truth'. My presence as researcher, portraitist, actor and advocate must be acknowledged. Audiences are led to a deeper understanding of the phenomena in question, through the skill and artistry of the researcher's unique perspective and expression. After careful observation and empathetic attention in the field, this requires a measure of courage in the analysis, making full use of tacit knowledge, lived

experiences and insights (Ely et al., 1991). The analytical work might rely to a considerable extent upon personal insight that could be difficult to replicate - English (2000) disconcertingly refers to 'genius' - but this does not render such an approach any less valid as research or reduce scope for reflexivity. Rather, it requires different means of verification and internal validation to enable the audience to judge the quality of the evidence and interpretation, including its inadequacies and errors.

Developing the textual portraits and landscapes

It was challenging to use what was essentially a set of paraphrased notes to create embryonic portraits within landscapes, moving from 'writing up' (field notes and school evidence) to 'writing down' (the finished accounts) (Guba and Lincoln, 2008). The aim was to create and refine an 'image' (Thomas, 2011) of individuals in their contexts. This was where, as researcher and artist, I felt the greatest responsibility, recognising the creativity inherent in qualitative analysis and the need to justify this methodologically, as distinct from a journalistic process. The conceptual framework, with its themes of individual professional identity, professionalism and agency in relation to organisational cultures and approaches to change, was used to annotate the paraphrased notes in order to 'interrupt' the original fragmented narratives and identify relevant evidence that might be reconstructed into textual portraits and landscapes. Even structured in this way, this relied considerably on creative intuition which, as Thomas (2011) asserts, can be as essential to questions, arguments and conclusions within the social sciences as any positivistic or normative process – indeed it is something he suggests should be treasured, not suppressed. Within the overarching nested case study framework, it was important to retain a sense of the whole picture rather than fractured parts, while consciously relating elements of the picture to aspects of the conceptual framework embedded in my consciousness, employing my own tacit understandings in the process of interpretation.

Thus I took charge of the interpretative process in order to "...find essential meaning, reduce, reorganise and share in economical and interesting ways" (Ely et al, 1991:140), to create a 'trustworthy', 'credible' product that was worthy of attention (ibid:156). I cultivated a necessary sense of audience, focusing on aspects such as fluency, language and expression as well as content and clarity. This required discipline, since the data was rich with detail that I was reluctant to omit, resulting in initial drafts of many

thousands of words for both landscapes and portraits. I therefore set word limits to force distillation of the essence of people and places, and used analytical memos (Altrichter et al., 1993) to annotate the paraphrased notes, as shown in Appendix 10 for 'Christine' and 'Pam'. The criteria for these memos accorded with themes within the conceptual framework as developed in Chapter Two and subsequently modified, focusing on aspects of professionalism and identity, school improvement, agency, leadership and school change. For example on the second page of 'Christine's' account, there are comments concerning her approach to managing change and identifying examples of agency, while on the next page the headteacher's proactive and supportive approach to change is noted. On the fourth page of 'Pam's' account there is a comment on the over-emphasis of the school on the systemsworld and a 'surveillance culture'.

Out of these memos emerged a clear set of key issues for each account, linked to the conceptual framework, which were summarised to provide some structure for writing the final portraits and landscapes. The distinction between this process and formal coding of data was that the teachers' stories remained intact throughout and were reworked into the final portrait texts. This enabled organisational and individual elements and discussion of the relating aspects concerned with agency and structuration to be included in the teacher portraits. Meanwhile, the landscape evidence was built from its constituents into a coherent account, working organically between the framework of ten indicators in Figure 7 and elements of the conceptual framework identified in the data. Each account remained discrete until the portraits and landscapes presented in Chapters Five and Six were completed, then the texts were grouped into 'sets' comprising the nested case study for the two respective chapters, acknowledging the influence of contextual and organisational factors on the individual accounts. The lists of key issues, set against the original research questions, provided a structure for a final comparative analysis of the identities and roles of teachers within their organisational settings.

The staged process of analysis for the six teacher portraits can be summarised as follows:

1. Recordings and handwritten notes of semi-structured interviews (conducted according to the schedule in Appendix 5) incorporating elicitation tools (Appendices 2, 3 and 4);
2. Listening to both recordings and making additional handwritten notes;

3. Word-processing an account from these notes;
4. Identification of issues in relation to research questions by adding analytical memos (Altrichter et al., 1993) in the margin of each individual account (as in Appendix 10);
5. Making a list of 10-20 key issues emerging for each person in their setting, based on the analytical memos that themselves related to themes of professional role and identity and organisational change, as outlined in the conceptual framework;
6. Creative and intuitive development of this writing into a portrait by working over the account, structuring according to the key points identified and using the analytical memos to maintain focus on the research questions;
7. Editing of each portrait to between 3,000 and 4,000 words;
8. Checking of the completed portrait text with the teacher concerned.

The creation of the two school landscapes followed a similar series of stages:

1. Observations on visits to schools, notes handwritten afterwards or at opportunities during the visit (e.g. between teacher interviews);
2. Headteacher interview data and evidence from other relevant encounters recorded and summarised into a word processed account as in teacher interviews (see Appendix 7);
3. Notes made from recent inspection reports, school documentation, media reports and articles, many from internet sources (see Appendix 8 for a summary of sources for each school);
4. Table drawn up for each school to summarise all categories of evidence, using structure (see Figure 7);
5. Word processing of an account based on this data, drawing out aspects of the conceptual framework;
6. Creative and intuitive development of this writing into a 'landscape' to form the organisational context for each set of three teacher portraits.

The notable omission of transcripts of interviews was a decision made early in the planning of the research. Having worked from coded interview data previously to create an analytical account (Frost and Durrant, 2002), I was aware of the effects of fragmentation of narrative on the interpretative process within case study, as Thomas (2011) warns. I had experienced a sense of the 'futility and irrelevance' of coding

(West, 1996), finding it necessary to return continually to original narratives to join the fragments of text together again, because I was interested in the teachers' stories as well as in testing our conceptual framework of categories by which the data had been coded. In 'searching for the story' (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997), transcription was unlikely to enhance the analytical process of this study and I could not justify the expense and labour of achieving an accurate set of transcripts, noting the painstaking process of inevitable correction of 'outsourced' transcripts (Powney and Watts, 1987) and the arduous complexity of accurately representing human encounters linguistically (West, 1996). Although I had the resources for transcription available and was prepared to rethink if the portraiture was not working, I concluded that transcription would present a barrier, rather than offer a conduit, to creating accurate portraits.

Validity and authenticity

This research was never intended to achieve external validity (Robson, 2002) in terms of the generalisability of the evidence, as already explained. However, it is particularly important for a study on such a small scale to achieve internal validity, in other words to ensure that the evidence is a true representation of reality. This internal validity is achieved not through methods, but through exploration of the nature and quality of the relationship between the interpretative account and the phenomena being researched (ibid, after Maxwell, 1992). This was achieved for the portraits and landscapes by inviting participants directly involved to authenticate the accounts. I was encouraged by the email response of 'Lorna', who wrote,

... I think what you've written is an incredibly accurate portrait of the school and the staff. It is almost like walking through the corridors and listening to their voices.

(email from 'Lorna')

The resulting textual portraits and landscapes, expressing holistic interpretations of people and places respectively, are 'dialogic texts' that prompt an interactive response (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008) that is likely to be emotional and empathetic as well as analytical. This was certainly true in the responses to the landscapes and portraits from those who participated directly in the research. 'Lorna', for example, said that the portraits made her 'sad' as they evoked 'fond' memories of good experiences that had then turned sour. The textual descriptions took her on an imaginative journey to the

school and colleagues she had left behind, which she expressed in the present tense in the quotation above. 'Michael' also engaged fully with the account, not only endorsing it but offering a reflexive comment about how he felt in reading it.

You have made a very good job of compiling my often rambling diatribes into a coherent piece. It was quite a narcissistic experience reading pages about myself - and sobering to see myself laid bare like that!.... Thankyou for taking the trouble to send this through to me, it gave me plenty to chew on!

(email from 'Michael')

'Christine' was particularly pleased to confirm not only that the account was accurate, but also that she still 'stood by' the things she had said, reinforcing this by stating that she was managing to retain some classroom teaching in her new role as assistant headteacher. These emotive and personal responses suggest that the interpretive accounts fulfilled a function rather different from an analytical research report or meta-analysis. They seemed to convey a true sense of place and personhood that resonated with the subjects of the research, reinforced their values and sometimes prompted further valuable professional and personal reflection and challenge. In order to fulfil this function as dialogic texts, the landscapes and portraits had to be expressed in language and with emphasis that had true meaning for the people involved.

The provisionality and authenticity of messy texts

In relation to individual teacher portraits, the complexity of the interactions between researcher, teacher and reader must not be underestimated, echoing the relationships and mediations between artist, sitter and viewer (Woodall, 1997) in the portrait and landscape analogy. Guba and Lincoln (2008) reassure that the inconvenience and messiness of research endeavours can be turned to positive ends. In postmodern analysis, people and places gain meaning through perceptions, feelings and interpretations, the symbolic interactions between people and their places and their expression in language (Hargreaves, 1993; Blumer, 1992). Meanings of texts are deferred, contrasted and layered in relation to the language and experience of the reader, and mean nothing without their contexts (Derrida, 1982; Williams, 1998). Authenticity in representation is a slippery concept, validity is tentative and we fall back on emotional as well as rational responses to stories, portraits and landscapes, responses without which they would have no meaning. The textual portraits and landscapes in this study build tentative bridges between science, literature and art, in

the name of phenomenological enquiry into these complex, non-scientific social worlds. The intention is to explore the meaning-making of teachers in the subsurface 'lifeworld' of school improvement (Stoll, 1998; Sergiovanni, 2000) where responses and contributions to change are not consistently rational and objective but subject to myriad subjective interpretations.

This chapter has explored how the process of developing portraits and landscapes in research involves theoretical and methodological bricolage to create textual interpretations that acknowledge, indeed demand, active audience engagement. Far from diluting or fragmenting the research process and outcomes in its breadth and eclecticism, this methodological approach is appropriate in the investigation of complex settings and phenomena, adding "...breadth, complexity, richness and depth..." to lend authenticity to the enquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:7 after Flick, 2002). It is soundly situated within the realm of qualitative research and the narrative paradigm (Fisher, 1989) but involves drawing on different interpretative perspectives and academic disciplines. The research has involved interaction with participants and audiences; it also required reflexivity, with the researcher's self as a subsidiary character. The analysis that has emerged has inherent provisionality (West, 1996), in the spirit of the qualitative paradigm. Its 'unfinished business' (Ely et al., 1991) is not a deficiency, but a characteristic of the genre.

On reflection, the focus on holistic interpretations gave a freedom to the researcher that transcended coding and categorising approaches to ask broader questions about 'what is happening here?' in order to create a series of images of individuals within their contexts. The research opened up opportunities for participants to introduce ideas, experiences and associations of their own volition. Significant elements and incidents were introduced by participants and the small scale of the study enabled most of these details to be captured and included in experimental texts (Guba and Lincoln, 2008), maintaining the messiness of the social worlds they represent.

A vital aspect of the reciprocity of these texts is the language chosen to represent the individuals and settings. Fielding (2004) warns of the 'recalcitrant realities' of seeking to interpret and represent the voices of others. The validity of an interpretation is called into question where alien structures, questions and language are imposed upon participants, both in eliciting responses and in presenting this to other audiences and drawing conclusions. For the portraiture approach used here, the intention has been to produce an account with which participants could identify. The texts have subtle

idiosyncrasies of language and tone that are different from more traditional research accounts. These texts are deliberately written with the intention to evoke a personality or a situation without the continual interruption of direct quotations or the distanced tone of a research report. Quotations are used very sparingly to give additional emphasis and authenticity. The intended effect is that the subjects of the accounts can readily identify with the accounts, feel they are on familiar ground and recognise themselves and their settings. They may, of course, gain some additional insight into their identities and circumstances, but this should be from a position of familiarity, as when looking in a mirror.

Conceptual summary and implications

This chapter has explored how portraiture poses a number of challenges to orthodoxy, as a bridging, boundary crossing, reciprocal methodology. A final challenge to methodological orthodoxy is that the portraitist may seek wider and more eclectic audiences than the academy (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997). The portraits and landscapes may have purposes other than representing an interpretation of evidence in order to answer the research questions. Reporting can be a creative act, an act of advocacy, seeking to engage, inspire and resonate with a range of different audiences, who negotiate its meaning with a “...vigilance to empirical description and aesthetic expression” (ibid, 1997:12). This can become a political act to ‘decenter the center’, where creators of ‘new texts that break boundaries’ resist the scientific reductionism and convenient bounds of reality that can reinforce orthodoxy and oppression by silencing people’s voices and obscuring details of their lives. The ‘transgressive texts’ of portraiture uncover hidden assumptions and crystallise the truth as discovered, told, heard and re-presented (Guba and Lincoln, 2008).

Many commentators suggest that new methodologies, focusing on holistic interpretations, spiritual and ecological values and enquiry into human flourishing, may enable us to move towards a more engaging, imaginative, just, democratic, different society (see Apple, 2009; Sergiovanni, 2000; Guba and Lincoln, 2008). The resulting texts ‘validate themselves’ through internal authenticity in the refractions between different strands of information and meaning, as they elicit responses to this from their audiences. The truth thus represented includes not only physical representation in text of lives and actions, but the essence of living presence, social

being and agency. This concept of essence, the ‘pearl earring’ within each account, helps to focus the research on the substantive conceptual themes concerning individual professionals and their interactions with the two contrasting organisations, taking into account these deeper, complex and nuanced understandings of validity.

Preface to Chapters Five and Six

Self-portrait

In each of the following two chapters, the school landscape is represented, followed by three teacher portraits from the school. These texts represent the result of the analytical process described in Chapter Four, where data was gathered, organised and scrutinised in a “disciplined, empirical process of description, interpretation, analysis and synthesis” in order to construct the final texts (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997: 185).

Construction of these texts was challenging and problematic. Initial attempts succumbed to the pitfall of ‘the haphazard’ that Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis (1997) warn is common in novice attempts to marshal the rich data into a coherent and accessible text. They counsel (after Aristotle), that a suitable structure has a clear ‘beginning, middle and end’, opening with introductory and contextual information to allow the reader access and provide narrative coherence. A set of emergent themes should be identified by a process of ‘memoing’ in order to generate new interpretive insights. These themes can then be used as a structure for selecting and co-ordinating the information presented. However this does not necessarily provide a rigid framework for the final text, which they suggest needs to grow out of ‘creative impulse’ rather than follow strict rules of composition, despite the systematic, analytical process underpinning it. The portraitist, like the visual artist, makes aesthetic decisions to negotiate a balance between the following components:

- coherence - ensuring that the text provides a holistic contribution to the themes identified;
- resonance - ensuring that the emergent themes are evidenced empirically;
- necessity - ensuring that, within the limitations of the study, nothing is superfluous and nothing of significance has been omitted.

Nevertheless, the process was not completely aesthetic and intuitive, since analytical criteria guiding selection and interpretation during the memoing process were derived from themes within the conceptual framework, as explained in Chapter Four.

I also turned to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis (1997) for guidance on elements that should withstand scrutiny:

- the inclusion of contextual information to clarify and edify;
- the modulation of voice to give an authentic interpretation;
- resonance of identified themes with the language and culture of those represented to scaffold the interpretation;
- respect for relationships and keeping of faith with those represented as the interpretation is shaped.

The drafts were revised many times in attempts to achieve an appropriate aesthetic / empirical balance and to meet these criteria for rigour. My initial concern was to achieve coherence using fluent and authentic language that represented the teachers and their organisations. I wished to avoid organising the accounts according to ‘grand narratives’ of school change, since I found discontinuities between these and teachers’ understandings. My anxiety to tell real stories initially overrode the second criterion of resonance, such that the stories belied their sound basis in data. Having tried too hard to make the texts distinct from more traditional interview-based analysis presented in a ‘scientific realist’ narrative style, involving ‘characterising, comparing and classifying’ (Foley, 1998), they did not easily win the trust of readers, particularly an academic audience. In fact, the nature of the accounts tended to deconstruct my authority as an author and researcher, as Foley suggests. I believe that this was partly because they needed to contain more circumstantial details and vicissitudes of teachers’ lives and work, which were concerned with different, subtle kinds of change. However, I also concluded that the language of my interpretations was putting barriers between subjects and audience by obscuring teachers’ voices. A ‘counterbalance’ was needed (Saunders, 2003) in order to make the subjects of the research and their voices more visible, so as to achieve not only truthfulness by my own judgment, but validity by other people’s.

I resisted the impulse to produce something more creative, to ‘break the rules’ with texts more challenging to the reader. I judged that departure from a more factual analysis towards more creative meaning making, enticing though it might be, would be at the risk of alienating the academic audience, in particular, further, and discrediting my research. This was perhaps partly due to lack of intellectual courage (Baehr, 2011), or at least a need to balance this with intellectual humility and expediency, realising my own limitations and constraints for this particular study. The overriding factor was

the need to create something that I was confident would be trustworthy, resonating both with the empirical evidence and with a range of audiences, including those represented.

I realised that in order to be both accessible and authentic, more quotations were needed within the portraits to allow teachers to comment in their own words, while more referencing and quotation within the landscapes, with less use of the passive voice, would authenticate the contextual information. Thus the texts became more visibly rooted in the research evidence. For the sake of fluency I used well-known abbreviations and acronyms in the text as well as in direct quotations, preparing a glossary for reference (Appendix 11). The texts had not only to exist to my own satisfaction, but to 'be believed' (Ely et al., 1991), so I chose a more traditional, sober and functional path (Saunders, 2003) than might have been expected from my methodological explorations in previous chapters. The data has not been treated as creatively - poetically, artistically, perhaps - as other examples of portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997; MacBeath et al., 2000). I recognised that opportunities for more creative, unorthodox explorations, boundary crossing between accounts representing facts and those expressing meaning, would arise later and elsewhere; indeed, I intended to create them and wanted to engage others with them. It was exciting, for now, that the research had opened up these possibilities for the future.

This means that the texts produced, although they have been derived from a staged analytical process, may appear to the reader to be quite ordinary. They may even be disappointing in the context of this thesis, given the underlying thinking and processing accounted for in Chapters 3 and 4. Other accounts may hold greater excitement and power, simply as a result of their chosen subject matter. For example, Alexander Masters gives a true account of 'Stuart', a homeless man, through their developing relationship (2005), with the riveting drama, pace and pathos of a novel. Through reading the book I gained unforgettable insights into a life migrating on and off the streets, punctuated by psychotic episodes and culminating in suicide, with a unique and unlikely friendship at its core. Closer to the theme of this research, the experimental approaches such as MacBeath et al's (2000) first series of chapters in 'Self-Evaluation in European Schools' are intriguing, presenting a story of a girl, Serena, which is

...in some senses fictitious but in a more important sense very real. Through her experience of her school we are led to some important truths and deep questions about what matters.

(MacBeath et al., 2000: xi)

The authors here have represented ‘every school’, ‘anywhere’, interpreting research evidence into fictional stories from individual perspectives which, the authors argue, allow the reader access to ideas and insights not otherwise available. Rather than fictionalising evidence, and without a particularly sensational focus, the intention for this study is to present anonymised accounts of real teachers within their settings in order to provide insights and make meaning of the role and identity of teachers in school change. In the next two chapters, ostensibly unremarkable teachers in two schools are presented as authentically as possible, through texts that they themselves recognise as real. In presenting ‘familiar’ accounts of six ordinary teachers and their interactions, within two typical but unique organisational environments, I am asserting their stories as remarkable, in the sense that they are worthy of note.

The final dimension of scrutiny, respect for relationships, was the hardest to achieve. I have already explained in Chapter Three the difficulties of maintaining contact with the teachers. Street (1998) explores the challenges of co-construction and concludes that the apparently worthy aim of induction of practitioners (in her case, nurses) into an academic process can be unrealistic. Indeed she refers to her own attempts as ‘failure’, finally asserting that in a post-modern project it is important to allow divergent voices and expectations to disrupt the purity of the conceived research process, rather than exerting power illegitimately where there seems to be a need to coerce people into the desired way of thinking.

Teachers hold tacit understandings and engage in meaning making through thinking and talking (Holly, 1989), while writing is an academic discipline, a ‘technology of power’ which relocates practitioner collaborators to the position of respondent, despite any original intentions. I have already argued that it was unrealistic to aim the kind of insider-outsider relationship advocated by Elliott (1988), since the research was not conceived as interventionist or developmental. Indeed, in one of his own chapters, Elliott (2003a) footnotes that his own interpretations of teachers’ accounts can be criticised because he ‘failed’ to engage the teachers in dialogue. For this research, the benefits for the teachers came in the immediacy of reflective conversations prompted by the interview questions and elicitation tools, which they said were interesting and in

which their opinions, ideas and experience were valued. They were then invited to comment on the final texts rather than being involved in creating them. At the same time, the influences on my own work beyond the research, in supporting teacher-led development and school improvement through a range of projects and programmes, gained considerable momentum as the research progressed. I explore this further in Chapter Eight.

Meanwhile, the resolution of these dilemmas took considerable time. Having staked so much on these portraits and landscapes, I would have been relieved to have experienced the sense of ‘diminished expectations’ that Foley (1998) describes, albeit from an ethnographic perspective; happy to ascribe difference in narrative style to differences in writing skills, personal sensitivities or upbringing; content with modest, rather than grand knowledge claims. Foley advocates that narratives should bridge the increasing “cultural gulf between academics and ordinary people” (p.126). As a novice portraitist grappling with the texts, I felt like an ‘ordinary person’ aspiring to write like an ‘academic’ and was burdened with my own expectations. Yet the texts deliberately reveal less of myself as researcher and as author, compared with the auto/biography of West (1996), or the ‘me-search’ referred to by Ely et al. (1991), although they do convey some perceptual as well as factual detail. Finally, my ambition was to capture the ordinary and to present it in a valid and recognisable way.

It was interesting that when the texts began to ‘ring true’, prompting a ‘yes of course’ response, rather than ‘yes, but...’, they also began to feel ‘right’ personally. As I stood back from the brush strokes of detail to view the canvases, I was eventually satisfied that, as far as possible, they fitted my own interpretations. They represented the ‘gestalt’ of the encounters and observations and contributed to a better understanding of the worlds for which they accounted, linking individuals with context through the insights I had gained of each. By all these characteristics, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis (1997) would recognise them as complete.

The quotations included in the portraits and landscapes in Chapters Five and Six are from the teacher or headteacher interviews. All names of individuals and schools have been changed to ensure anonymity. References have been omitted where they would reveal school identities, for example Ofsted reports, newspaper articles and websites. A glossary of acronyms used in the texts is to be found in Appendix 11.

Chapter Five

New Futures Academy landscape and portraits

School Landscape

New Futures Academy

New Futures Academy was built on a foundation of promises. Structurally, the new secondary school was created from a merger of several local schools, the new school being split into five smaller units of around 500 students each, located on two sites. The legacy of the previous secondary school still dominated the new organisation. According to the original secondary school website², most of the construction on the site consisted of “a conglomeration of sub-standard temporary buildings”, many of which were around fifty years old. A £54 million building programme had been promised for the Academy as part of the ‘Building Schools for the Future’ scheme, where students and staff would be housed in exciting, expansive, technology-rich learning environments that they would help to design. New buildings were desperately needed, not only to fulfil aesthetic and educational ambitions, but also to restore public confidence on health and safety grounds since the existing buildings had actually started to collapse the previous year, resulting in injuries to students. Media reports show the extent of the shock to local families, damaging the reputation of the struggling school. As the new school launched, the building work had not yet begun. The only visible change for students, parents and staff was a new sign at the school entrance.

An unforgiving socio-economic context

The history of the embattled predecessor secondary school is fully documented on the internet. It had struggled against the government’s standards agenda and was placed in Special Measures in 2003. Its unauthorised absence rate of 21% was one of the worst in the country. Around 15% of the most able students made their escape at age 11 through academic selection for grammar schools, for which they had to travel beyond

² No references are cited in this section in order to preserve the anonymity of the school

the immediate locality. This ‘creaming off’ of the most academically able left a remainder of students characterised by low attainment, low self-esteem and low aspirations, deficit labelling that had persisted over several generations, exacerbated by the decline of local industry and the area’s relative physical isolation. A research report in December 2010, commissioned by a local charity and reported in the media, concluded that many young people in the locality were drawn into a 2nd or 3rd generation cycle of drinking and drugs, resulting in anti-social behaviour in pockets around open spaces such as recreation grounds. Contributory factors were identified as deprivation, isolation, lack of transport infrastructure and leisure facilities, unemployment and lack of opportunity.

Aims and priorities for the new Academy

The initial ‘expression of interest’ document for the Academy stated that the new school would be created explicitly to tackle the local cycle of deprivation by providing a positive contribution to the local area and economy and spiritual and moral leadership. A spirit of motivation and entrepreneurship was to be promoted through twin specialisms of Business and Enterprise and Sport. Politically, the Academy was required to raise standards of academic performance, particularly at Key Stages 3 and 4, compared with the predecessor secondary school. At the time of the Academy’s launch, the government had raised the National Challenge threshold, the minimum standard required of secondary schools, to 30% of students achieving 5 A*-C grades at GCSE. More challenging still for a school lacking the most academically able members of its community, the 5 GCSEs must include English and mathematics. Despite this national re-emphasis on academic accountability, a strong vocational emphasis was planned for New Futures Academy, building on the secondary school’s previous work commended by Ofsted. An innovative curriculum and democratic structure would underpin both internal activity and strong connections and contributions within the local community.

The Academy was launched in September 2009, its first academic year coinciding with the year of this study.

Transition and launch: a new school structure in old buildings

On my first visit, the anticipation of the new buildings and the new organisational label had generated some excitement, with the promise of a fresh start, working towards a hopeful future. This was certainly the intention of the senior leaders. There was also a strong suggestion that the new buildings would solve matters, that everything would be different. The transition had not been easy; a feature in the national education press described how over the previous 18 months the principal designate had led a school that did not yet exist, from a prefabricated building shared with a mother and toddler group. From here, he recruited 600 members of staff, met students and parents and appeased powerful local opposition groups to enable the funding agreement for the Academy to be signed, so that it could open on time and as planned.

Despite the excitement, hardly anything had changed visually at the secondary school site on the day of the Academy's launch, so alongside the excitement, there was a sense of concealed disappointment when I first visited the school. The new sign, depicting the Academy's name and designer logo, was stuck into the grass verge in front of the shabby, wooden, prefabricated buildings. Walking from an overflow car park on the tennis courts, in the absence of obvious signs, I found myself around the back of the school, negotiating my way past an unpleasant situation where a teenage boy was being loudly reprimanded by a male member of staff on the grass behind his classroom. Giving the incident a wide berth (as my presence had not affected the tirade), I made my way around the side, into a building that looked like a temporary classroom, which was signposted as reception.

Through the internal office window, the administrative area was well organised and professional and the greeting was friendly and efficient. I was directed to sit and wait in the large, featureless room, made dark by the low ceiling. The room was surrounded with large cardboard boxes, piled from floor to ceiling, which seemed to be deliveries awaiting dispatch to different parts of the school. Ordinary chairs were around the edge, with the feeling of a traditional 'waiting room'. There were none of the 'touches' I had seen in other school foyers, such as a vase of flowers, a table with school literature or celebratory pictures. Dark wooden panelled walls were decorated with symbols of the school 'houses'. There was nothing to read and certainly no indication that organisational transformation was in progress. Small knots of families signed in and out, waiting to see staff, collecting and delivering children, coping with toddlers wanting attention. There was some friendly chatter as people met around the signing in

book. Staff, with photo-identity tags and pen drives dangling on their Academy-branded neck bands, consulted parents discreetly and professionally, ushering them into rooms behind reception. They seemed to be discussing and dealing with issues promptly as people called into the school. The general impression was of good relationships between the school and families, which was reinforced in subsequent visits.

The executive head's office was light, newly furnished, spacious and hospitable, looking out on the front of the site, with a new oval wooden table and comfortable boardroom chairs. Everything seemed calm and well ordered. The executive head was clear at the launch about the school's priorities in the first few months, to settle students and staff and stabilise the school into one organisation. Students needed to get used to new routines and it was imperative to set high expectations of behaviour and attendance, to underpin the quest for raised standards. The assistant head explained that the Academy had merged staff from several schools, many of whom were in new posts and/or had moved site, while some were new to the area altogether, including a significant number of newly qualified teachers. A staged start for year groups was taking place. The executive head excused himself from the conversation every so often, as senior leaders were taking care to maintaining a visible presence in the early days, walking corridors and being seen around the school.

Teachers showing me through different parts of the Academy took pride in their school, conveying a sense both of what it was and what they imagined it was to become. Walls were decorated colourfully, perhaps 'patching up' until there were new spaces to decorate, but still communicating the fresh start and valuing students' work. Much effort had been made to create the right environment around students and cover up the dilapidation. For months afterwards, on my subsequent visits, classrooms still contained boxes and the flotsam and jetsam of the movement and restructuring over the summer, but children and teachers passed us with friendly banter, in a docile and purposeful atmosphere.

Structurally, however, there were innovations. In order to create a stronger sense of belonging and improve relationships, the executive head and assistant head explained that students had been vertically organised into 'Family Units', each with a tutor. As explained on the website, these groups were set within the overall structure of five internal 'Schools of Learning', two on one site and three on the other, each headed by a non-teaching head of school. Executive headteachers led each of the two sites, with

the principal presiding over the whole organisation. Prestigious sponsorship and a celebrity chair of governors added status. The structure had established a powerful hierarchical leadership model, setting up an element of competition between the five ‘schools’ and their leaders, as explained by the assistant head and retrospectively in the Ofsted report. Everyone I spoke to was aware that the performance of heads of school, subject departments and teachers was under close scrutiny.

The National Challenge and other policy drivers

From the outset, the espoused priority for the Academy was necessarily to raise standards, essentially in Key Stages 3 and 4, in order to meet the National Challenge threshold. This was to be founded on better teaching, raised aspirations and improved behaviour and attendance. The ‘expression of interest’ document was a manifesto for the community as well as for students. It stated that the introduction of a flexible curriculum, vocational emphasis and new technologies would be introduced to ensure powerful and relevant learning to meet diverse needs; student voice and active citizenship within the community would be encouraged. Other factors, such as students’ self-esteem and motivation and the importance of spiritual and moral education, were also acknowledged as important. The underlying community ethos, both inward looking and outreaching, was clearly visible and it was recognised that partnerships (for example with local businesses), positive relationships and good communications with parents, carers and families would be crucial to the Academy’s success. There would be extended provision, including intergenerational learning and support for family literacy, recognising the underlying issues of crime, unemployment and underachievement. The school leaders I spoke to understood the importance of education within and for the community, but realised that the efforts of the previous school had not been sufficient or appropriately focused to meet the current challenges and government benchmarks for success. Reinvention was needed, while capitalising on existing strengths. The plans for the Academy captured this, incorporating some of the initiatives that had already been making progress, such as a local scheme to support young people who had lost direction and were likely to become ‘NEETs’ (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

A closer look at school and sixth form prospectuses and at other areas of the website gave indications of the emphases and aspirations for the Academy beyond the most

frequently reported issues. A simple logo with changing pictures of students engaged in learning carried an acrostic of predictable aspirations. This and other messages clearly accorded with policy drivers; there was nothing particularly distinctive here for a modern secondary school. Messages about behaviour and mutual respect were prominent alongside high expectations for achievement. At the time of the Academy's launch, the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda was still current. With regard to the ECM outcome 'enjoy and achieve', the Academy promised in its prospectus an innovative, personalised curriculum, with both academic and vocational dimensions, meeting individual needs. Students would learn how to learn and think creatively and would develop skills for lifelong learning. They were promised that the much anticipated new buildings would create a modern learning environment with 'world class' facilities, equipped with modern technology and adopting innovative computer-based teaching and learning approaches. The structure of smaller schools was intended to create a community feel for enrichment, connection and caring, contributing to the 'health and safety' aspects of the ECM agenda. With regard to 'making a positive contribution', the outward facing ethos promoted by the executive leaders carried a commitment to working with the local community of families, businesses, local government, charities and services upon which the Academy counted for support. Opportunities for responsibility, active citizenship and student leadership and voice were highlighted in the prospectus, both with regard to decision making within the Academy itself and through involvement in the local community.

Struggling for survival

After an initial period of optimism fuelled by the ambitious promises made at the launch, progress in this complex process of development was problematic. An interim inspection report supported the assistant head's view that communications were difficult to manage and tensions emerged between different parts of the organisation, including conflicts between more traditional approaches and more progressive ones, as represented by different senior leaders implementing their ideas within their separate schools. Part of the Academy's innovation involved running a different curriculum at each site, but this was found to be inequitable and had to be restructured, while the timetable was already running. Ofsted starkly reported that

...the split-site curriculum in the first year was deemed to be inappropriate and inequitable and the current curriculum is organised within the 5 small schools, resulting in students not being set so as to cater for the whole range of ability.

During the first year, the 'top-heavy' leadership structure proved to be financially unsustainable, necessitating some tough management decisions, as reported by the assistant head. Senior leaders who had been on non-teaching timetables were required to return to the classroom. Ofsted noted that staffing was initially very volatile, resulting in instability in the first year, reporting sustained difficulties in recruiting to some subject areas, although generally staffing was much more settled by the end of the year. At the end of this first year, the executive principal and one head of school left the Academy. Many other details of the internal events and circumstances over this troubled time that have emerged over the course of the year, cannot be recounted here for ethical reasons, since they came to light through means other than the research process and would breach confidentiality and anonymity.

The focus on behaviour, attendance and performance continued, battling against the relentlessly uncompromising local socio-economic context and continuing staffing problems. Raising attendance was a vital dimension of the improvement strategy, tackled alternately by rewards and sanctions which were reflected both on the school website and in the local press. The introduction of fines for truancy began to be reinforced in February 2010 by contact with parents by email, phone or text on the first day of absence. A rewards system was also introduced at this time, to give positive attention and incentive to the 'silent, good majority' for good attendance and behaviour, in the form of points that could be redeemed for online purchases. The school website offered PowerPoint slides aimed at parents, explaining some of the implications of persistent absence, although this begged the question of which parents would be reached by such a strategy. However, the problem was intransigent and the press grabbed attention with the headline 'TRUANCY FIGURES', obscuring the many reasons why children might be persistently absent. The executive headteacher, interviewed in the local press, noted marked improvement compared with the predecessor secondary school and that they were doing everything possible to address the issue. Even so, the school's attendance remained amongst the lowest in the country, persisting long after the period of study. The school's website still carried intimidating images and messages a year later, using a poster of a dentist's chair with the slogan "A CHECK-UP DOESN'T TAKE ALL DAY, SO DON'T TAKE ALL DAY OFF SCHOOL" and threatening parents with fines. The lack of progress on this issue

suggested that frequent absence was endemic, deeply rooted into the culture of families over generations.

Involving families and building community ethos

The contribution of parents and carers to school development and support for their children was actively sought in the Academy's first year, through a parents' forum. Minutes of regular meetings of a new parents' forum were published on the school website during the Academy's first year, which provided a valuable external view of progress. After six months, the minutes show that parents who attended were pleased with the monitoring of their children's progress, with relationships between teachers and students, with the responses of pastoral managers to specific situations and with the practicalities of lunchtime arrangements and uniform. However, they expressed concerns over quality of teaching and the value, quality and management of homework. The practical outcomes of attempts by the Academy to establish the Family Units as smaller groups to which students could 'belong' came in for some criticism; parents said that in the vertically structured 'Family Unit time', some students were taking advantage of the flexibility by texting and using Facebook and that older students were setting a poor example. Parents felt that the time should be used for 'proper lessons'.

The Academy's discussions with parents over several months of meetings led to the design of a questionnaire in summer 2010 to canvass a wider range of opinion on progress than was represented at the parents' forum, coinciding with the end of the period of this study. The survey elicited 99 responses. The summary of results confirmed the emphasis parents placed on discipline and good behaviour and also on good quality learning and teaching. Questions were raised about communications between school and home, for example parents wanted earlier warning about trips for which payment was needed and asked if they could pay by instalments. The executive headteacher promised to take up these matters with the school leadership team. Meanwhile, attention diverted to lobbying for the new buildings, which were in jeopardy because of the change of government and financial cuts. This included a visit from the local MP to a meeting of the parents' forum to lend his support.

Over its first few months, the assistant head explained that the Academy deliberately fed positive stories to the press, aiming for at least one per week, a strategy designed to

maintain a good image with the community. The stories gave a clear indication of the breadth and emphasis of the school's activity beyond performance and attendance targets. While there was a series of updates on the status of the long-awaited building work and the usual reports on sporting fixtures, the vast majority of reports concerned charity and community work, too frequent and consistent to be spurious. Students had designed a local play area, created murals for the local playground and railway station, raised money with a Valentine's Day music event for 'Help for Heroes', supported a school in South Africa and worked with the local Rotary Club to fundraise for polio. They had assisted with litter picking on the recreation ground, tackled canal clearance and planted flowers to brighten the town centre. Student representatives on the local Youth Council were involved in projects to develop solar powered street lighting, to organise a band talent contest and to lobby for subsidised bus season tickets beyond age 16. 'Community cohesion', a powerful strand of government policy in the latter days of the Labour government, was a reality for the school, with its well established community ethos. There was a wealth of evidence of genuine and sustained participation and engagement, supported by strong partnerships between the Academy, Council and charity groups.

In July 2010, three students described as 'challenging' by their teacher were invited to Downing Street to be presented with a national award for outstanding contribution to the community, for teaching IT skills to over 50s at the nearby village hall. They had been learning about local history, by helping people to research their family trees. Students' comments, as reported in the local press, suggested that they were used to deficit views of themselves and their community.

We didn't feel that what we were doing was all that amazing.

I'm quite good at computers and I wanted to show older people that not all young people are horrible.

The Specialist School and Academies Trust website carried a case study of the Academy's leading practice in Business and Enterprise. In this innovative project, the school was providing services to the local community, in exchange for repayment in kind by organisations and individuals, including the police giving careers advice in return for support with crime prevention.

This community work was a continuation of closer work with the police to support vulnerable young people. In October 2009, a month after the Academy had opened,

press headlines reported that police had been posted in the school, suggesting that this was a reaction to a crime wave and masking the fact that this was, in fact, an initiative focused on relationship building and discouragement of crime and vandalism by designated Police and Community Support Officers working closely with teachers. While isolated incidents cannot be taken to indicate significant social change, the assistant head noted that the tone of later reports in the press tended to show greater sympathy for students, supporting the Academy in its desire to encourage and model positive actions and good character and maintain its strong community links.

Meanwhile, the dedication and loyalty of many teachers was evident in other press releases. In January 2011, an Academy teacher awarded in the New Year honours list for services to education spoke of his love for his job, the place and the students. Other teachers promoted students and supported their community and charity work; it was clear that this was not only for publicity but represented genuine advocacy and commitment, presenting students in a positive light to the media and the community but also reflecting this back to the students themselves, to build their self-esteem and confidence.

Improving performance and continuing challenges

However, Ofsted was interested primarily in academic standards. The February 2011 interim inspection report noted academic improvements due to better data management and accountability, including better tracking and intervention, regular marking and formative assessment and the introduction of self-evaluation. This was attributed to effective short-term action planning by the two executive headteachers, to address problems that were recognised at the time of departure of the principal at the end of the first year. Still, the Academy was judged to have responded well to the National Challenge since academic results had increased by 8% that summer to cross the required threshold of 30% A*-C GCSE grades, which was a great boost to morale. The impact of the specialisms was deemed positive, while involvement of outside agencies such as Creative Partnerships had encouraged better engagement in learning. Of the lessons observed during the monitoring visit, the executive headteacher gave a public statement to the effect that 20% of lessons were satisfactory, 60% good and 20% outstanding (therefore none had 'failed'). Inspectors noticed generally improved

enjoyment, engagement and behaviour, a vital foundation for improvement six months after the difficult first year.

By these accounts, the Academy had met its priorities to raise attainment and improve behaviour in its first year, but there was no room for complacency. Despite the inspectorate's commendations for the progress that had been made, overall progress was deemed to be 'inadequate' and this was what made the local headlines 18 months after the launch. Improvement "...masked considerable underachievement amongst lower ability students" and those with special educational needs and disabilities across all abilities. Inspectors found a lack of strategic direction; there had been weaknesses in curriculum leadership, difficulties in recruitment and retention for some subjects and less successful sixth form subjects had been discontinued after the first year, including sciences. The involvement of the main sponsor had had variable impact on subjects. The inspectors concluded that there were still inconsistent standards of provision and teaching and that there was a tendency towards passive learning, due to over-direction by teachers, mirroring parents' concerns the previous year.

However the main concern was serious omission in the Academy's child protection procedures, pointing to deep-seated and long-standing flaws in leadership and management. This was blamed by the executive head on a backlog of mismanagement from the previous administration of the predecessor school, 18 months previously, according to another press statement. Urgent action was demanded by the inspectorate. Continuing poor attendance was also noted, although initiatives to combat this were recognised. Despite these problems, Ofsted reported that behaviour and attitudes were judged to have improved, creating a calm and ordered atmosphere which contrasted favourably with the previous school on the site.

Optimism in an uncertain future

The political benchmarks changed during the year of study as the Conservative – Liberal Democrat coalition began to make its mark. The introduction of the 'English Baccalaureate' of 5 academic GCSE subjects created a higher hurdle for schools such as New Futures Academy, whose performance was always adversely affected by selection. Behaviour management was also high on the government's agenda. Yet in a climate of increasing austerity, funding for creative initiatives such as Creative Partnerships, from which Ofsted reported that the Academy had benefited, was

withdrawn. Community cohesion, which was a vital aspect of education in the locality many years before it appeared in the Ofsted framework, received less emphasis. In terms of accountability, the school was entering still more brutal political territory.

Still ‘on the edge’

By the school’s second summer, amidst considerable confusion of information, the Education Secretary was reported once again to have put the building work on hold, but the first bulldozers arrived in the spring of 2011, giving school and community new cause for optimism, while the Academy was anticipating its next inspection. That winter, however, New Futures Academy was graded ‘4’ by Ofsted and given ‘Notice to Improve’. Improvements had been made in key areas of attainment, attendance and the support of those vulnerable to underachievement and the Academy was still making the most of its strong community links. A newly appointed principal was putting strategies for improvement in place. However, inspectors judged that learning and teaching were still inconsistent, that too much teaching was ineffective and that student progress was not improving as it should, resulting in the poor overall judgement. Meanwhile, colleagues who worked in or with the school reported that staffing was undergoing another radical restructuring.

Two weeks after the Ofsted judgement, the local radio reported the loss of another 350 local manufacturing jobs.

Teacher Portrait

James: New Futures Academy

James was Key Stage 3 English co-ordinator at New Futures Academy, having moving from one of the merged schools. He was initially offered a Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) in mentoring and intervention linked to his role in his previous school of Inclusion Liaison Officer. This had involved running the inclusion team, organising resources and arranging mentoring and intervention to motivate disaffected students, which everyone had said he was good at. However, as a passionate subject specialist, the English role was much more in keeping with his experience and interests. He was active in negotiating this role:

I said to them, look, we've got an obvious gap here for Key Stage co-ordinator – can I not do that? And they said yes...they were very accommodating.

Thus at the outset, the impression was given to teachers that their autonomy would be encouraged, giving confidence in the new organisation's commitment to distributed leadership. James was pleased to be able to return to a professional focus on his subject, both in terms of his own classroom teaching and in supporting colleagues in his co-ordinating role.

Finding a professional balance

When James started working in schools as a Teaching Assistant, after graduating in English six years ago, it quickly became clear from colleagues' comments that he habitually worked beyond his remit. After a year as an unqualified teacher, he joined the Graduate Registered Teacher programme, which felt like an apprenticeship, getting experience and training on the job. It was "quite a nerve racking job at first", but he gained confidence and took on extra responsibilities over the years. In the lead-in to the Academy launch, however, he developed a gastric illness linked to overwork; he was writing schemes of work, meeting set deadlines, learning new protocols and becoming familiar with the new job while keeping up with his commitments outside of work. Now recovered, he felt he was only doing things that needed doing, realising the need to be careful. Clearly willing to invest in his continued professional development, he had to balance his new job with the demands of a six month old baby, Masters study

and the 'Leadership Pathways' programme. Thus he was benefiting from the professionally enhancing and empowering work of Lorna, as CPD co-ordinator, who understood the connections between professional development and support and teachers' individual roles in school improvement (see Teacher Portrait: Lorna). His boss had warned him to prioritise properly instead of paying lip-service to work-life balance, advising, "When you're in a rush, do things but walk there", which James took both literally and figuratively.

...if I'd done this last term, maybe I wouldn't have got ill in the first place...
work needs to be just work.

For someone so professionally committed, perhaps there would always be a tension between drawing boundaries around work and meeting his own high expectations. In order to do his job well, James was planning lessons and writing schemes of work in the evenings and at weekends, but he said that this tended to be pressure he put on himself, in relation to his perception of his role. Both demands and expectations were higher in the new regime and decisions had to be made about where and how to invest energy and time. James wished there was more flexibility in the school day and week; ideally he would work longer hours on less days to give more concentrated periods of time at home, but there was some flexibility to adjust his working days to suit changing pressures and priorities. His current job contrasted with the previous inclusion role:

I end up working outside of school now, where before I would've had to stay late ringing parents and stuff.

Being valued and developing trust

James' experience of transition to the Academy was "fairly awful". The education consultancy firm who were employed to manage the change were "shocking" – they failed to pass on information, misinformed people and adopted an inappropriate tone and approach:

We sat in meetings after work, basically like a council meeting, with a board of people in front of us and some were there to reassure us, say 'that's not a valid concern, you don't need to worry about that', and other people who were there saying 'you'll do as you're told'. It was offensive, patronising.....and it left a lot of ill feeling in the whole area.

In his last school, James and his colleagues had enjoyed good relationships, a friendly working environment and a supportive professional culture where he said, "I felt

valued, trusted and entrusted as well” by the senior leadership team. As the schools merged, teachers felt themselves to be very vulnerable, moving to a job where to start with they felt they were treated unprofessionally, with no contract or job description and receiving contradictory and incorrect information. The mistrust was exacerbated by rumours about Academy management; teachers had heard that, “...your rights go out of the window”. This quickly eroded trust and professional confidence and undermined a lot of goodwill. James believed this was affecting the whole of the close-knit community, not just the school.

James recognised the need to build capacity within the subject team to contribute to the development of the new Academy in a crucial core subject. He worked with his new team during the summer term preceding the launch and visited the new site, then looked forward to relaxing and adjustment over the summer. However, four weeks into the summer, everyone was sent outdated timetables and contracts that had not been discussed, but must apparently be signed and sent back. It created a cascade of discussion but James, by this time, had established an informal link with one of the headteachers, to bypass ineffective communications: “I’d get to the stage where I’d just text him”. In this case the response was to “...just ignore it”. It was an unsettling, confusing and disconcerting time, as roles remained unspecified. The eventual contract was not a very specific one, including the TLR but no description of what this entailed apart from ‘meeting the requirements of the role’. Mistrusting its legality, he got it checked externally. Still, its vagueness did give him scope to develop the role as he thought fit.

James had some variable experiences in professional support from the Academy. When he was ill, he found senior leaders helpful and supportive. In his ‘return to work’ interview he was encouraged to apply for some days to study for his Masters degree. However, he later had a TLR interview in which it was suggested that “...people are looking for value for money” and he was given to understand that he was overpaid for what he was doing. In retrospect, the two encounters felt contradictory, yet two people on the panel were the same in both interviews. He was not sure whether he was supported or under surveillance. This would affect both ability and willingness to invest time and energy in change, since trust had been eroded and the sense of judgement inevitably led to risk-aversion, with teachers tending to play safe, conform and work within perceived limitations.

Nevertheless, James said his overall experience of the first few months was enjoyable and teachers were settling in. Many of their fears had turned out to be unfounded. The headteacher was giving the impression that he was pleased and James was privately given a personal letter of thanks for specific things he had done; it was clear that this made him feel valued and he was sure it was genuinely meant. On the whole, he felt that his hard work was rewarded and that teaching was still a worthwhile and enjoyable occupation, particularly in terms of good working relationships with colleagues. Yet praise, even if well meant, was shallow, boosting morale temporarily while masking the deep-seated divisions and leadership issues recounted by Lorna (see Teacher Portrait: Lorna) and eventually criticised by Ofsted, where structural and curriculum dysfunctions exposed fundamental weaknesses in leadership. Most significantly for James, there was a lack of belief amongst many senior leaders in the competence and capability of teachers to carry the school forward. This led to further tensions in managing learning and teaching where, for the Academy struggling to raise standards, consistency and conformity was all.

The fallacy of consistency

Teaching and Learning Responsibilities are loosely defined, but were organised to achieve consistency. James felt that consistency was overrated, if it meant that everyone had to be doing the same thing.

If it does, it becomes boring for colleagues and pupils I think. If anyone ends up teaching someone else's lesson - we've all been there - it's dull.

He felt that consistency should be about managing progress and equal access to the curriculum. He returned to this idea many times, in relation to both classroom teaching and curriculum management. He felt that quality of process, rather than standardisation, was key and that there were many routes to achieve overall aims. Imposing uniformity, even down to individual lesson plans, was counter-productive, resulting in stagnation for both teachers and students, suppressing teachers' creativity and students' motivation and preventing the teacher from responding to students' needs. In his Key Stage 3 role, James recognised teachers' different styles, approaches and aptitudes, for example he advised colleagues that The Year 7 'Horror' unit could be taught as they wished, as long as the aims were met and everyone 'levelled' at the same time.

Schemes of work and lesson plans were readily available, encouraging teachers to save time by falling back on standard lessons which might not reflect their own pedagogic approach, but which would still tick the accountability box. The Academy was thereby undermining creativity, flexibility and autonomy of teachers not only in playing to their strengths and interests, but also in tailoring their lessons to their classes and differentiating for individual students. This presented James with a continual dilemma: “Do I spend 3 hours planning [the lesson] or do I use the [scheme of work] set?” He was still doing his own planning, but wondering if this was sustainable.

Changing backwards

James wanted to see every student progressing by a level every 6 months and agreed they should have awareness of their own progress, next targets and how to reach them through formative comments and dialogue with their teachers. He knew that this ‘Assessment for Learning’ approach was based on research. In his previous school, teachers had worked collaboratively to develop an effective system where students’ work was marked once or twice a term with formal National Curriculum levels and target setting, along with feedback on how to improve.

We said this is their notebook, this is for them, however this is their outcomes folder, this is for us, that will have twelve pieces of work by the end of the year – it shows progression, it shows targets set, it shows targets being met, it shows compliments for the pupil, it shows a level, it shows awareness of pupil progress....

One moderation session each month after school replaced continuous solo marking. Students generated “astounding” pieces of moderated work, while teachers benefited from more intense but less frequent marking and also from the collaborative process. James believed that both students and teachers felt this was more meaningful and aided progression.

On moving to the Academy, regular departmental reviews involved checking that ‘every single piece of work’ was marked, which annihilated previous practices. Heavy handed accountability left little room for manoeuvre; James and his colleagues were forced to take what they believed to be a retrograde step in order to satisfy these requirements. This involved them in more marking, but it was the pointlessness rather than the extra workload that frustrated him most:

For me, you don't write 'Nice work today', it's pointless - you know, you write 'You need to focus on your vocabulary' and when you do that it couples to a level. It's more time consuming, so you do it once or twice per term.

Interpreting the Academy's new requirement at face value meant that work in progress would be ticked each lesson, even student notebooks in which everyone had written virtually the same notes, or work in draft. There was no time for teachers to add proper formative comments, because of the sheer volume of marking each day. James remembered "being at this stage 3 years ago", but he did not have the authority or confidence to contradict the head of department, despite his conviction that the Academy's leaders were approaching change in a counter-productive way.

To be honest, it was probably a chance I could have taken if I'd been a bit more confident, but I didn't.

However, James would not abandon what he believed to be more effective in supporting students' learning and was also concerned about the implications for workload. He therefore continued to implement his formative assessment methods with his own classes. He had everything in place and was prepared to argue his case to the head of department, able to show that the 'trail of evidence' of unmarked notes and draft work met the requirements of accountability:

I've got 30 kids who know exactly what National Curriculum sub-level they're on for the three strands, plus they know their targets, they'll be Ofsted-ready every single day in terms of their marking.

Gradually James brought his own approaches into his support for newer teachers, not through training, but in a responsive, individual and flexible way:

It's all very informal - they have been great with that and they come to me if they need help and I go to them if I've got a concern - it works well.

He found that while colleagues were anxious to meet requirements, they were also keen to take on these new principles; it helped to reinforce their understanding of the purpose of assessment, as well as saving them time. This was not considered by James to be a subversive ploy, as he knew that this approach made their assessments more robust than if they were pointlessly ticking every page every day. Nevertheless, the approach was counter-cultural to the academy's demands and therefore required greater individual agency based on a strong personal conviction.

Learning and inspiration

In answer to whether ‘Ofsted-readiness’ could override quality of learning, James believed the department had a good balance, despite the emphasis on ticking accountability boxes. Beyond GCSE targets, his emphasis was clearly on understanding, progression and enjoyment in English, stressing, “I’m very keen on the ‘enjoy’ bit”. His enthusiasm for literature, in particular, was palpable and led to creative lessons: his current idea for Year 8 was based on the television series ‘Dragon’s Den’ where inventors and enthusiasts pitch ideas to entrepreneurs, competing for investment. He described the department as very open, with flexible approaches and support, a range of material available and plenty of choice. James felt that within the time constraints, he had freedom to innovate, rewarded by lessons that were personally motivating and enjoyable for his classes. However he made no reference to this energy and enthusiasm being recognised and harnessed for school improvement more widely, implying that his classroom was a sanctuary where he could operate effectively within and even despite the pervading change culture.

Ideally, James said he would remove the ‘box-ticking’ element of learning and teaching altogether. Giving students greater choice in their learning would capture imagination and “improve the learning experience”. It might even “get rid of the disaffected” as he knew that while the more academically able students could be supported and ‘pushed’ through any topic, the curriculum and schemes of work demoralised the less motivated. Removing time limits and tick boxes would allow teachers to meet students’ needs and preferences, for example if the class enjoyed an abridged version of Gothic Literature, they could extend the time to read the original version. This greater freedom would improve the learning experience, which for James was more important than the grades achieved, although these were of course linked. However he recognised that the school, with a precarious Ofsted position, could not attend to these longer term gains and must focus on increasing results in the short term.

Curriculum relevance was another concern. James would be horrified to abandon the classics or Shakespeare, but some of the texts he was being required to teach were “awful and depressing”, or simply uninspiring and irrelevant, both for him and for his classes. He considered Michael Morpugo’s ‘The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas’ too heavy, while the necessary teaching about its narrative viewpoint was inappropriate for Year 9. He and the class approached it grudgingly.

You're standing in front of thirty 13 year-olds trying to enthuse them about a piece of literature that you don't even like.

He felt the limited canon was lazy and complacent, requiring the same texts year on year. James would have liked to choose texts that he knew his students would enjoy, that they had not read before: "Why can't they read Jacqueline Wilson?" Irvine Welsh might use abhorrent language, but his work represented the modern world and generated contemporary discussion. Some set texts, such as 'Holes', were more enjoyable: James had seen boys eager to turn the page, wanting to read a whole chapter in front of the class – because "it's funny". He would also prefer to do more creative writing. While James had carved out considerable flexibility in pedagogy, the restricted curriculum content constrained his creativity and desire to improve the learning experience. It was difficult to remain inspired and harder to inspire his classes; teacher and student motivation, for him, were strongly linked. As with assessment, constraints restricted the potential for learning, improvement and inspiration.

A 21st century classroom?

The Academy was built on the promise of an exciting, contemporary learning environment. James commented wryly, "...all I'm tripping over is boxes of old books". Although he knew that the resources would probably follow with the much anticipated new building, the current contrast with his previous school was stark.

I'm used to having a document viewer, four computers in class, access to a bank of laptops if I need them. I've got a data projector and screen but the interactive whiteboard doesn't work...an amp that someone trod on...that still works but looks awful. Maybe I was spoilt before, but some of the promises the children were given about what it would be like when we walked in the door was ... we'd be teched-up to the eyeballs.

He had already seen how technology could motivate learners, giving more choice and opportunities for innovation and saving time in a crowded curriculum. James invented an activity as he spoke.

Determinism and fatalism - give each word to half the class - 5 minutes to look up definitions on Google - post them to the Smartboard via Bluetooth - then discuss.

In his classroom, admittedly towards the start of the year, there were cardboard boxes piled around the walls, the door handle didn't function properly, the door hung

strangely. The lack of technology in particular was directly affecting children's learning in relation to the schemes of work.

We've had power outages in ICT all week and there's a limited number of ICT suites and there's no laptops and there's no library...so how do they do their research? It comes down to setting it for homework.

He and his students would have to be patient.

Inclusion, support and advocacy

James was moved to quietly spoken indignation when he talked about the media's view of young people, teachers and schools. He felt that the way in which children and young people were portrayed was "unfair and untrue". He made a point of telling them this:

I must've said on no less than six or seven occasions this year how proud I am, how lucky I am – I'm proud of this piece of work - this is amazing - let's read a few bits out.

I say I'm so glad I don't have to believe what I read in the papers about young people.

Although he knew there were some schools with "security scanners like an airport", he wouldn't want to work in such a place. He was clearly an advocate for young people and completely committed to their personal development and welfare as well as their academic learning. He was cautious about the school's academic trajectory so early on, "I know mathematically, numerically we're going up...but it's too early to judge", but holistic outcomes were an important part of the picture:

Improvement in terms of self-confidence and stuff like that is much more satisfying to see...increasing participation in class and general demeanour.

For James, school should be a good experience all round, combining academic achievement, self-confidence and enjoyment; school improvement should be built around all of these, according more with the Every Child Matters outcomes than narrow results-based judgements.

Based on his experience on the inclusion role, James was concerned for students who became entrenched in negative behaviour so that schooling became a battle. He saw them encultured into cycles of conflict and subject to constant sanctions – he believed

that these disaffected students needed to be moved into a more appropriate environment, before their behaviour became habitual. They needed exclusion not as punishment, but for their benefit. Generally, however, James felt that students' relationships with teachers were good; they knew lots of 'good' teachers and who to go to if they had a problem, although not all would choose to seek help.

James felt it was absolutely vital to address important issues immediately and fulfil promises and warnings, while senior staff must reinforce, take action and follow up, working hard also to gain parental support. He was concerned that not enough attention was being given to connecting up this important work, which exacerbated classroom disaffection and disrupted learning and teaching. He seemed already to have identified some gaps in the school's leadership structure and focus in this respect. In his previous inclusion role, where he was interacting with parents and families daily, his promise to deal with problems immediately was appreciated by students and parents. He would never let problems go unresolved where student welfare was at risk. He recalled, with some embarrassment as well as pride, a student standing up in assembly in response to being asked what they would 'remember and always carry with them', saying that he would always remember that James had helped him when he was getting bullied. Interventions at a personal individual level were therefore recognised as part of the change process, making a profound difference to some children's lives, with teacher convictions endorsed by students' and families' appreciation.

Connecting individual, school and local priorities

James identified parallel priorities for the Academy of raising grades, addressing behaviour issues and reducing exclusion. However the underlying priorities, understood by everyone, were to work with the community and get them on board, working across the boundaries of the school. This was seen as the key to tackling some of the social and emotional issues that underpinned learning and to raising young people's aspirations. All of these aspects, for James, were bound up in the notion of 'improvement' and all contributed to his purpose as a teacher and his sense of satisfaction when achieved.

James felt that people were generally optimistic, despite some of the initial issues at the Academy's launch, and that the merging of local schools had brought benefits: it was pleasing to see a calm atmosphere around the place. Every student, even the

disaffected, should be given new chances and space to develop, which depended on respectful relationships and patient support as well as enjoyment and engagement in lessons. With most students, he believed this was possible with a positive approach and he took responsibility for this in his own classroom:

One Year Seven student can't seem to toe the line, but I say hello every single day, give him that chance, because in the end, he's a kid – those who develop that attitude should be given a chance.

James felt at this early stage that initial concerns about the Academy had largely been unfounded; many seemed to have been built on supposition and rumour. He felt the school was in a good position to move forwards. Personally, he said he felt positive about the future. However his account revealed some discontinuities of structure and management of change, along with some misgivings about the focus of senior leadership activity and the accountability measures introduced. This had led to erosion of trust and confidence in the Academy's regime that had imposed limitations on creativity, innovation and risk taking in relation to teaching, learning and assessment. James' potential role in school change could be said to have been largely unfulfilled and unrecognised, except amongst his own classes, individual students and subject colleagues.

A year later, James had left the Academy. He was not seeking another teaching post.

Teacher Portrait

Pam: New Futures Academy

Pam was Team Leader for Food at the new Academy. She was one of the most experienced and longest serving members of staff, having worked on this school site since September 1976. The only daughter of a businessman and a college lecturer, she considered herself lucky that her own background and education had given her every advantage.

I'd always wanted to be a teacher...I'd been very lucky and had a very good education and I had everything I wanted really. I just wanted to do something more... I would never have been going for an easy option.

She had always worked long hours and expected to work hard. Pam believed fervently in the value of education in its widest sense, that everyone should be a lifelong learner and that learning was a passport to a better life.

'A difference needs to be made'

Pam had always taught, apart from a brief initial spell learning Cordon Bleu cookery in France and cooking privately until she was 21. She wanted to pass on this knowledge and "make a contribution". After a teaching practice in a grammar school for her Certificate of Education, she moved to a secondary modern school in a deprived inner city catchment which, as her current headteacher had said to her, must have been "a tough call". The challenging day job was supplemented by teaching adults two nights a week and she also undertook further art training at Cambridge Institute of Education, not for career reasons, but because it was available and interested her. These early experiences were formative, as she developed a strong interest in "pastoral care and kids that didn't thrive". She initially wanted to move to a girls' borstal in London. The fact that the previous Home Economics teacher had been stabbed didn't deter her - "they offered me the job and I was dead keen to go" - but the living expenses were too high. 33 years ago, she applied for a job in the secondary school on this site, intending to stay for a couple of years. She pondered her reasons for staying:

People say you stay because you make a difference. I came here because a difference needed to be made. Sometimes I think I can make a contribution to that.

She was at pains to point out, though, that she wouldn't want to claim to be 'saving the world': "that's just silly".

Adapting to changing roles

Pam adapted to a range of professional roles and activities, involving both pastoral and subject emphasis within different school structures, as staffing changes required shifts of responsibility. She entered the school as a division tutor, responsible for 5 tutor groups, then became deputy head of faculty and temporarily head of faculty, overseeing craft, design and technology, food and nutrition, child care and art. Her own professional life modelled extraordinary resilience. A visiting colleague opened her eyes to the challenges that she faced every day:

...she came and taught here for 6 weeks... and she's taught in secure units... and she said it's the hardest job she's ever done – she said to my husband, 'You don't know what Pam's been doing for the last 30 odd years'

Still, during our conversation, she never referred to anything as a problem or admitted to fear or anxiety. She habitually described the situations and challenges she encountered as 'interesting' and tackled them with apparently boundless enthusiasm.

Innovation, creativity and enjoyment

Despite her long experience on this local school site, Pam had not stood still in her career and professional activity. She believed in seizing every chance to participate in projects, initiatives and collaborative links to push practice forwards and inject energy into the curriculum and pedagogy. She therefore clearly articulated a role and purpose for herself not only in contributing to school change but also in seeking out opportunities to do so. She remembered the most innovative times with affection: "We knew we were pioneering, we were going to give it a go, give it a try". In projects "too many to mention", she had taken local research and development in her stride, enjoying fruitful collaborations with colleagues from other schools, the Local Authority, the local community and business. School improvement, for Pam, was

experienced as an organic and communal process, involving creating networks and building relationships over time to achieve a wide range of outcomes.

She spoke with greatest enthusiasm and affection of her 15 years as head of year, a role she loved and had made her own, having agreed to start on a trial basis, making sure she was very much in command of her own professional role and territory.

I said I would do it on the condition that if I didn't like it, I didn't have to do it anymore. And I loved it. And I did it for 15 years.

Colleagues noticed that there were more student enrolments in the years she took through the school, and, although the link was never formally investigated, there did seem to be public confidence in her work that mirrored her own self-confidence. At that time, she was responsible for about 470 students, supported by 20 staff and 3 deputies. She thrived on crossing boundaries: activities extended beyond normal school hours and beyond the school site, were cross-curricular and involved different age groups and the wider community.

She was also teaching different age groups such as primary students in the Children's University. She piloted a 'Maths in Home Economics' project with a local headteacher, with whom she is still in touch. The activity was professionally invigorating, using people's skills and creativity to meet fresh challenges and develop productive collaborative relationships. Most importantly, learning and spending time with children and young people were at the centre of everything.

Those sort of halcyon days of education, we were taking them on summer camps and we were taking them on trips and ...it was a very innovative time ...we'd got good sports – very able children.

A holistic and global view of learning and improvement

Pam viewed learning holistically and understood the importance of relevance for these students, using her subjects to link learning and wellbeing, bringing the community into the school, "from tea dances, to crèches, to pregnant mums". She spent five years working with the Primary Care Trust and Sure Start on teenage pregnancy, had been a co-leader of the Personal, Social and Health Education programme in the school and worked with Jamie Oliver's '15 Foundation', giving opportunities for young people in the catering industry. The school had also been involved in Creative Partnerships

projects. In all these activities, which she felt were “ticking along nicely” at the launch of the new Academy, the outcomes included motivation, enjoyment and wellbeing as well as achievement. Contributions to family and community development and wellbeing were not by-products, but integral.

Pam’s vision and moral purpose reached still further. She spent part of her holiday teaching abroad for four years, including some work with the victims of the 2004 tsunami in a tiny village in Sri Lanka, teaching ‘A’ level English, which was organised by friends. The previous year she was in Nepal setting up a nursery ‘way up in the jungle’. She saw these encounters as contributing to her professional learning, both in terms of educational practice and in her subject, for example she was interested in the food programmes in Sri Lanka. These experiences developed a deeper cultural understanding and a broader world view that she wanted to share with her students.

Now teaching the grandchildren of her first students, Pam felt that she had noticed deterioration in knowledge of the world and everything in it, which she attributed to insularity and narrowness in the community. She was appalled at students’ tendency to talk ‘soap-speak’:

...they seem to know absolutely nothing about the world or anything in it; they talk about absolutely nothing.

She felt that changes in society had affected the nature of teachers’ professional role. With greater litigation, parents’ attitudes were often fuelled by standing up for their children’s rights and there was less innate respect for teachers. At the same time, parents had been deskilled and lacked confidence in parenting. She noted the influence of technology with dismay.

For me, the technology, the computers, the Nintendos, the Playstations, the Wiis and all of this, they just live in a society that to them is so instant that to learn and to research and to debate, to talk and to think about things, putting their point of view, they find incredibly hard.

As a result, she felt teachers were expected to be entertainers as well as educators, with “all singing, all dancing”, creative, innovative ‘3 part lessons’. She felt that sometimes it was necessary to get down to learning things ‘straight’: children had to do examinations, they had to be able to reason, write and punctuate. She believed in confronting these issues not only directly, through subject teaching, but by opening people’s horizons, sharing her enthusiasm and fostering relevant, critical discussion amongst students and in families, for example about diet and parenting.

Finding a way to be human: learning, relationships and trust

In an overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic account of her role, Pam recognised the limitations and implications of the social context. However she reserved most negativity for the system within which she was required to work. For her, the “challenge of change” was the main characteristic of teaching as it is now, but she clearly separated national priorities for reform from the teacher-led innovation described earlier. Speaking about teachers in general rather than personally, Pam said that difficulties in managing behaviour were exacerbated by long hours and stress, as pressure increased in the name of efficiency and accountability. Although examination results were important, she did not think being an “exam factory” was what education was about.

We’re exam mad. It’s all structures and systems and processes and policies and follow this, follow that.

All that fun we used to have with the kids has kind of gone, with the league tables, with the performance, Ofsted – all of those change the whole ethos of the way school is.

It’s all organisation, planning, paperwork - before you ever get to spend time talking to the kids. You’re worn out before you ever get into the classroom, then, you know, you’ve got to be Walt Disney....pyrotechnics...the consummate performer putting these fantastic lessons in place all the time. If you were a worrier, you might as well go and do something else.

The de-humanising effect of the academic focus was compounded by a surveillance culture which had eroded trust, even in the pastoral aspects of her work. She recognised this in terms of external political influence on the school’s processes and necessary interpretations of teacher professionalism. Although agreeing the need for child protection, she disagreed vehemently with rules that prohibit touch, resenting that this suggested some kind of perversion. There were still girls who would fling themselves into her arms when they were upset.

I’m a mother, I’m a grandmother....You can’t pick a kid up in the playground because they’re sobbing their hearts out – that’s absolutely mad! What am I to do – say ‘I’m not allowed to touch you’? It’s just absolutely ridiculous.

Pam said she would like to see longer lessons, less formality and more flexibility. She would abolish uniform, and could not see why students could not call her ‘Pam’, as they did after leaving school. The ‘difference’ she sought to make was about everyday moments, conversations, relationships and attitudes, as much as academic improvement, guiding children and young people “towards a better life”.

Professional qualifications, high standards and leadership

Pam's views on professionalism were unequivocal: the very best people should be in classrooms and she believed that "there needs to be some kind of quality control". She had high expectations of herself and of others and wanted to ensure that things were done 'properly', with "nothing slipshod". Pam felt that teachers themselves were partly responsible for the erosion of quality and the diversification of teaching roles and qualifications. She believed that teachers should speak and dress appropriately, as well as have the necessary qualifications in knowledge and skills. Professional qualifications should be fully valued, so education needed proper investment. Working with a team in which she was the only fully qualified teacher, she was quick to praise colleagues who "stepped up to the mark", worked well with the students and made rapid progress following induction. Pam was opposed to what she called "education on the cheap" in the form of an influx of unqualified teachers, saying that some people should never have entered the profession. However, she acknowledged a wide range of roles supporting education; she had built a strong team that included technicians and support staff and spoke about them with genuine personal pride in their achievements. She was very clear about her own leadership style.

I don't like working on my own, never have done, and although I'm the boss, I don't think of it as a pyramid with me [at the top]. I feel everybody has a say...they can challenge me and if they can come up with a better idea, I'm happy. Let's have our cards on the table and if you don't like it then we'll change, but don't go away unhappy.

When I'm not here, it runs fantastically well, so I know I'm doing something right...I have a fantastic team around me, and that's really important.

Everyone knows I'm the boss, but I'll back them one hundred percent.

Pam's approaches in managing her team and other leadership tasks and roles were consistent with her approach to students, based on relationships, respect and trust. Working with these colleagues was not simply a means to achieve the desired outcomes, but also a source of immense satisfaction, part of the reason she continued with the job. She expected everyone to contribute and deliberately enabled this; she described this as "rolling boulders off the runway" to enable colleagues to 'fly'. However, she was well aware that, while she did not want to stand on a pedestal of authority, as the only fully qualified person on the team she was the guardian of high standards and expectations, particularly in relation to quality of teaching. In this sense, she was responsible for a locally empowering professional culture and shared approach

to school change within her department, which may have countered some senior leaders' derogatory attitudes to teachers and limited conceptions of their roles as described by Lorna (see Teacher Portrait: Lorna).

Supporting the changing organisational context

Speaking in the early days of the Academy, Pam felt she could rely on the executive headteacher for support. She felt him to be fair, human and supportive and willing to “roll up his shirtsleeves” to work alongside them, which encouraged a positive response amongst colleagues and students. She viewed the new leadership structure, with five heads of school (under the two executive heads), as similar to the old year head system. She had also been quite impressed so far with the governance. The chair of governors, linked to the sponsoring authority, had sent a personal letter to each member of staff with thanks and support, which made them feel valued. The headteacher had also sent personal letters to individual teachers thanking them for excellent work and there was attention to social support for new staff. She was under no illusions, however, about this honeymoon period. With a large influx of new staff this year, building new social networks and finding accommodation, it would be hard work to retain them at New Futures.

Pam's interpretation of her formal role was to support the headteacher and senior leaders in their difficult job. She said she did not question the school-level changes, but committed her whole support to make them work. In her departmental responsibility, she acknowledged herself as something of a “control freak”. The practical matters of the Academy launch included managing students' induction, starting courses, analysing data and keeping up with paperwork and coursework. She was proud to say that the whole department rose to the challenge, working extra hard so as to be ready for the launch. The loss of contact with Pam meant that it was not possible to investigate whether this positive attitude was sustained, but it was perhaps significant that a year later Pam was the only one of the three New Futures participants who was still in post, suggesting she had found a way to proceed whilst not compromising her professional values to an impossible degree. The way in which she tackled the fundamental change to Academy status gave insights into this resilience and adaptability.

Agendas for individual development and social change

While supporting whole school change, Pam always looked for levers to achieve her own agenda. In her current role as Team Leader for Food across the Academy, she strongly supported the Academy's vision of students cooking and eating together in the new Family Units, acknowledging the vital role of food in people's social and emotional welfare and development.

I was very excited by that - teaching all in mixed age groups and in that social context and obviously being aware that we're living in an area that's deprived, I mean, [some] people that live here don't understand totally what that means. Food is pivotal to their wellbeing and longevity – people don't live as long here as they do in other parts of the county.

Her team had planned an initial healthy menu to trial and develop the scheme and were delighted that there were increasing opportunities to talk with students about food and related issues such as Fair Trade and organic produce. There was real opportunity here to help to change attitudes so that people could make better choices about cooking, budgeting and shopping. There was also a direct link with wider learning:

If you feed them, they learn better. They're learning life skills...I was very supportive of what [the Academy] were trying to do.

Pam's snowballing ideas gave a glimpse of the way fresh opportunities for professional development and student learning were powered by formidable energy and enthusiasm. She was already thinking about allotments, a 'green gym' and a celebrity gardener. She recognised that her career had come 'full circle', focusing again on her subject and its potential to improve life chances. There was still no shortage of curriculum innovation: the department was introducing a Real Care Baby scheme (with 'dummy babies') to Family Unit Time, with potential to address government targets for reducing teenage pregnancy. She was perfectly comfortable with managing overlapping agendas and discourses and mediating the commands on her time. She seemed to have found that the vision for the Academy fitted well with her personal vision and that there were still plenty of opportunities for new challenges and innovation. By working strategically, Pam was able to construct the context for her own agency, despite powerful internal forces that might, for some, work against this.

Relationships and expectations

One of the levers for this agency was a resolute focus on students' learning and wellbeing. Pam knew that effective relationships with students were essential and that without 'quiet' respect and trust, the task of teaching in this school was enormously difficult, particularly with regard to managing behaviour and working long hours. The students would scorn weakness and "rip weak teachers to shreds". Pam did not interpret this as toughness on the part of the students, attributing it to a lack of resilience, while she felt that her job was about "trying to lead them in the right direction". Students appreciated teachers who gave them time, did not challenge them in a threatening way, but could "effect change in ways they enjoy". Students and parents appreciated and remembered when problems and issues were dealt with promptly, effectively and appropriately. This was enormously important in building confidence in teachers and in the school.

Setting the highest expectations and hitting upon the right practical support could inspire students in unexpected ways. For example, each sixth former was given £60 to buy business attire.

They all walk round looking like Goths and Emos, you know, just what's currently fashionable or whatever, and they're now all in there in their suits and ties - pinstriped suits - and they love it, particularly those boys - the boys who play good sport.

Pam believed 'human' approaches were needed, which meant 'giving of herself', including apologising and admitting mistakes where appropriate. She would reason with students face to face, as people, rather than calling on authority, including where behaviour had been challenging, insisting that "we are both human beings". In return, she had never had any personal difficulties, even though she knew that students could find her house from the telephone book if they wished. She had won their quiet respect. All of this work was an essential foundation for improving learning.

Pam felt that teachers must develop confidence to ask students about their experiences and opinions. Previously, staff felt let down by some students who gave a disappointing account to Ofsted, saying the school was a 'dump' and expressing dissatisfaction. She said that students should be asked about happiness, safety, wellbeing, belonging, enjoyment and whether they understood the rationale for their learning. The Academy needed to check that they felt cared for, respected, treated

fairly and were able to work well together, and it must act on their opinions and judgments.

Answering negativity with advocacy and inspiration

Pam had seen the divisive influences of policy over a long period. The school used to be truly comprehensive, taking all local students of all abilities. Once policy changed to allow access to selective schools further away, families took advantage of the system, able children moved away and the school was left with the ‘tail’ of lower ability students. As school by school comparisons of performance became increasingly powerful, its profile and reputation plummeted. Pam’s view of the internal regime to raise standards was influenced by this wider understanding, which kept her grounded as she understood the reasons for the school’s longer term predicament.

Pam was under no delusions about the difficulties of the task for the new Academy, set in a deprived area where families lacked basic knowledge and skills. Again, she felt this had got worse as she had taught successive generations from the community. She countered the lack of hope and feelings of failure with which many students entered the school, derived from the impoverished background and selective school system, with impassioned advocacy.

Young people are fantastic. I think they are. They do have a conscience. They are interested in people less fortunate than themselves; you can see that from the charity things they do. They sponsored my work in Nepal - they were dead keen, dead interested.

Her approach to reform was to explore ways to work within the changing context to make a difference in the ways she believed in, through relationships, inspiration, modelling and involvement, linked to specific projects, initiatives and ideas.

The quest for ‘success’

Pam’s understanding of priorities for the coming year followed familiar themes. She knew it was important to get the school settled and students attending, behaving and wanting to be there, which included respect for one another and for teachers, good manners and teamwork. Parents would want to know their children were happy and safe, wanted to come to school, felt they belonged and were looked after. The Family

Units were essential to this strategy. Pam saw all this as the foundation for academic success. The school would need to stay fully staffed; retention was crucial to see the plans through, but it would be difficult for staff, subject to these additional pressures and with the prospect of working on a building site.

Pam knew that attention would rightly turn to a strong sense of purpose in the classroom, engaging and meaningful lessons and achieving excellent quality of teaching and learning in all curriculum areas. Areas of weakness must be addressed, with requirements made clear for merged schools coming from different systems; there was 'no place to hide' for teachers, but Pam agreed that high standards should be set for her profession and supported internal accountability.

There's a lot of incompetent teachers and they've never been weeded out and they should have been.

This might leave some colleagues feeling vulnerable and exposed, but Pam preferred clear expectations in her own role, and said she herself wanted to be told if she fell short. She cited examples of where central accountability for good teachers highlighted the quality of their work and gave them credit. In teams, pressure was balanced by support for anyone who was struggling, while those doing well would be properly commended and would have opportunities to assume even greater responsibility. While this was cultivated at departmental level, these aspects of credit and support were felt by Lorna to be lacking at senior leadership level in the early days of the Academy and it was only later that it began to be acknowledged that the capacity for improvement lay in the staff themselves (see Teacher Portrait: Lorna).

Locally, Pam felt that an important criterion for success was the attitude and conduct of students seen in uniform locally within the community. Status and publicity from events, visits from celebrities and community work would all help to portray a positive image. Results had already improved, but a culture shift would take time as younger students were inducted into new attitudes and ways of working. There had to be a shared drive for improvement from parents and students wanting the school to succeed and making it first choice, therefore positive relationships were crucial.

Individual futures and a better world

While Pam knew that it was often on short term and surface measures, such as performance and attendance, that the school's success would be judged, and was hoping and striving for better examination results, she also knew that improvement was going to take a long time, according with the school improvement discourse of 'no quick fixes'. For Pam, it was to do with believing in young people and equipping them, not only for their own benefit but for a wider role.

... they're fantastic and they're the gateway to the future and so it's no good knocking them. We've got to give them every skill in the book to get through the 21st Century they've got to save the planet – 'cause they have - and if they haven't got the educational skills to do it , well....

Ultimately, for Pam, the purpose of education included gaining GCSE results and reducing exclusions, but extended far beyond. It was concerned with building individuals' ability and motivation to contribute to society, starting with their own families, so that they would eventually make a difference themselves. This was a natural extension of her own approach to professionalism, which enabled her to take up the Academy's rhetoric of shared leadership and assume direct responsibility for contributing to students' learning and wellbeing. In so doing, she was able to cut through any limitations imposed by the organisation, to forge an extended professionalism that had outlasted changes in institutional regime and times of political hiatus, driven by her values and purposes for education within society.

Teacher Portrait

Lorna: New Futures Academy

Lorna had a sense of real anticipation and excitement in the early days of the Academy's existence and was relishing her new, hard-won role of assistant headteacher. Everyone had had to apply for jobs at the Academy, otherwise it was understood that they were making themselves redundant: "...people didn't know what they were going to do". Formerly based in one of the merged schools, she was relieved to have secured this role in the face of considerable competition from colleagues at a time of great uncertainty: "It was quite exciting really and quite a coup". She proactively changed her title from 'CPD Co-ordinator' to CPD Leader, since

...CPD Co-ordinator is a silly title really, it sort of suggests you haven't really thought about what people are doing.

Ironically, she later discovered that her view of her strategic role was not necessarily shared by the principal and senior leadership team. Meanwhile, Lorna had done a lot of work the previous summer in preparation for the Academy's launch and was looking forward to developing her role in this new and exciting setting.

I felt I had a very clear role and a lot of opportunity to make the job what I wanted it to be. I felt very lucky to have that opportunity.

Developing a new leadership role

Lorna's job description was clear, including responsibility for organising Continuing Professional Development (CPD) on both of the Academy sites for all staff, allocation of one day courses and programmes for teachers and support staff, professional mentoring for newly qualified teachers and introduction of a new government programme, the Masters in Teaching and Learning. She instigated and co-ordinated a school-based Masters in Educational Studies and an Aspiring Leaders programme. Day to day it was a non-teaching role, but she was pleased to work in the classroom in her mentoring role, supporting and demonstrating effective learning and teaching to mentees, connecting the CPD explicitly to improvement. Her role therefore enabled her to support others in contributing to school improvement, in accordance with her own vision for shared leadership and mutual responsibility for learning. Her career had been

varied; after training in adult and further education she had worked in a community college, organised adult education, lectured in a prison, gained Qualified Teacher Status as a Licensed Teacher and held leadership positions as head of English, head of year and assistant head. She had gained her Masters in her subject area of English and spent two years as part of the Local Authority advisory service as a Leading Literacy Teacher and then within their Improving Schools Task Force. She was extremely well qualified for senior leadership in a challenging academy, particularly as she was well acquainted with the local area and had excellent contacts within the community, along with the experience of leadership and advisory roles in school improvement. Her disposition was positive and colleagues told her that she ‘spread the sunshine’, which she saw as an important professional attribute, sharing enthusiasm, being cheerful and supportive and spreading a smile.

So much of the job was being positive really, because if people weren’t then it wasn’t going to work.

A strategic approach to improvement?

Lorna entered her Academy role expecting to be involved in planning within the leadership team for CPD to support school improvement. Her experience and knowledge suggested that school improvement needed a strategic approach and she recognised the need for this in bringing together several different schools under one organisation. She knew that this involved a balance of accountability and support and wanted to champion collaborative, capacity building approaches in which teachers and other staff would develop understanding of their strengths, build upon their knowledge and skills and support one another to improve practice and share leadership. She also knew the local community well and recognised the need for careful and patient long-term work with parents, local organisations and the media. However, although she was an assistant headteacher, she found that she was not closely involved in the strategic work of the organisation after all. Since the senior leadership team was already very top-heavy, involving the principal, the two executive headteachers and five heads of school, she relied on a meeting once a fortnight with the principal, which she found was generally unsatisfactory. She was distanced from discussions and forced to focus on her area of responsibility in isolation. It was “quite difficult sometimes” even to secure the meetings.

Lorna wanted to connect her CPD planning to whole school planning, as she knew this was necessary in order that teachers' roles were enhanced through connection with the process of improvement.

The first thing I said was 'where's the development plan for the Academy – but there wasn't anything – well, it was two sides of A4.

Lorna knew that although the Academy had already been launched, the development plan had not yet been shared with staff. When she tracked it down, she was concerned to find that it was so sketchy. Being proactive by nature, she went ahead and set the CPD strategy in place for the year, making the necessary connections herself so that the CPD supported other aspects of development; in fact, she saw this work as “bigger than the Academy”, enriching the profession. Eventually, senior leaders constructed a credible school development plan, although this was done by parcelling out sections to individuals who did not necessarily confer. Lorna was already seeing alarming weaknesses in leadership and administration and realised the seriousness of the situation where the stakes were so high.

Decision making for expedience

As the first year progressed, Lorna struggled to understand the rationale for some of the decisions that she was expected to implement. She saw serious flaws in the school's new structure and curriculum design, creating inherent tensions. The two executive head teachers tended to work in a more traditional mould, each leading a site. The commendations received by James and by Pam's colleague attest to this rather patriarchal approach. Initially, one of these sites followed a traditional curriculum and one an experimental curriculum; Lorna's experience told her that it was inequitable, therefore untenable, as students from the same school did not have equal curriculum opportunities and access.

I knew that Ofsted were going to come and that you couldn't do that, you couldn't experiment with children.

When Ofsted did arrive, Lorna's concerns were endorsed as the inspection identified the curriculum as an issue for urgent attention.

The five heads of school were characterised by Lorna as young, ambitious and bright, and tended to favour more progressive methods, being themselves products of the

National College for School Leadership and Masters level professional development, They were encouraged to develop their separate 'schools' distinctively and competitively, which inevitably resulted in jostling for position and recognition, exacerbated by the curriculum inequities. Lorna felt that "there were problems from day one with inequities of provision and accommodation" and in her own experience, this sometimes became petty.

They complained that I'd provided croissants for one site and I hadn't provided croissants for the other site – but only the first one was a breakfast meeting.

Lorna felt that teachers were at the mercy of leaders with conflicting views about learning and teaching, creating nothing short of a 'war' between the two sites. It was clear that the curriculum inequities were divisive and that a consistent approach was required. James's account of the central regulation of assessment was an example of the administration exerting control without a clear or convincing rationale (see Teacher Portrait: James). Lorna concludes that some of the decisions made were not even tactical but simply expedient, designed for financial survival, given the extremely high expenditure on senior leaders' salaries: "...they'd set up something way too expensive – obviously money was an issue". Lorna could not discern the values or strategy underpinning developments, a weakness again highlighted by Ofsted the following year.

By the spring of the Academy's first year, Lorna noticed a worrying increase in staff absence, which she attributed to poor treatment by school management. However she was unable to address this directly herself, because of her relatively low status within the senior leadership hierarchy, so she tried to attend to her specific job to the best of her ability. She was "trying to make out that things were OK" but felt lonely and "quite isolated".

At the end of the first year, Lorna planned the first development day of the September term.

And on that staff development day, as the SLT stood up to welcome everybody back, they kind of called me aside and told me that they had created an Academy Improvement Groupand that they wanted me to chair it and that they wanted to introduce that Academy Improvement Group to all the staff at the staff meeting.

I said, 'That's fine.....Ok.'

She might have planned the staff development day differently if she had known. Still, despite being wrong-footed on the development day, this approach was more promising, with fortnightly meetings giving the potential to involve Lorna closely in decision making, but she still experienced tensions because of the lack of strategy and communication, leaving her working in a vacuum. Without a clear values base, change was pulling in different directions at the expense of goodwill and trust.

Communications breakdown

Communications transgressions continued, suggesting confused decision making behind closed doors and carelessness with information. Lorna found out that staff induction had suddenly been added to her responsibilities.

I was asked....well, I wasn't asked really [whispers] (I saw it written on a bit of paper) ... that I had been given another role of induction...

Despite the lack of consultation, she welcomed this as it enabled her to review people's professional development priorities on entry and to provide continuity in CPD, but the Academy was clearly intensifying the workload. After a year with a non-teaching timetable, there was a shocking incident.

I was sitting in my office and there was a knock on my door ...and the person said, 'Your children are waiting for you', and I said 'What children?'... 'Your class'... 'I don't have a class'... 'Well they say they've got [you]'. ...and I said it must have been a mistake. So I phoned the head and he said, 'Yes, everybody's teaching now'. And I said 'Why didn't anybody tell me?' and he said, 'Well you were told, there was a timetable in your pigeonhole'. But I knew there hadn't been, because otherwise I would have asked about it.

Lorna concluded that with 80% of wages initially allocated to senior leadership, financial pressures had forced the Academy to focus more of this resource directly on learning and teaching. When she challenged the decision regarding her own role, she was given to understand that contractually she was obliged to work unlimited hours, otherwise she would lose her teacher's pension. On investigation, she was aggrieved to find that implementation of this ruling was selective, as some senior staff were still not teaching. She was backed by her Union in challenging the change in her own role, on the grounds of an already full timetable and a non-teaching job description. She made her case:

My job was quite hard enough as it was, I'd got enough to do and if they wanted to change it they had to consult with me.

As a result, she had a meeting with the long-standing experienced teacher who represented the sponsoring organisation, who reassured her that she did not, in fact, have to teach. The threat of losing her pension also proved to be incorrect. Lorna felt undermined professionally, not least because the intensification of her role suggested that her previous full time job description did not represent a full-time job at all. She also felt disenfranchised from leadership with this return to the classroom, despite her role as assistant head. Her trust in the organisation was shaken. She began to think the senior leaders simply wanted her to leave, although she was assured that this was not the case, "They were very – like – don't go, don't go".

Challenges to leadership integrity

Lorna had begun with a clearly defined role that she could develop as she wished, an important component of which, she was assured and had agreed, was valuing people. She had now entered a period where she 'walked a tightrope' through organisational decision-making that she saw was adversely affecting colleagues' lives. 30% of teachers were still unqualified, for example those on the Graduate Teacher Programme for whom she was responsible. As finances were pared down towards the end of the first year, the Academy was forced to make tactical decisions that Lorna feels should be kept 'off the record' but which she described as "a horrible experience" for herself and colleagues. Broadly, the senior leaders were "doing some random, not very nice things" and there was continual restructuring. Having welcomed new staff, including many newly qualified teachers, into the wonderful opportunities presented by the newly launched Academy, where teachers were seen as future leaders, Lorna was forced to break her own promises to her colleagues, people who were her friends but also for whom she was responsible. Her role became more reactionary than proactive or strategic, involving unpicking problems, listening to people and trying to help them to feel supported.

As her work intensified, Lorna felt she had no choice but to retreat further into her specific role and threw herself into successfully gaining the Academy a CPD Quality Mark. Despite the discontinuities in training and development caused by lack of clarity or coherence of purpose and poor communication, she had managed to put into place a range of impressive professional development initiatives for all career stages. The

Quality Mark gave an outlet for her positive energy and gained the school important recognition; it was a small step forward and it helped staff to feel externally valued, although this was perhaps in tension with their internal experience. Meanwhile her 'boss', the executive head of one of the sites, was "brilliantly supportive" - he said to her "If I had to keep two members of staff then I'd keep you" and "I'm really sorry this has happened to you", but said his hands were tied; he seemed to be continually compromised. Lorna was not willing to be compromised, but realised it was not something she could fight against: "I'd never had anything like this happen to me before".

She knew that the school needed to demonstrate improvement and was clear about the criteria that had to be met: better engagement in lessons; improved attainment; good quality and use of data; a coherent, planned curriculum with appropriate resources. She was seeing teachers blamed and de-professionalised through prescription and hoop jumping. They were ground down by lack of resources, including a 'hopeless' lack of the much promised IT provision. They were weary of change. She thinks that teachers may have picked up a few ideas and tweaked their practice a little through mandated top-down training approaches, but many of these were experienced practitioners who had always been effective and yet were not recognised as such by the senior leaders. She saw that teachers and other staff were generally respected by students and parents and felt that the capacity for improvement lay with them. She felt relationships with the community were good and the local media were supportive, despite some damaging stories in the wider media where there was more suspicion and scepticism. Most importantly, the teachers knew the students and provided continuity.

The students really liked their teachers because for them [the teachers] were a point of reference... so I think there were some very good relationships.

The Academy was working hard on its public image with the aim of getting a positive story in the paper at least once a week. However, Lorna was adamant that the senior leaders believed that teachers were at the root of any problems in relation to standards and were falling back on blaming the legacy of the previous secondary school on the site: "legacy teachers, legacy curriculum, legacy students". The Academy was therefore casting itself as powerless to challenge the very issues that it was created to challenge. Lorna maintained that these matters were clearly under the jurisdiction of the Academy. Meanwhile the sponsoring institution, in her view, remained distant, "...they didn't think about us at all...they should have done". Some of the deeper

problems were again exposed by Ofsted more than a year later, when irregularities in child protection documentation came to light, requiring urgent remedial action by the current administration, who publicly blamed the previous leaders when Lorna believed they themselves were responsible.

Building capacity for improvement: turning in the right direction

Lorna was sorry to see the senior leadership's emphasis on centralised training and a lack of professional respect starting to undermine her professional development programme, now nationally recognised by the Quality Mark. She had been concerned to build greater capacity, by empowering staff through collaboration, enquiry, critical thinking, peer support and shared leadership to contribute to urgently needed change. She rejected the deficit view that was being applied indiscriminately across all staff and preferred to look forward. She believed that the school had the necessary capacity in its teachers and students, but for many months she did not see the Academy recognising and building upon this. As a result, leverage was lost, with teachers working in a culture of blame, engaging in 'top-down' training to rectify their deficiencies and expending high amounts of energy with limited effect. Lorna's dilemma was that she felt complicit, as a senior member of staff, in the unravelling of opportunities that prevented the Academy from realising this professional potential and putting it into practice through clear and coherent strategies. Her own vision was optimistic and strategic, but she was unable to exercise her own leadership potential because of the powerful hierarchical structure above her. She felt unable to reconcile these competing messages in order to lead her CPD programme with integrity. She reflected that "professional identity can be quite fragile really, as I've come to realise". She was experiencing the same disempowerment as her colleagues and did not have the sanctuary of a team or department within which a counteractive subculture could be developed, as both James and Pam had described (see Teacher Portraits: James; Pam).

Eventually, however, Lorna sensed that the 'telling' approach began to ease off. The directive approach and blame culture did not seem to have worked. It was realised that teacher effectiveness could generally be relied upon, and staff began to be recognised for their strengths and valued for their commitment, which was endorsed by the 8% improvement in GCSE results, taking the Academy over the National Challenge threshold at the end of the first year. The departure of the principal at this point enabled the senior leadership team to develop more autonomy and take responsibility, as

recognised in the Ofsted report six months later. Although there were still weaknesses in communication and some randomness in decision making remained, which continued to erode the necessary trust between staff and senior leaders, Lorna felt that her vision for coherent professional development as the foundation for effective learning and teaching was now more achievable. She imagined that the quality of teaching would move from 'satisfactory' to 'good' to 'outstanding', leavened by CPD programmes such as the school-based Masters programme, the Masters in Teaching and Learning for newly qualified teachers and new heads of department and 'Leadership Pathways'. She already saw these engaging significant numbers of staff in learning and action research to contribute to organisational change. Her slogan for this programme was 'Inspire - Ignite'. Within a hierarchical organisation, she was trying to spread capacity for improvement and leadership laterally through all levels of the school.

Nevertheless, some of her experiences and compromises forced Lorna to seek a new job. She agrees that she had achieved a great deal and worked hard to ensure that this was sustainable when she left the Academy one term into her second year, having secured an academic post in a natural extension of her own professional learning trajectory. She may have made this move eventually whatever the circumstances, but it is clear that the main catalyst was her inability to reconcile her own values and moral purpose with what was required of her. Above all, her leadership was not trusted and allowed to flourish, but was reduced to implementing what she saw as dubious and contradictory school policy by imposing blanket requirements and training for teaching, learning and assessment. She still believed that the Academy had good, keen, interested teachers and should be able to provide much needed opportunities for staff, including excellent training routes into teaching. She believed in developing all teachers' professionalism, valuing them as people and as professionals as an essential foundation for effective school change. This is what she hoped for the Academy's future.

Looking back on her experience, she said that whatever the situation, she believed in "treating people well". She felt for colleagues who remained in the Academy, many of whom stayed in touch with her as she had become their friend and confidante. She captured their cynicism as she concluded, "They haven't replaced me, so they've saved a great deal of money, haven't they".

Chapter Six

Castlegate School landscape and portraits

School Landscape

Castlegate Community Special School

A low, modern building at the end of a cul-de-sac, amongst unremarkable housing just outside the city centre, houses Castlegate Community Special School, for pupils aged 4-19 who have profound, severe and complex learning difficulties. All students here have statements of special educational need, the majority are boys and nearly all come from a white British background, reflecting the neighbourhood and wider catchment area.

Clear signs indicated the safely fenced car park, directed me on my first visit and gave safety warnings. A few students, huddled in their coats, were being loaded efficiently onto a bus. The young man at reception was warm, efficient and courteous. The smart office window was surrounded by award plaques, hosting an array of registers for signing in and out. The foyer was clearly a busy thoroughfare, the surroundings light and airy, with pot plants properly tended and windows looking out over small courtyards. A group of young people of all ages and statures arrived from an outing, with good humour and some jostling. A teenager passed with a huge soft ball, needing two members of staff to help him negotiate the corridor. Other groups moved through with teachers and teaching assistants (TAs).

The previous weekend had been Remembrance Sunday. A collage of hand-made poppies, carefully coloured, was on a notice board propped up at the entrance. A little girl came into reception from a corridor with her mother and, pulling her over to the board, stroked a poppy. Her mother agreed, "That's lovely...", trying to encourage her daughter into school, reminding her of the good time she had last time and the things she did, until she consented to be led back into the classroom area by a TA. Mother left calmly, with the air of someone who had to do this every day.

Light, laughter, creativity and caring

Around the school, guided by Martin, the headteacher, I built an impression of light and laughter, creativity and caring. The walls and spaces carried shapes, sparkly mobiles, colourful posters and textured panels. Small, paved and decorated outdoor areas offered sanctuary for individuals and groups, interspersed with specialist equipment and physiotherapy rooms. Other facilities included soft play and sensory rooms and a hydrotherapy pool. There was a sail-like structure in the outdoor area, where children were playing games. Beyond the airy spaces and wide angled corridors near the foyer were the older buildings, wood panelled with narrower passageways and a traditional school hall. Martin said he would like to rebuild this part of the school to create a better environment: "It's all brown – too much brown – I don't like brown – so dark...".

I was welcomed into open-door classrooms, where it was obvious that children and staff were used to frequent visitors. Smiling students called out the headteacher's first name over and over, practising. Working through the Key Stages, one class was using the interactive whiteboard, driving a car across the screen, practising language and motor skills. A small group was sitting engaged at the front, while some were around the periphery in their specially adapted chairs, with their support staff. There was lots of eye contact and touch. Another class, working with the Creative Partnerships 'Change Schools' initiative, had artwork on every available surface, horizontal and vertical, with a preponderance of orange. The next class had invited visitors from other classes for someone's birthday. Someone had baked a chocolate tray cake covered in Smarties to share round. Everyone sang and clapped enthusiastically; Martin laughed and talked with the children; everyone smiled.

The sense of calm was evident each time I was with individual teachers during the day, borrowing Martin's office where the walls carried thank you cards from families and pictures by students. The office staff regularly brought tea, keeping me informed if anyone was delayed. Priorities were clear: the students came first. When Martin's pager sounded, he excused himself quietly, but immediately and firmly, disappeared for a few minutes and returned with reassurance that the issue had been dealt with. He was clearly completely in control, for which mutual trust and shared responsibility with his staff was essential, built on strong personal relationships. It became clear that his vision, personality and demeanour underpinned and shaped the school culture. There was no sense that this was a school on show for my benefit. It felt like a safe and

happy place, maintained through an enormous amount of commitment and hard work, somewhere to which anyone would be glad to return. This culture could not have been manufactured in the short term; it had clearly been developed and was sustained between staff, students and parents over time.

Engagement, achievement and inclusion

Ofsted had recently awarded the school Grade 2 ('good'), commending effective leadership and management to address issues noted at the last inspection. Inspectors stated that students made good academic progress, participating 'eagerly and with understanding' in lessons that were engaging and fun. There was good teaching and assessment, with learning planned and targeted in small steps to encourage frequent success. The school's auditing and evaluation was also commended and obstacles to equal opportunities were identified and dealt with. It was genuinely shocking to see the Grade 4 ('unsatisfactory') for attainment in the Ofsted report, with a qualifying comment that this was to be expected, begging questions of a national accountability system that judges all schools to the same criteria, whatever the children's needs. The attainment grading was beyond inappropriate; having visited the school it seemed ridiculous and patronising and discredited the system itself.

An account of the school's excellent and innovative trans-disciplinary practice, in the form of the 'Shared Goals' project, was published on the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust website. In this project, parents, carers and professionals were involved in meeting at least six times a year to plan, review and adapt holistic and supportive approaches to development and learning for individual students. The school was also striving for recognised improvement by working towards awards such as the Artsmark and Healthy Schools status, using these as a focus for development. It was a registered centre for 'MOVE' (Movement Opportunities Via Education), using specialist facilities and trained staff to help severely disabled children to develop physical skills such as standing, sitting and walking. Castlegate also had a smart training room which was used for the school's own professional development and could be hired to bring in some revenue.

Partnerships for learning and participation

The school's multi-agency, community and partnership ethos was evident in all conversations with teachers and the head. Formal links included direct involvement with the local Observation and Assessment (O & A) Unit, from which many children moved to Castlegate, and a 16-19 Unit on a nearby college campus. Partnership with other schools had been commended by Ofsted and involved 'inclusion' visits by students to mainstream schools. A wide range of agencies, services and individual professionals offered a variety of therapies and support. External connections to stimulate learning, social and emotional development seemed to be made at every opportunity, including much arts-based activity. There was a flurry of interest in the Paralympics, including a workshop at the local university's 'Creative Campus' and a workshop on the educational bus tour of 'LEAP' (Leading Arts Practice), on an Olympic theme.

The school's prospectus was a simple Word document in Comic Sans font and its website was accessible, serviceable, invitational, friendly and quite understated: "Our website is to enable you to find out more about the school that we are very proud of". It was not necessary to market the school, since it was oversubscribed, but documents and web pages were designed to present a positive image. They reassured parents, provided information and underlined principles, particularly emphasising inclusion – success, achievement and progression for all.

The school was promoted as an outward-facing and well connected 'Learning Community'. Espoused aims were to develop in students a sense of personal value, self-confidence and self-esteem in a secure yet challenging environment, so that students could go on to lead an 'active, independent and autonomous' life in society. The school prided itself on skilled teams working with multi-disciplinary professionals, supported by specialist facilities, small class ratios and excellent connections. The website included links to helpful information pages on disability rights and access to free and subsidised specialist equipment. It carried a chatty newsletter with updates, reminders and interesting or practical information such as term dates, staff comings and goings, projects and courses, fête reports and charity contributions. The school was clearly a focus for support and information for families of children with disabilities, its open doors creating a 'community within the community'. It powerfully and relentlessly promoted the ethos of students participating

in, belonging to and contributing to wider communities, including their own neighbourhood and society more generally.

Shaping the future together

While there was a positive and confident ethos and atmosphere, there did not seem to be any sense of complacency. Martin was actively leading change, believing it to be integral to the educational and organisational process. He considered that change had two components. First, there were strategies to ‘get things done’, which were supported by management and coaching. Beyond this, there was the vision: a sense of the school as a community with its own culture and memory of ‘how we did things’ and ‘how we do things now’. Martin believed that “everybody who has something serious to say about the school” was part of the creative process that shaped the future. He himself was a committed researcher and scholar, currently enrolled on a professionally focused doctoral programme that supported his own research on leading school change.

Martin also promoted the research of teachers on professional development programmes and accommodated requests from external researchers, including my own. He said that he did not believe he was creative or clever enough to lead constant change, so he needed to create a culture where “...people can say things and it will have an impact”. If many of the ideas came from staff, they were more likely to cope with change as a collective endeavour. When Martin instigated change, he still relied on colleagues, both to make it work and to tell him if anything was wrong. He reflected that the most awkward people were often the most helpful; he did not begrudge the difficulties in managing them, as they repaid him by identifying issues, giving opinions, both positive and negative, and asking questions. He actively sought their views and welcomed the critical discourse. He also counted on people to put actions against their words; having made a suggestion, they should be able to take the responsibility to lead it through.

It was difficult to recruit people who would work in this way. Primarily Martin looked for people who he thought would be good teachers and who said they wanted to work at Castlegate. The school had created something of a magnet and recruitment was often by human connections as much as by advertising, with people wanting to be part of this particular community and asking in advance about vacancies. Staff included

teachers from mainstream schools and artists who had worked in schools and saw “... a culture that is supportive of their creativity”.

However, all appointments were a risk and some people took longer than others to adapt. There was always a difficult transition as people’s professional identities were challenged and they had to rely on their commitment and personality, rather than skills and experience, to carry them through. Approaches and strategies that worked elsewhere were ineffective because students did not respond in the same way. Teachers realised they were totally deskilled when they first joined the school and Martin saw successful mainstream teachers relinquishing their previous professional identities. Within their new mindset, they could then transfer and adapt their strategies in new ways for new situations and then they would ‘fly’. Martin’s hope and intention was that those he appointed would grow into making a wider contribution to school development. He seemed to have genuine delight in this progression.

Building capacity through structural change

The major structural change this year introduced Phase Managers in addition to Key Stage managers to alleviate an overburdened leadership structure, where things were being left undone. Key Stage Managers in the secondary phase, who were also class teachers, had increased their role from managing three classes to managing six, with two different curriculum models, a wider spread of ability and a greater range of accredited examinations. A formal review by a management consultant recommended merging Key Stages 4 and 5, appointing a Phase Manager in order to ease transition at age 14-19 and to cope with the additional students. This led to a plan for every phase to have an appointed manager with the intention to address transition problems, which seemed to occur even when students remained in the same building.

A written proposal for restructuring to appoint Phase Managers was put to staff, who supported the idea of Phase Managers (although Martin knew they were not quite sure why they were needed) but still felt that the existing Key Stage Managers would be needed for problem solving in teams, staffing issues and logistic organisation. Although expensive, Martin was already pleased by what had been gained in return for extra payments to individuals in the new structure: more development could now be managed and people in these new roles were “...starting to really operate and enjoy it”, forming new sub-management teams and gaining professional development. Martin

had also taken the bold step of abolishing weekly whole school staff meetings to enable staff to organise meetings as needed, which had freed up people's time considerably.

A community school: inclusion and outreach

The improvement priorities were clear for the current year. Martin explained that to achieve coherence, the overall priorities in the school development plan were broken down into bits and pervaded everything, rather than being explicitly articulated as a whole. Teachers were working on the bits.

Amongst the priorities were things that, while not necessarily more important, 'needed to happen faster'. The main focus for this year was accommodating more students with a wider spread of needs, which had implications for curriculum provision, structure, accommodation and resources. This changing intake, with subtle differences in children's needs, affected learning relationships. The second, linked priority, managing challenging behaviour, was absolutely key and always a major concern. Martin felt that the school had not changed quickly enough to respond to changing intake, but he was adamant that the environment had to change with need, rather than expecting students to simply fit in and cope with the existing approaches and curriculum. Despite all the time and effort already expended, additional training and support mechanisms needed to be put in place, so that staff were confident in the most difficult situations.

Also very high in the head's strategic plan this year was a long term project to work with 'satellites', where classes of Castlegate students would leave the site to work in other local schools. Four secondary schools had signed up enthusiastically. The headline and public rationale for this was the need for more space for the expanding numbers. The other strand to this was that the head believed that it was not right to simply pull up the shutters because there was no room for these additional students. Instead, they must think creatively about how their needs could be met, with Castlegate evolving as part of the local community of schools. Working in other places, as opposed to just visiting, was a necessary process for the school in order to be inclusive and widen opportunities for students where the Castlegate site did not best accommodate their needs. The Castlegate approaches, values and philosophies were deliberately being carried out to support the student experience in other places, conveying a message far more powerful than outreach work by staff alone.

Creativity for change

This year saw continued involvement in the Creative Partnerships initiative where Creative Practitioners worked alongside teachers to support creative learning and organisational development. Instead of staff sitting in the training room and brainstorming how issues might be tackled and how they might do things differently, they were using the inbuilt enquiry and development process explicitly as part of the school's improvement process, to help staff and students think about 'how we do things' and 'how we go about change'.

The school was in the second year of a three year project and Martin had deliberately approached this in a non-directive way. Last year, the work had involved individual teachers bidding to lead projects and planning the work with Creative Practitioners, managing the budget themselves. It was "wonderful" as 8 teachers, representing half the classes in the school, shared what they had done at the staff meeting at the start of the year, some joined by the Creative Practitioners with whom they had been working. This year, the Creative Partnerships work was intended to strengthen the new phase structure, with one project per phase being planned this year, to start next year. At least two teachers would need to work on this across classes in each of the three phases. A further project built on the first year's successful Creative Partnerships work in developing the skills to use video with classes. In the third year the intention was to emphasise collaboration and involve the whole school.

Two Creative Partnership case studies from Castlegate School had been published on the national website. In the first project, called 'Flow', students were involved in investigations about how people communicate, learn and understand, using bubbles, print making and photography. The case study reports that staff found the project refreshing and interesting and were going to use the new techniques and underpinning creative principles in future learning and teaching. The second project reported on the website, entitled 'Hopes, dreams and fears' was still under development, expanding into a wider ability range to develop new curriculum and teaching strategies for different subject areas.

To a visitor, Castlegate School might feel comfortable and stable, but this was the basis from which a dynamic organisation challenged its students, staff and extended community, nurturing its creativity to support improvements in learning and inclusion.

The head's vision steered the process of improvement, while sharing this with staff, families and the wider community built the culture to make it happen.

Martin realised that there were many stresses, strains, worries and concerns for teachers, perhaps more intensive than in mainstream schools. He relied on his committed and experienced staff to implement change and worried about its effects on them, but his concern was overridden by his moral purpose and vision for the school. It would be easier to claim the school was full, to restrict intake, to exclude those with the most challenging behaviour. His final statement in our interview showed that he was unwilling to let the organisation stand still, seeing this as a regressive attitude.

I'd much rather have those students and know that we're doing the right thing, than that we retreat and become inward looking and make it perfect here.

Post Script

At the time of completing this account, two academic years after the period of study, Castlegate was graded only 'satisfactory' (Grade 3) by Ofsted. The report³ stated that student outcomes were good or outstanding, including evidence of good progress particularly in English and mathematics, appropriate challenge and regular, accurate assessment. Foundation and Sixth Form provision were outstanding. Quality of teaching, curriculum and guidance, care and support were good, as were leadership and management of teaching and learning, caring and wellbeing and deployment of resources. Partnerships with other schools were excellent and there was good engagement with parents and carers. The grading was apparently reduced to satisfactory because governors and senior leaders were not judged to be giving sufficient attention to monitoring and evaluation of strategies and policies keeping pace with development. The report stated that the governors needed to be holding the school to account, ensuring that there was focused school development planning with monitoring arrangements and deadlines established for the school's key policies and strategies. Without these in place, Ofsted could not find sufficient evidence that the school had the capacity for continued improvement.

³ The Ofsted report is not specifically referenced in order to maintain confidentiality

Teacher Portrait

Christine: Castlegate School

Christine came from a family of teachers and her degree was in Performing Arts. After a break to have her children, she completed her PGCE when her children were tiny and built up her experience by supply and part time teaching locally in a mainstream setting. She worked her way through the age groups from reception, and was eventually made SENCO. She moved to this school on the recommendation of a TA visiting with children from Castlegate, who said, “Oh, you’d really love Castlegate”, so she waited for an opportunity to apply. An Early Years specialist, Christine’s attention was divided between leading the Foundation Phase at Castlegate School, running the local Observation and Assessment (O & A) Unit on a different site, managing inclusion and arts co-ordination.

Christine took her multiple roles and responsibilities in her stride. She felt there was no divide between academic, social and emotional aspects: “I don’t think you can tie it down to one thing, it’s just holistic”. She automatically and subconsciously linked the work with individual children in school with the wider context: “Teaching our children and giving them what they need is a contribution to society”. In this, her personal beliefs accord with, and may be shaped by, those espoused by the headteacher (see School Landscape: Castlegate Community Special School). In her phase of education there was continual monitoring of progress, rather than academic emphasis on examinations and tests, which perhaps made these connections easier to discern and enact. Along with her commitment to the classroom, this year she was focusing on developing the strategic and leadership elements of her work, both within her team and in relation to whole school change, again with the full and active support of the headteacher and senior leadership team.

Learning and leading in a new setting

Christine found the new school challenging at first, realising how much she had to learn, despite the knowledge and skills she had already picked up from the TAs. She was undergoing the ‘deskilling’ the headteacher always recognised in new staff. The turning point was three weeks in.

The very first year I was here and going into a class of quite varying needs and, you know, floundering a little bit, I suppose, with ‘oh gosh, so much to learn’ - I think it was about three weeks in - and this one little boy, he’d never spoken and I sang the ‘hello’ song to him and he looked at me and went ‘hello’ - and... I cried. I cried, the team cried. And going home and thinking how lucky I am that my children are so healthy...having that back from the children...it’s what I get back from the children that I love, to be honest.

She did not believe that she had changed her teaching significantly, as she had always included variety and activity.

That’s the way I used to teach. So I’d say to the children, this is a really boring subject and I know you’re all going [yawns] so we’ll hot seat it or we’ll do a bit of drama about it or a bit of dance. That was my background anyway, so it didn’t really bother me that I came here and we were singing everything.

Still, she had to endure some cynicism; some TAs felt they knew better and that she was not experienced in special education, therefore there was a bit of resistance to the changes she wanted to make. She was persistent and worked alongside her team, talking to people, encouraging them to try new approaches and promising to review with them before making anything permanent. Thus she was gradually able to gain credibility and make her mark, while developing a leadership style that she was still using in her current roles. She felt she had “a nice balance” between leadership and management and the classroom but much preferred her time in class, saying several times, “I just love the children”. Christine’s class had 11 infants in the room with herself and 5 TAs, including 5 children who had autism and found it difficult to wait their turn in a larger group, testing her classroom management skills to the full. She would have preferred a smaller class but struggled to think of much more she would change – perhaps she would have preferred more specialist resources such as sensory tools and infant playground equipment.

Managing complexity: multi-agency working in an extended school

Christine’s description of how her time was organised sounded complicated, but she did not feel it was difficult managing the roles simultaneously.

I don’t consider myself juggling, because I’m quite organised and I know what I’m doing. I am [juggling], but I can do it.... You have to learn to prioritise, don’t you.

Her approach was to deal with everything as it came in. Nevertheless, she had to negotiate her role and timetable both in terms of general organisation and on a day to day basis. This included working full time at the O&A unit to cover the maternity leave of the part time teacher with whom she shared a timetable. To supplement her two half days for management she had organised another half day of PPA time (Planning, Preparation and Assessment) through a Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) covering her class. She expected to work hard, remembering her husband's comment when she started teaching: "...it's only a 9-3 job [laughs] - he soon learnt it wasn't like that".

This patchwork timetable was working well until she had to attend meetings on different sites that did not coincide with her timetable. She admitted that sometimes she felt "sawn in half" (see Figure 4, p. 75), saying with a laugh that she 'couldn't be ill', but fortunately she was rarely ill anyway.

It's keeping on top of everything really, just keeping one step ahead. I'm very much if I get it, I do it, I don't like leaving things in a pile in the corner – although [laughs] there are lots of piles in the corner at the moment!

There was no slack in staffing or pool of regular supply cover, because of the specialised work entailed, so absence or cover to enable regular team meetings had to be managed internally. However, Christine did have control over her workload, as the head was realistic in allowing individual teachers to prioritise and manage their time, including considerable autonomy within the high expectations of their roles. She also said she had learnt a new word – 'delegate' - since September: "...I do pass the odd thing over and try to let go".

Christine built up her management of the O & A unit from scratch, which had involved considerable initiative on her part. This unit took children for a year so that they could undergo assessment and observation, including seeing them work with different therapists, in order to advise parents whether they needed statements of special educational need and where they would attend school. Most wanted their children to come to Castlegate, but some were advised that elsewhere was more appropriate. Most children entered the O & A Unit in September and there was a further influx at Christmas, when children failing to thrive in mainstream had to be moved; often they had less obvious needs which emerged more gradually.

Christine described the start of term in detail.

In the first two weeks of term we do home visits and we do all the nursery visits because all of the children will have mainstream places as well, we do all of those, we share all of the IEPs we create and things like that with the mainstream schools as well. So we do a lot of outreach.

She was also working with a range of agencies and professionals: “consultants, paediatrics, eyes, hearing, ‘physio’, [occupational therapy], speech and language”. She was currently busy developing a wide range of parental liaison and support, including workshops and support groups, starting to build links with children’s centres, taking the work out into the community and “going into places the Local Authority hadn’t been before”. Later Christine described her practical commitment to making strong links with parents.

The first week the children came in, I phoned every single parent and wrote in their books every single day. We invite them in for lots of different reasons; I’ll phone if there’s anything that has happened - good or bad, I’ll ‘phone the parent.

Although inevitably much of this was pastoral support, her focus was “...to try and develop more involvement in the learning”, of which communicating was the most important element. Her conception of her role clearly crossed and extended the boundaries of the school; although this was the current policy emphasis, the work was already multi-agency by nature. There was no blueprint for this, but Christine was comfortable with an instinctive approach, “learning it from scratch”. It was clear that the school’s distributed leadership culture and high levels of professional trust enabled middle leaders to develop their own strategies for development and carry them through. The headteacher’s confidence gave them personal confidence in their own ability and engagement in the school improvement process was considered to be a normal part of the role.

Managing teams

As a middle leader, Christine realised that for individual teachers and TAs, the smallest things assumed great importance and that she had to be aware of “...the rumblings as well as the positive”. Her phase team met regularly with a proper agenda and if additional things cropped up they were included, in advance or on the day. These meetings were extremely important and were given time during the day through cover by other teams. Christine met with her own class team even more often. Opportunities

were given at the start of every term to suggest improvements and comment on progress, but also people volunteered ideas at any time, they were jotted down and discussed. However, she went far beyond the formal brief in managing colleagues and was acutely aware of the affective dimension of her role.

I think it's important, however senior you are, that you go in and see what's happening and what the day to day things are. The most important part of the job is to manage a team of adults, because sometimes they all have different opinions, you're not just a teacher in mainstream with one TA - you know - I've got five.

She recognised the need to negotiate and compromise but had introduced a clear structure within which everyone could work. Between meetings, she talked and listened to people to pick up issues that people might be reluctant to raise in a formal discussion, perhaps due to lack of confidence. It was when everyone talked “over a cuppa” that she needed to be around, because “....that's when you hear things...” – both positive and negative, including people's feelings and opinions, to set against her own clear ideas about change. This kind of emotional intelligence again fitted within the school's culture where relationships were valued, time was given to collaborative working and accountability was shared, with the headteacher shouldering the burden of ultimate responsibility.

Christine was clear about the standards that needed to be fulfilled and she expected tasks to be completed, systems and strategies to be in place and everything to be done ‘properly’. Accountability within her area of responsibility fitted within the school's overall accountability system; there were formal and informal assessments and lesson observations by the head to pick up teaching and learning issues quickly. Everyone participated in a self-evaluation day for internal monitoring. Christine also contributed a survey response towards the formal school self-evaluation form. Her philosophy mirrored the head's, in that all staff were valued and there were plenty of opportunities and choices to be made in relation to professional development for those who wished to take them up, including progression routes for TAs as well as teachers, “and they're always encouraged”. Inevitably some colleagues were able and willing to lead aspects of development, but others would say ‘I'm just a teacher’. Where people had been at the school for a long time, Christine felt they were “set in their ways a bit”.

In relation to the way she herself was managed, Christine felt that her professional judgement was trusted by the head and was happy to be left to manage her ‘own little world’ of Early Years.

I think he respects [us] and he just leaves you and he just trusts your professional judgment.

At the same time she knew the head had an open door; she had “never felt any barriers” to communication. She therefore felt she had the right balance of freedom and support to be an effective manager. Although she had a few misgivings in the early days about the apparently top-heavy management structure where Phase Managers as well as Key Stage managers had been introduced, she supported the head and was committed to making the new structure work. This compromise within the pervading climate of professional trust showed Christine’s sophisticated understanding of the need to accommodate changes that she did not necessarily endorse, through respect for the head’s vision and broader rationale for improvement.

Planning and managing change

In developing her various roles, Christine had instigated and implemented many improvements herself. She realised that she could ease teachers’ workload and improve the way in which the organisation worked by putting new systems and processes in place, often involving other agencies, organisations and individuals. She combined a naturally collaborative approach with persistence, driven by her convictions. For example in her work with the O & A Unit, she had found that she was continually being asked her opinion on referrals, so she had worked her way onto the decision making panel, which had paved the way for other staff and improved the system.

After I was up there about a year and a bit I kept saying, ‘Why aren’t I sitting on this meeting? You’re saying which children come to me - I know these children already’ - I’m often phoned by the specialist teaching service who are out there in mainstream, not sure - I get phoned – ‘Could you come out and have a look and tell me?’ I ended up getting a place (I badgered a bit), so I actually sit on it now and actually all the teachers in charge of all the units get to sit on their areas – for one, they can say if they’ve got a place, and then if it’s relevant.

Clearly, as well as being more efficient, this had increased coherence and consistency of decision making and enhanced inter-professional understanding as everyone was in the room together. Belief in improvements that could benefit students, families, teachers and other professionals encouraged Christine to continue in the face of resistance to change, in her intuitive style. The headteacher had made it clear that he

considered such initiative not additional but central to the school's improvement strategy.

In the balance between government directives and internal initiatives, Christine had a fundamental belief that while compliance was important, externally driven change could always be interpreted. For her, the head had a crucial role in the school development planning process but at the same time, it was very collegiate.

Martin obviously does an awful lot of work on it, where he would like to see the future of the school. Everybody sits around and has a look at [the school development plan] and adds to it. Or if there's areas where we've discussed as a staff [that] we want to do something... It's a time for us to say 'Well, I'll be on that group' and we'll take our initials off and put our initials on – 'I'm not doing that as well!' [laughs] ...but someone else'll do it - I wouldn't just take it off!

Parents were also encouraged to make suggestions and comments. Christine felt the development plan was written to reflect the staff's responsibilities and priorities, rather than driving what they do, so she could not actually recall the details but trusted that they were documented.

My initials are against quite a few things on it. Don't ask me what they are, 'cause I can't remember! I know it's all the 'Artsmarky' stuff and the Foundation curriculum...

Christine's emotional approach was pragmatic and, like Lorna and Pam at New Futures, resolutely positive: "You get on with what's thrown at you – you have to make the best of it, don't you".

Christine was developing the leadership and management dimension of her work during the year, through a six month 'Aspiring Leaders' course (although she did not like the title as she felt it was 'self-indulgent'). This again was part of the school's strategy to support shared leadership and enquiry-based change with built-in professional and leadership development. She had continued to shape new roles and make improvements through her own particular style of leadership, developed on the job, which balanced informality with persistence: 'we have a chat', 'I badgered', 'we gave it a go', 'let's try', 'work with me', 'we'll see how we get on' and so on. Although she was absolutely clear about what she wanted to achieve and how it should be done, she allowed the outcome to remain open until something had been tried and reviewed collaboratively, allowing that "it might take a little bit longer than it should". However, she instigated change that she was already confident would work,

experimenting, modelling, demonstrating, trialling and supporting. She ‘put herself up first’, doing the groundwork before expecting others to follow.

An example was the new system for Individual Education Plans (IEPs), a package called ‘B Squared’ which Christine piloted 4 years ago. It is based on the ‘P’ levels for students with special educational needs working below level 1 of the National Curriculum, breaking assessment down into tiny steps – “touch the cup, grasp the cup, lift the cup and so on” - so that the targets are manageable for students such as those at Castlegate. Teachers had to highlight the next steps on the computer and the system created the IEP, including the skills needed and the criteria used to measure success, with a review date. This could be personalised even further, by adding how the targets would be met and additional success criteria. In anticipation, Christine was committed to it but aware of the difficulties of implementation.

Martin really wants it implemented through the school, so he wants me to do a staff meeting on it and I know that already some of the teachers are like, ‘No’, because it’s on the computer... because they don’t feel they’re good enough on the computer...it’s the fear of the unknown I think. They’ll be assured that it’s easy and that it’ll lighten their load.

Christine felt this system was essential for consistency as previously there was discrepancy in the number and priority of targets identified; essentially staff could set the targets as they wished. In the new system, a maximum of 4 longer term targets would be set and reviewed annually, which should therefore lighten the load for staff as well as ensuring consistency and encouraging reflection, benefiting both staff and students.

By the end of the year Christine had run a workshop and was helping colleagues when required, characteristically leading by example and demonstration, promoting the approach with her own experience, enthusiasm, evidence and evaluation, supported by the head’s confidence in allocating responsibilities to her. She was aware of the issues, but she would always advocate change that had already proved its worth.

Regarding her Art Co-ordinator role, Christine was self-effacing

I don’t really have a lot to do with it, apart from policy and budgeting, because the arts are through every single lesson we have in the school – it’s an integral part of the curriculum anyway.

She gained the school a Silver Artsmark Award soon after she arrived; in fact she had applied for the Bronze, being unaware of the full scale of activity across the school,

and was pleased to see the application upgraded. There were some gaps suggesting that they were not ready for Gold and although this had been one of the school's targets and had been on Christine's list for three years, the head had allowed her to put it aside again this year because the artistic work through Creative Partnerships, co-ordinated by the deputy head, was maintaining the focus on creativity. It was interesting that the school allowed for professional agency in relinquishing tasks, as well as taking on additional responsibilities. When the time came, Christine had clear ideas about what needed to be done, for example INSET to strengthen dance. She felt that the Artsmark was worth having because it gave prestige and value to the work staff were doing: "Yes, we are good at this and somebody's recognised it".

Educational purpose and process: a focus on learning

Although Christine loved the management aspects of her work and felt she had a good balance, she could not envisage leaving the classroom completely. By the end of the year she was talking about shadowing a deputy head and wanted to develop the strategic aspect of her work further, but she still wanted to be with a class at least two days a week. She felt that this supported leadership, as a continued classroom focus meant "...you understand what everybody's on about". It also reflected her deep love of working with the children at the roots of her professional life.

It's for the children - that's why we come into teaching, isn't it, it's for the children, to give them the best start they can possibly get.

Christine was disappointed that the outcomes of the Rose Report were not to be enshrined in policy following the change of government during the year. However, she was not daunted. She admitted with a chuckle that she had already used the now abandoned guidelines in planning her curriculum for next year, as it would make the provision more appropriate for the children and essentially the targets were the same. She knew she could get colleagues on board and was confident that she would have the backing she needed from her trusting senior leadership team. She knew, though, that something that worked today might not work tomorrow. She said she would never abandon something she thought was going to succeed, for the sake of following a policy directive, any more than she would persist with something she knew was not working. She steered a careful course between policy and local needs.

You've got your government directions haven't you, that come down to say these things have got to be changed in the school and the head takes a lot of that on board himself and explores things before he even comes to the staffroom; he likes an informed opinion so he can put the options out there. [Its] trying to do what we've been asked to do on the government issues and making it right for our school.

The school's priorities emphasised personalised learning supported by Individual Education Plans and an appropriate curriculum in which Christine knew that development of communication was key. Leuven approaches, now used widely within the Local Authority, had been adapted for the children's needs and were being trialled to support children's wellbeing and happiness. Although strong attachments formed through nurturing approaches, transition was carefully managed over a long time to mediate the potential difficulties in this setting. With the senior leadership team's support, Christine was now adapting the Foundation curriculum so that the amount of play in relation to more structured learning reduced gradually over the years.

In Early Years the emphasis on practical aspects perhaps focused attention away from learning, but it was parents' involvement in learning and progression that Christine was most interested in developing. For her 'Aspiring Leaders' course, she had to develop an enquiry-based project from a senior management point of view and, perhaps typically, she designed a project to cover several strands of development at once. She wanted to involve parents in their children's 'learning journeys', while implementing the Foundation Curriculum into Key Stage 1 and had based this around 'unique story journals', a kind of passport for parents and teachers to compile, which were taken with the children from Reception into Years 1 and 2, following a successful pilot in pre-school. The books began with a 'pen portrait' by the teacher, followed by entries from teachers and parents on different elements of the curriculum, stating progress and long-term goals. For Christine, the project had stimulated many ideas for further research, including surveying parents and considering children's learning at home. She wanted to bridge the communication divide, lift the focus away from particular problems and highlight learning, reinforced with student voice, for example through the use of symbols boards shared with parents, which were effective when children could not speak. Christine acknowledged the success of this project so far and was pleased that the work had been externally recognised as well, winning an Ofsted grade of 'outstanding' in her area of responsibility.

Creative learning journeys

The balance between management and classroom practice did not happen by accident; Christine had clearly negotiated to spend at least some of her time continuing to work directly with the youngest classes because this was what she loved and what inspired her to lead others to achieve the best possible outcomes for the children. The headteacher was recognising the strengths and motivations of his staff and accommodating them as far as possible. This year's Creative Partnerships project epitomised Christine's approach to classroom and curriculum. It was a happy story, brimming with energy and experimentation. Christine wanted a different way to introduce body awareness with the children, having relied on old-fashioned "hands together, feet together" song tapes for years. They were working with a Creative Practitioner who was experienced and effective with children with special needs.

We ended up with a learning journey again, but through our body. He took us on a journey from [here] to South Africa. But it was, like, the way we got there - we had to do the trains, the type of movement involved in that, the different types of movement for the animals in the safari park, dancing in the mines, then the body awareness [where] we're showing our traditional dances to the South Africans (we did head and shoulders, knees and toes)...

The journey sparked new activities: shield making, maps, use of objects, games and 'call and response' songs that could be used time and again. They were now adapting the approach: 'We're going to Australia', 'We're going to the seaside' and so on. The children participated with suspended disbelief - even the children who were usually "completely in their own bubble" had started to join in of their own accord. For Christine, "It was brilliant, absolutely brilliant."

Teacher portrait

Jess: Castlegate School

Jess introduced herself as a classroom teacher, “just starting out” although this was her second job, as a Year 7 teacher at Castlegate, with responsibility for English planning in Key Stage 3. At our first meeting, she said she could not imagine why anyone would want to talk to her about her work, as she was not sure she had anything valuable to say, while at our second meeting, she was embarrassed that she might not remember what she had said the first time. The headteacher’s insight in recommending her as a participant in this study must be acknowledged, as it showed an enlightened view of a less prominent and less experienced member of staff who still had something to say and was contributing to school change. Jess was happy to share her thoughts and ideas, finding the second interview in particular a “nice distraction” within a typically busy week, having worked on her planning until 1.30am the previous night.

Starting teaching

Jess’s interest in special needs education began when her older sister was a volunteer helping with respite care. When Jess went along to have a look, she was instinctively drawn to it: “I just took to it, just liked it”. During her standard teacher training, she said,

I was always interested in that child in the corner with the TA – I wanted to be with them.

Several times, she mentioned that she would sometimes still quite like to be a TA as “you get closer and you work more with that child”; it was clearly the relationships with the children that she enjoyed most, along with helping them to progress.

Jess’s initial teacher training covered generic themes such as differentiation, but there was no specialist training for her chosen route. She was happy to enter her first job as an ‘open book’, working with a class of 6 students supported by 5 TAs, in a specialist residential unit for young people with autism aged 11-19 with “very challenging behaviour and very complex needs”. She heard ‘by chance’ that a job had come up at Castlegate, close to home, and had only two days to apply, which gave her limited

thinking time. She feels the decision to change jobs was therefore taken out of her hands, although she reflects that it was probably time to move on because of the physical demands of the job.

I was faced with getting hurt on a regular basis and I wondered whether it was time for me to just have a little break away from it ...'cause it was quite.... draining.....they were very strong, one or two of them.

However, Jess was very fond of the students and had recently called in to see them during a Saturday session.

It was so lovely to see them. Lovely. I really enjoyed it. I do miss them.

Teaching and team building

Jess found Castlegate very different from her previous school. It caters for a much greater range of special needs and when she first arrived, although somewhat deskilled as expected, she enjoyed gaining new knowledge and skills. At the start of the year, she was not particularly ambitious but wanted to focus on her current role, in which she felt competent and confident. She had 11 students in her class and worked with 3 TAs, which she described as “still a shock”, as the ratios of staff to students were so much lower than for her last class. She knew that in a mainstream school, these students would have one to one support all the time. The students in her class were completely reliant on the regular class team; supply teaching would not work here.

This year, Jess was working with a Year 7 class but was also responsible for English in Key Stage 3. On Wednesday mornings and all day on Thursdays, the students were grouped by ability for a carousel of English, maths, science, art and music, rotating for 5 sessions while the teachers stayed put. Jess felt it was important to be teaching her own students the majority of the time, to build important relationships, but saw the benefits of the system.

I really like it, it's nice and varied and it means I get to teach the students I had in my class last year - it's nice to keep the connections with them.

This is another example of the positive ethos and trust-based culture, enabling the headteacher to introduce change that might not be universally popular with staff but fitted the wider moral purposes of the school, in challenging students as members of the local community and society more generally. Teachers embraced the changes

despite their misgivings, accepted the rationale and looked for the benefits, which was likely to make the changes more effective. Jess was delighted when she saw what her students had achieved, and extremely proud that a couple of students reached NC level 3 which was very high for the school, let alone the class. She thought that this was because she had introduced lots of communication and sensory activities, which she saw as the greatest priority for their learning. She deferred credit from herself to her team, who were “very good at managing themselves”, foreseeing problems before they happened and taking action. One was a mum who had excellent empathy with the students, one was a calm man with lots of patience and the third was enthusiastic with lots of initiative. Early in the year she emphasised the importance of this teamwork; by the end of the year she described her team without hesitation as “the best in the school”. Jess clearly enjoyed their company; despite the complexity and continual challenge, she said, “it does come together – we have lots of laughs”.

‘One day I’d like to get a life’

There was a great deal of paperwork involved in Jess’s job, including forms, assessments at certain times and lesson preparation as an on-going chore, to be done at home. She said at the start of the year that one day, she would like to ‘get a life’.

I’m only 25 but I don’t have a life. I work, I work, I work, I work.

Other people had told her that “...the longer you’ve been in it, the less you have to do”, but she had not found this yet. On weekdays, she would go home after school, put her pyjamas on and work on her bed with her laptop, until everything was prepared for the next day. Thursday was her night off as Friday was activities day, needing less preparation. She worked all day on Sundays. She had Saturdays off, unless she had to go into school to do jobs she could not manage to do during the week; as there were lettings of the hydro-pool, school was open. She was also looking forward to her weekend voluntary work in the hydro-pool, partly because it took her back to the one to one work with students that she so enjoyed: “I won’t be in charge, I get that ‘TA’ job, I enjoy it”.

Jess thought some colleagues could just walk into school with no preparation, but although she could manage like this for a short while, her preparation normally took many hours. The paperwork would be needed eventually, for example baseline

assessment had to be done, otherwise it was impossible to monitor progress. Next year looked as if it would be as pressurised as this one, with satellite classes and other changes on the horizon. The headteacher had said that he worried about the pressures on his staff, but his priority was doing what was right. By Jess's account, no-one was prepared to stand still and this message was understood and accepted, even amongst new staff members such as Jess who struggled with workload daily.

Inclusion, curriculum and choice

Jess recognised that attitudes, facilities and medical advances in relation to special needs education had gradually improved, not least in that students were now at school rather than in a 'home'. However she was not sure the media were paying much attention; she felt that although understanding had improved, they were still to an extent working 'in the shadows'. For Jess there was a trade-off between meeting needs in a special school and benefiting from mixing with students at a mainstream school. She believed that interaction between all children was valuable.

I think most of the students should mix together, develop and learn about each other together in a 'natural play' sort of way.

At the same time, she felt that in the special school environment students could empathise with one another and that their achievements would be celebrated more.

Jess did not feel particular pressure from government targets at her school, although there were still targets to meet. This suggested effective mediation by the headteacher and senior leaders of external policies, filtering those that would be of benefit and interpreting them appropriately for the context. The curriculum was more flexible than at her last school. There, she remembered having to teach a modern language to her students, who had extremely limited general understanding and communication skills. She had planned lessons concentrating on sensory experiences, with French food, music and signing of French words, but was not convinced of the value of this. She faced a similar dilemma in maths:

There was a maths topic I once taught - again it was a non-verbal group, needed a lot of support, we should have been only focusing on communication skills, but no - in our maths topic they wanted us to teach about Council Tax and credit cards and bills.

Jess paid lip service, making money boxes out of papier maché, “...a layer each week for 8 weeks”. At Castlegate, the priority was for the students to become settled, gel as a class social group and focus on communication and she felt she had much more scope to make decisions to meet their learning needs, which she attributed to autonomy coupled with support, enabled by senior leaders with clearly defined roles. While the Key Stage Managers had overall responsibility, they trusted Jess and her colleagues to make decisions on classroom learning, but offered reassurance where necessary.

They say ‘I’ve got faith in you, I leave it up to you’ – they’ll let us have our say....Every so often I say ‘this is what I’m doing’, just so I’ve got approval.

Relationships, care and progression

Jess laughed when asked about her attitude to teaching. When she got home each day, she said she ‘got her ranting done’ first, mainly about staffing issues, before commenting on the good points. She would have preferred a smaller class, maybe of 8, despite the benefits of social grouping, to enable her to concentrate on learning. Jess described her role in terms of non-stop juggling, balancing and being ‘on the go’, trying to remember everything. She felt that as a teacher, she had a distinctive approach and was developing a personal theory for her practice.

A lot of teachers would say that ‘I like that fact that I’ve given some knowledge from myself to them’ - I’m not really about that, but I think that’s why I like special needs...I like the fact that I’ve helped some communication, I’ve helped to modify a negative behaviour, I’ve helped to make that child happy. I like the care and I like the nurture role and trying to make a difference to their lives in that way...that’s a different kind of education.

Jess felt that she had a variety of roles with the children: nurturing, supporting learning, disciplining, friendship and support. However, Jess was adamant that teachers at Castlegate were not providing therapy, indeed they were not allowed to refer to it as such. Despite the emphasis on caring, she distinguished education from ‘babysitting’, focusing clearly on supporting learning and progression. Nevertheless, sometimes she said the relationship with students became almost parental, for example in the case of one vulnerable student who was in foster care. Everyone was on first name terms as at Jess’s previous school; this was to do with effective communication for students with profound difficulties, but Jess preferred it anyway. She had respect for the students and

knew she could not fully understand them: “They’ve experienced things in their lives that I haven’t – they’ll catch a fake a mile off”.

Parents and carers had very open and frank discussions with teachers, asking for advice and reassurance, but were also called upon as experts on their own child. This discussion helped to alleviate worries and reassure parents and carers that they were not alone. When their child was happy, they were happier and more positive themselves. Progress for these students might be measured in overcoming problems in sitting, standing and walking by building muscles, for example in the pool, and by gradually removing support. The baseline assessment was the starting point for identifying the next steps to improvement in their education. Through the ‘MOVE’ programme, Jess saw her students gradually getting fitter and healthier and moving around, for example standing to be changed, which meant that they could go on family outings. This progression made parents happier and improved families’ lives, according with the wider Every Child Matters outcomes and moral purpose for the school, as espoused by the headteacher. Jess’s true measure of success was “the smiles on the kids’ faces”.

Continuing professional learning

At the start of the year, Jess’s professional learning had slowed down in terms of formal and specialised courses, but she was continuing to learn different skills for special education, for example refreshing her knowledge and skills on challenging behaviours and qualifying as a hydrotherapy lifeguard. She knew that the school offered many courses, University programmes, workshops with parents and partnership work with other schools. Jess’s recent initial training was being put to good use. She was mentoring an ex-TA on the GTP programme who was working with her old class; in helping her, Jess could draw on her own recent experience as a relatively new teacher. Also she used the interactive whiteboard all the time, as this was included in her initial teacher training, so she was able to give demonstrations and offer support with this technology.

Early in the year, Jess was happy to learn about new things as they arose, in relation to the skills and knowledge needed for her day to day job. However, she was keen to point out that she reflected on her practice ‘a lot’. She felt it was essential to read extensively, updating herself on new research and professional knowledge in relation

to particular conditions and applying this at the level of one to one relationships with her students. She had attended generic as well as specific courses, for example relating to the current school focus on creativity, with a major focus for change in school this year being continuation of the Creative Partnerships work. At the start of the year, she admitted she was looking forward to developing creativity further, with a few reservations, having been persuaded by the head.

It was discussed in my appraisal and I said that I felt I was being as creative as I could be...but then it almost contradicts the idea of creativity to me... being taught to be creative! But no – I love getting new ideas for teaching.

The headteacher recognised that Jess needed to be challenged a little here, while at the same time giving her a channel for her enthusiasm and energy. Her response shows that this personalised approach to nurturing and directing staff was highly effective and appreciated. The previous year, Jess had chosen a graffiti art project which suited her EBD students well, but this year she had ended up stepped back as none of the projects had particularly appealed to her and she wanted to give other colleagues the opportunity. As with Christine, her agency might sometimes involve withdrawing as well as taking on new responsibilities and there was space to allow for this at Castlegate. This time, she was only involved in Creative Partnerships in terms of timetabling of her groups and in listening when project outcomes were shared by colleagues.

Contributions to change: decision making, trust and consultation

Jess tended to take more notice if she knew things were going to happen than if they might. She sometimes struggled with meetings because although she knew staff were being informed and consulted, her mind was focused on practical matters.

I switch off because I'm thinking of all the things I could be doing. If I have an opinion I voice it, if I don't have a strong opinion, I keep quiet.

Here, she felt that in decision making, different viewpoints could be beneficial; they did not necessarily cause conflict. Nevertheless, she had become more aware of the school development plan, because her targets were linked with it. She was also aware of what was in the plan more generally because of the continual consultation, for example about the new playground.

Structurally, the head was extremely proactive in instigating and leading change, while it was clear to Jess that teachers should make decisions for their own classes. The leadership hierarchy had their own clearly defined spheres of interest and accountability and other agencies and experts were an important part of the extended school structure, such as the speech and language specialists. The new Learning Mentors were being proactive in reaching individual students and building self-esteem and self-confidence. There were shared goals and as a class teacher Jess worked with them all to address Individual Education Plans.

Jess felt that Martin was happy with his staff and believed they wanted the best for their students. He was encouraging teachers to experiment more, particularly in providing opportunities for self-taught, student-led learning, enabling the children to make decisions and choices. Jess had taken on the language in the first instance: “He’s so willing to let us try things, take risks – that’s probably using his words”. She was now becoming more convinced, realising that “...every child has got some building blocks in them already”, providing a foundation for individual progress. Jess knew that the downside of ‘letting go’ was that you could not necessarily control outcomes so well, but certain behaviours could be predicted and prevented and she could be proactive in focusing on particular needs. For example, when she had wanted to do some focus work with her higher ability students who could progress academically, she had arranged for the other four students to visit town, allowing her space to concentrate on the small group’s knowledge and skills.

Overall, Jess felt the school was progressive and far from complacent, communicating the ethos the headteacher was actively cultivating.

The school is constantly looking at better ways of doing things – that’s constantly under scrutiny: ‘If this isn’t working, what else can we try?’ – it’s a pretty forward thinking school.

She felt that teachers’ response to change was ‘a complete mixture’; some people liked change, but in her view they tended to be the managers and Phase Managers. She thought that it was “not a bad thing” to put everything under scrutiny, but recognised her own limitations in this respect.

I like new things to happen, but I can be quite wary and cautious...I’m not completely negative but sometimes I do tend to see the negative before the positive.

As an example, Jess felt she had had to compromise in the case of the satellite classes, where more students would be enrolled and taken to a unit in the mainstream school run by staff from Castlegate, in response to Local Authority requests to increase capacity. This would enable more children to join the school. When first suggested, Jess believed that no more children should be enrolled as the school was already full and she felt that staffing issues should be resolved first, but she kept quiet. However the headteacher was engineering the change carefully. As a Year 7 teacher she would automatically be involved in the satellite work, but was approached by Martin individually and asked to remain on the school site. He did not tell her who the other teacher was who would be working in parallel offsite, wanting her to make the decision on its own merits, rather than on personalities. However Jess figured it out, made tentative enquiries and ‘got a little knowing smile back’ in confirmation. In fact, it had worked out well, as she was happy with the pairing and the other teacher actively wanted to work with the satellite class. It is unlikely that the head had not foreseen this outcome. Jess knew there would be additional workload the following year, where she had been hoping this would reduce, but she was ready to make her contribution to make the satellite approach work.

Politically, Jess took decision making seriously. Ironically, in the case of the general election this year, this meant that she declined to vote, as she was so busy that she felt she did not have time to inform herself adequately. She knew that there would be changes to budgets and curriculum as the result of the change of government, but felt rather distant from this.

A new determination

Early in the year, Jess felt that the people who liked change tended to be the leaders and managers. She herself was vague about some of the current changes taking place.

There’s something launching this month – I can’t remember what it’s called... If I feel it’s a management issue, or sometimes if I think a decision’s been made, if *they’re* going along with it, then [I’ll] just go along with it...unless I have a strong opinion.

She thought she had disappointed the head by saying she didn’t want to be a manager in five years’ time – she felt she had given the “wrong answer”.

I'm not really [ambitious], no - I don't have ambitions to do management or take it further.

Although her job was to oversee her class team and she had Key Stage 3 subject responsibility, she was resisting the label of 'manager', seeing this as a more senior role.

At that time, Jess said, "I'm quite content in my simple little existence" and the conversation focused on the day to day frustrations and triumphs she was experiencing in her classroom and team. She was focusing most of her time, energy and commitment on her class and deferred credit to her team. However, although apparently quite self-effacing, she was clearly also a determined person, recognised the value of driving herself forwards and actively challenged herself. She was keen to recount that she had walked on hot coals recently for a charity. She believed she had achieved this not so much because of the two-hour pep talk they were given, but more by finding the motivation within herself: "You're gonna do it because it's there in front of you". In the end, it was just like walking over hot sand and did not hurt at all.

It had always been at the back of her mind to go travelling. At our first meeting Jess was anticipating a trip to Australia at Easter to see her sister, but secretly worried it would give her a travelling 'bug' like some of her friends who were scattered all over the world. In the event, she was quite daunted and nearly didn't go. With her sister's family, she felt more like a visiting teacher than an auntie, as her professional knowledge and skills came into play, being with her nephews who have special needs. As a result of this adventure and also some serious re-evaluation of her life following a family bereavement, she returned with much more focus and clarity about her professional and personal direction. She soon enrolled for a part time Masters programme, which would enable her to specialise and committed her to staying at this school for the moment. She was also thinking about applying for one of the available subject leadership roles. Both of these would, of course, add to her workload. Her ambitions were fuelled partly by the need for financial security, with long-term plans for her family which might involve going part time. She knew that things needed to change in her own approach and professional role in order to allow all this to happen and was starting to take control of this, with renewed personal commitment to further development of her professional role.

The significance of the supportive school culture, in particular the proactive guidance and leadership of the headteacher, working with senior leaders, should not be

underestimated. For Jess, a subtle and encouraging approach enabled her to build confidence and find direction, including seeking more formal responsibilities, while her current contributions were recognised and valued. The headteacher's recommendation that Jess take part in this study showed that this recognition was not cosmetic or manipulative, but had genuine integrity. Jess was seen as someone with a real contribution to make to school improvement, broadening to involvement in the wider educational community. She was beginning to acknowledge the potential that had been recognised in her when she was appointed.

Teacher portrait

Michael, Castlegate School

A series of unplanned moves led to Michael taking up his current post as head of Key Stage 4 and Year 11 teacher at Castlegate School, working with young people aged 14-16 with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. He considered his job to be “...really quite fundamental and basic...not a huge job”. At its heart, it was about things like, “A is for apple”, or bringing guinea pigs into the class, drawing them and writing about them. Yet the professional world he described was complex and extremely physically, mentally and emotionally demanding. Michael wanted to protect his class from many aspects of whole-school change, as people and initiatives ebbed and flowed and the interactions with his class become ever more complicated. His hands continually made gathering motions as he talked about “my class”. His account reveals continual management of tensions between the wider moral purpose of the school as expressed by the headteacher and his concern to meet individual students’ complex needs.

Finding a niche in special education

A geography graduate, Michael initially wanted to be a social worker and started work for a charity, fundraising and giving talks in schools where he was particularly successful with the youngest children.

That went very well - I was very successful in that. A lot of people said ‘Why don’t you become a teacher?’

Disillusioned with the charity, he completed a PGCE and began teaching infants, then in primary schools. Following a year’s break in his mid-30s, he signed on with agencies in London, still very interested in social work and drawn to children with broader needs, but not wanting to be tied down to a permanent contract. Securing a short term contract in a special school, he stayed in special education and worked his way up the age range to Key Stage 4.

Michael felt that he had found a unique niche in special education, echoing the head’s views on the transition process.

Once you're in special, I think you'll find people tend to stay in special; it's quite hard to go back to mainstream really. It's just such a different way of working... Teachers who arrive at our school tend to be deskilled... you have to come to terms with a completely different way of working.

He now felt he would struggle to return to a primary classroom. However, eight years was the longest he had worked anywhere and at the start of the year he was wondering whether it might be time to move on again. He was thinking of a SENCO role in a mainstream school or of working in some of the new satellite classes, but this would mean 'charging himself up a bit', engaging properly with policy and assuming a greater curriculum responsibility. By the end of the year, he had applied for a new job supporting inclusion, relishing the apparent clarity of remit and specific focus of the role in comparison with his current all-encompassing one. Eventually he said he was quite relieved not to have secured the role, since the position would have been threatened by cuts instigated by the new government. He remained relatively sanguine about the political and economic situation; an open-ended budget for Special Education swallowed endless resources and might benefit from ring-fencing through the new austerity measures. He felt that this might even simplify the day to day complexities of his current role, if there were cuts in multi-agency provision.

The 'five-way marriage': managing complexity

Castlegate School was, in Michael's view, 'a really complicated place' and there was a great deal happening which, in his view, disrupted the close relationships and stability of daily classroom life and work. This had changed over his 8 years at Castlegate, when he 'taught his class as his class'. Various support workers and therapists were timetabled to take students out of class, who had to be accompanied by TAs. This quickly depleted the staffing for the classroom, restricting what could be achieved and setting up tensions between the priorities for education, physiotherapy and health. He agreed that these specialists needed to provide specialist support on site, but this detracted budget from internal staffing, so class sizes were large, which contributed to behaviour issues that caused enormous emotional stress and disruption. Sometimes people did not arrive, requiring fast decision making to put alternative arrangements in place. Some of the support was mystifying, for example there were speech therapists in school, but none of Michael's students with speech difficulties had specialist support.

We have an enormous staff at this school, but where are they all? What do they do? What impact do they have on the experience of children?

Visiting support staff tended to stay in their rooms and write reports when not timetabled with specific students. They were paid by the school as specialist independent professionals, rather than being part of the organisation's own support teams. They would not, for example, cover for absent staff. Michael was often exasperated as he saw the logistical effects on his class and the lack of impact of this extended, multi-agency organisation concerned him. Meanwhile, he felt that he and his team were subject to unreasonable expectations. However, he attributed no blame to the school's senior leadership, understanding the wider forces at work and their necessary mediation of this. He was also clear about his own role - part complicit, part subversive.

The expectations are very high, for our children, and very complicated and we're only ever going to make a meagre percentage of these – and we have to pretend to be meeting all of them but in fact we're only meeting a small percentage of them. It's my job as a teacher to maintain the pretence that we're meeting them to all sorts of professionals, and my class to manage as much [as possible] of what we can really manage.

The complexity of Michael's daily work certainly appeared daunting to an outsider. A typical day started at 7.45am with setting up daily routines such as organising symbols for autistic students, preparing the computer and ordering lunches – petty but time consuming tasks. Students drifted in and books from home were checked; if issues were missed then this could cause problems later on in the day. By 9.30, the class was settled with the routine of saying 'hello' and a song.

Michael was in no doubt as to the importance of his team.

Managing the TAs is a gigantic part of my job... it's like a marriage with 5 people in a room for a year, you know, you see a lot of each other and that's really a huge part of the job.

Sometimes the start of the day felt chaotic: "...eight things become ten, four of which have not happened before" and the team just had to try and get through the day 'reasonably'. Students were bound to pick up the complexities and issues, particularly autistic students who needed their routines. The system was clearly designed to provide a rich curriculum of support and development, to challenge students, to develop resilience. To Michael, it sometimes felt like a test of how many knocks they

could take. However, the compromise reached was a balance of security and challenge for these vulnerable students nearing the end of their schooling.

He therefore worked hard to maintain stability, where a newcomer might completely change the dynamics. At the start of the year, it was important to stand back and assess people and situations, making little touches and adjustments until the group settled.

It's amazing, it takes you quite a while to get into the heart of those students and know just what it is that's going to keep [them] going. It's so unique...it takes a very long time...it's a very delicate and fragile sort of ecosystem going on.

For Michael, the class teacher's role was unequivocal, it involved getting to know the students and building relationships with them, "...helping children become comfortable in their own skins and happy in themselves". He was confident in his own view and would not be easily swayed.

I'm influenced a lot by my own view of how I see my role and I'll kind of defend that against things that come along and I see as rocking the boat.

This meant that he would absorb many of the pressures himself in order to maintain a precious equilibrium.

A hundred things come to me through the staff meetings and from managers and all those other places – social services – and my job is to absorb as many of those as I can and pass some on to the class that I think are useful or those we can meet, and bounce back or absorb the others and protect my class from them really – [protect] the mechanics of what's going on in my room from too much of that.

It is interesting to conjecture the extent to which the headteacher was aware of this and accommodated this filtering into his change management strategies, given that he clearly knew his staff well. There seemed to be unspoken understandings between Michael and Martin about the way in which change was buffered by the headteacher to select and interpret for context, while Michael would do the same at classroom level. Thus they had found an effective way of working in students' best interests, while moving the school forward.

Leadership structure and culture

Michael clearly respected the school's senior leaders. He described the deputy head as "a real hero", working hard, making sure everyone is OK, being reasonable with everyone: an "impressive person", very pleasant, kind and gentle. The head, similarly, projected an extremely positive view but without being autocratic. Michael felt that Martin understood the issues that underpinned organisational strategies and external directives, interpreting them on the school's behalf and absorbing pressure for the school just as Michael did for his class.

He has a very strong personal philosophy of how he wants to behave and how he wants to see the best in his teachers (even when it's not there to be seen).

Michael saw the head as apparently relaxed, never cross, rarely tense, with an ever-open door, making time for everyone: "If I was him I'd be tearing my hair out – I wouldn't be sleeping".

Structurally, it was clear to Michael that Castlegate School did not have sufficient management capacity up to last year. As a result, the Phase Manager structure was introduced, but at the start of the year, Michael did not know anyone who supported the change. He said it was justified on the basis of aiding transition, which Michael did not see as such a problem. KS2 and KS3 were put together, where KS3 and KS4 in the secondary school phase fitted better. KS4 and KS5 were based on separate sites with a manager based at college away from the main site. Although the manager was working hard and involved in decision making, she could not resolve all the issues across two sites by 'phone. Within the new structure, there was still a need for someone to take responsibility for Key Stage 4, and Michael was pleased with how he had created his own role as Key Stage 4 manager. He found himself managing Year 10 and 11 anyway, due to his colleague's lengthy absence. By the end of the year, Michael had recognised the strategic value of the Phase Managers and accepted the change in structure, although he said that he imagined the same could have been achieved by appointing a new deputy head. He showed a willingness to go along with change, in a climate of trust, until convinced of its worth, as with colleagues Christine and Jess (see Teacher Portraits: Christine; Jess).

Response and resistance to change

The changes involving improvements to behaviour management were eagerly anticipated for this year. Behaviour was a continual concern, exacerbated by changing and increasing intake. In November of the autumn term, there had already been progress, led by a senior colleague. There were far less students in the corridors and mentoring was working better. At the end of the year this was still considered to have improved the lives of students and staff across the school, with behaviour teams working to a timetable with selected students and responding to situations and incidents. In all but the most challenging of cases, the new approach was allowing Michael extra space to work with the remainder of his class.

Other priorities for this year included the continuation of the Creative Partnerships work, which Michael saw very much as the head's project, involving colleagues in other classes. Again this was potentially disruptive to the classroom status quo, particularly when the Creative Practitioners involved were not trained to work with the children concerned, or where TAs and mixed groups of students did not know each other so well. Michael believed that his experience last year had been positive, as he had carefully selected students to participate in groups where he knew they would be comfortable. A final major change for Castlegate was the introduction of satellite classes due to start in September of the next academic year. Michael supported the notion of specialist units within mainstream schools, but felt that the transitions between sites would be difficult, again because the students needed continuity and consistent relationships.

Michael was weary and wary of continual change, yet critical of his own lack of flexibility. He knew that he did not change easily, although he admitted that he often came round eventually. However he contested the notion that training would inevitably lead to change in what he called his own "culture of working".

I don't have any faith in training as a main motor for changing that. Training puts great pressure on our school at the moment, everybody goes on courses for everything so we're always short of staff because of that and I don't personally believe that much of that has much of a motor on change.

Similarly, Michael felt that most curriculum documents and policies had no effects whatsoever in the day to day experiences of classes. He recalled all the time spent in meetings, "...listening to all kinds of things...", convinced that proposals were unlikely to happen and resolving not to think about them again.

All those meetings to go to and all that paperwork and all that talk are tangential to 90% of what the job really is.

To him, the files were just forms of words, stacked up on the shelves, although he hoped he was sufficiently open to ideas that might be valuable. The school was bringing things in and then not following through, which gave him choice in what he would implement, contrasting with his previous, more authoritarian school where he disliked the culture of monitoring and surveillance. Here, he could continue using old forms and procedures and everything was 'still fine'. Again it is likely that the headteacher was aware and permissive of this stance, as long as learning priorities were attended to. The change to using the correct forms was not one of the things that he felt needed 'doing faster'.

Michael felt that his younger colleagues were more responsive to change. The ideas and contributions of new staff were important, but this could be demoralising and difficult. With ICT, as soon as he had learnt something new and was feeling quite proud, another challenge presented itself. Email was an additional pressure, intensifying his already full schedule and diverting from planned work.

Emailing has really stressed me out, actually. I check my emails at 9 o'clock at night before I go to bed and I come in in the morning and [the assistant head] says 'Did you get my email last night?' and I say 'I went to bed at 9 o'clock and I didn't check them after that' and he says 'It was probably about 10'. So the next morning I have to pick up on stuff that I didn't get – I find that quite stressful actually - when I sit down at the computer to get some work done in the evening, suddenly I've got to get through 2 or 3 emails that just popped up, before I can start doing whatever it was I was thinking, and that's really intensified. At half term there were 3 people emailing me. I expect to do some work at half term, but this is stuff that's cropping up that historically would have been in my pigeonhole on Monday morning.

Sadly, Michael said that he thought senior leaders sometimes had to go through the motions of commitment to change, trotting out platitudes without conviction. While he had utmost respect for the head and senior colleagues, Michael said he saw reflections of "Stalinist Russia" in the current education regime. Paperwork was signed off as long as it added up and made sense, even if the information was false. Michael preferred to "stay with the troops", maintaining that he did not have the right leadership attitude to maintain such a regime. He preferred to manage his classroom, adapting and sometimes subverting requirements to protect his own students and, where possible, turning change to their advantage.

Accountability: expectations and reality

Managing the tensions of accountability was an uncomfortable business, prompting images of “...various swords hanging over my head and hammers that could come down at any point”. Michael realised that despite these tensions, he had found an environment where he was supported in working in his own way. His Performance Management targets had been linked to what he called ‘the head’s’ School Development Plan by “clicking on a special computer programme”, but then he was trusted to follow these through himself. The ‘Threshold’ process was straightforward, with minimal discussion, because Martin was confident that all criteria had been met, where Michael knew the process was much more onerous in other schools. The head clearly knew that bounding Michael with rules, regulations and paperwork was pointless, but expectations and professional boundaries were clear to Michael. If teachers were managing their class well, the head would ‘cut them slack’ and Michael had the leeway to support his students in the way he saw fit. However, although routine health and safety regulations and risk assessments might be vague, meaningless and time consuming, if something bad happened, such as death or injury to a child, then Michael knew that staff would rightly be ‘hailed over the coals’.

The target-led climate, with obsessive interest in accountability, resulted in another layer of tension and stress which Michael absorbed annually. Outwardly, levels of attainment had to demonstrate progress for all students. By Key Stage 4, the accumulated levels of exaggeration from previous years were so great that some of Michael’s students were recorded as being at “unimaginable levels”. If he recorded their actual attainment level, then lack of progress in Michael’s class would be questioned. In college they used a totally different system with different milestones, making the levels given by Michael somewhat irrelevant, so he had decided to fall in with the deception and record continued progress, so that there was no discrepancy. He was vehement about the effects of this, directing the frustration on himself.

Sometimes at home when I’m filling in that stuff I get really angry with myself, and tense. My wife and child have to stay away from the study. I don’t want to see anybody until I’ve done it.

His main concern, as always, was to ensure no detrimental impact on his class. He understood that the senior leadership team’s job was to make sure that the school’s work did have an impact in external terms. Much of the bureaucracy passed Michael by, but he felt the tension all the time, although he qualified his comments carefully,

realising that on another day his emotional response might be different. However he was adamant in his views: while progress checks might be very important in mainstream schools, levelling of progress against standardised benchmarks was less relevant here. He recalled a girl who was now in college and who he said would never change, yet a thick file existed to report her 'progress'. Michael wanted to see accountability systems that were meaningful in supporting students like his, with realistic expectations. He was interested in what made a real difference to their lives, for example building self-esteem and confidence through giving huge amounts of praise.

In terms of external accountability, Michael believed that Ofsted judged the school not from observation evidence, but from the Self-Evaluation Form and statistical evidence of progress and achievement. Most parents had very different criteria, the priorities being safety and health, although some also actively wanted to see progress with specific physical needs, such as independence with toileting and clearer speech, which he agreed were important to address and document. Although it was difficult to seek his students' opinions and involve them directly in improvement, they would certainly echo their parents' views, wanting to feel safe, comfortable and valued.

Teachers, children and society

Michael hated his own secondary school. He remembered aggressive teachers "dealing out stuff to kids" and a series of incidents from his own schooldays when "...we all sat there terrified in our class", forced to listen to the teacher even if boring and pointless. He felt there was now a new 'culture of Britishness', where parents would stand up for their children even when aggressive and expect far more from teachers, particularly in understanding individual children. Students now had high expectations of their educational experience and would not tolerate boredom. Michael felt the media had contributed in the long term, giving a biased and universally destructive portrayal.

The continuous negative portrayal of school in the 1980s – it really got me down. I try not to read the papers, I try not to watch Breakfast TV, because they're just a whole lot of sadnesses and I think that's such a shame, not just for education, for the police and health and for so many aspects. The media just reflects huge torrents of negativity which I don't think are what I experience really from the people I'm working with and the general reality of what's going on, and I think that's really destructive to everybody involved.

Michael felt schools could not 'fix' society, believing that their character reflected the culture and community in which they were situated. Although schools could make some difference to outcomes in a neighbourhood, he did not believe that teachers, who tended to reflect middle class suburban values, had enough credibility and nous with students to counteract the local culture. However, he did know how to work extremely effectively within these given contexts to improve situations and circumstances for individual children and their families. This fitted with the head's vision for the role of school within society and community in which, even though Michael presented himself as something of a maverick, he was undoubtedly seen as a key player.

The heart of the job: working with students and parents

Michael stressed the differences between his own job and that of a mainstream teacher. His students were school refusers, those who had been excluded or who were not managing the regime of shuttling between classes and relating to ten or so different teachers, the huge buildings and chaotic, crowded corridors in a large secondary school. Although some resisted the move, 90% of them quickly felt the benefits of Castlegate. Parents typically noticed improvement after a couple of months, which Michael put down to a 'family' approach, creating the ambience of a primary classroom and building new trust. Teachers were helpers, not bosses. Consistency, constancy and routine were vital: "...they know we will be there and behave how we behave". As the intake began to shift and more students with challenging behaviour arrived, Michael experienced another sense of deskilling

I'm not so effective with some of those kids as I am with some of the others - and I'm gonna have to be.

Concentration was essential on the part of staff, because small lapses could cause big problems. If a wheelchair did not go home on a Friday, the young person could not go out at the weekend. Care and safety were taken very seriously for these highly vulnerable students and keeping parents happy and meeting their concerns was a crucial part of the job. Most teachers would drive a student home if they refused to get on their bus; a home visit might take 45 minutes after school. Michael did not want to generalise, as parental circumstances and engagement varied greatly across the whole range, but things could go badly wrong if any key relationships disintegrated. He had

worked extremely hard with parents and families and was quietly proud of his work in this respect.

Making a difference to fragile lives

It was clear that improvement in Michael's terms, focused on making a genuine difference to students' learning, wellbeing and progress, often came down to style, trial and error, rather than systems and plans. It was often a matter of individualised judgement, intuition and experimentation, using personal, tailored and flexible approaches. Managing one or two 'very severe' students in the context of a whole class was extremely intensive work. He recounted several stories which demonstrated how he approached this.

Keeping Liam in a small room with regular restraint did not work. Staff ended up in tears and Liam's class teacher, Michael's colleague, was eventually signed off work due to stress. Michael took on management of his colleague's class, checking 22 contact books each morning, picking up issues and decision making across two classes for a sustained period. Despite support from the TAs, this period was enormously stressful. The emergency alarm was triggered several times a day, Liam would 'come back harder' after containment and the school's standard system was clearly failing. Michael therefore took it upon himself to manage Liam's day, running around to find what he enjoyed – the soft play area, the swing - small things that he could bring into his sessions. By working with him all the time except for a weekly respite period, the number of alarms fell dramatically. In the autumn term, Michael hoped that Liam would remain contained and happy at Castlegate, but was anticipating that transition to college would be problematic. However this proved to be unsustainable and Liam finally moved to a school that catered for his higher level of need. Michael said that the release had 'changed his life', but for some time the strategy had worked.

For two other students, Michael was happy to endorse the success of the new school systems. Rob had changed Jack, who was now a 'model pupil' and more manageable at home. Another student, Adam, had also made great progress, but nothing was simple – he no longer met the criteria for a car allowance and his family were trying to persuade staff to exaggerate his needs in order to keep their car.

Michael was very proud of these students' successes, which he attributed to his department and class teams. Compared with this intensive work with students, things like improvement plans, strategies, policies and initiatives were not particularly interesting, although he realised he would probably need to engage with this dimension if seeking promotion in the future. Sometimes, he saw initiatives creating barriers to improvement, often they made no difference and only occasionally did he feel they enhance students' learning and experience. Michael said he would leave his job if it was financially viable, but he was still interested in changing students' lives for the better.

Michael's account suggests that the headteacher and his senior leadership team had found ways of compromising requirements and interpreting internal and external expectations such that an independent teacher such as Michael, with his own personal philosophy, experience and approach, had room to work effectively and contribute to school improvement. The head recommended Michael's participation in this study in the knowledge that he would 'tell it like it is', with no fear of exposure. As well as indicating the head's confidence as a leader, this suggests that aspects that might seem dysfunctional were in fact an acknowledged part of the construction of a functioning school. Michael was supported in an individualised way, his strengths were acknowledged and he was given the space to extend his professional practice as he wished, while appropriate challenge was always presented to balance his nurturing approach with students and families. Real change, for Michael, was not necessarily designed or planned, but tended to evolve through building strong and supportive relationships with individual students, families and groups. When this was right, both he and the head knew that students would "...make so much progress that it just shines out of them".

Chapter Seven

An exhibition: exploring the role of teachers in school improvement

The presentation of pictures to an audience, in order to enable a further layer of interpretation to take place, is an art in itself. In order to give a systematic basis for interpretation, the artist or curator mounts an exhibition, in which careful thought is given to the placement of pictures within particular spaces. The organisation of a structured analysis from the portraits and landscapes in Chapters Five and Six is conceived here as the mounting of an exhibition. The evidence can be organised in different ways, in order to offer interpretations in relation to particular aspects of the research questions, framed by the conceptual framework explored in Chapter Two.

Although the discipline of exhibition design is embryonic, it clearly involves the ordering of works so that they may be understood in relation to each other (Dernie, 2006). This is not to say that generalisations will be made via an amalgamation or meta-analysis of images, or that the images will simply be presented again, but rather that it is intended that understanding and interpretation will be illuminated and enhanced by systematic and creative juxtaposition and sequencing. Exhibition design is often defined as a narration, in which a ‘background storyline’ is used to contextualise the items displayed (ibid.). This can involve designing a ‘strong linear experience’ for the gallery viewer, as Dernie suggests, which could in this case use the nested case study structure to present three teachers with the backdrop of each organisational setting in order to explore the links between individuals and each of the two school cultures. However there are also links and patterns to be observed across and between the contrasting contexts. In this analytical presentation, the curator therefore enables the viewer to move back and forth between images, making connections and generating new ideas in the relational spaces which lie both between the two cases and within them.

The evidence presented here is inevitably organised through the subjective lens of the qualitative researcher. There are, of course, multiple truths in these accounts and

therefore many stories could be told. The portraits in particular already represent an interpretation of teachers' experiences, ideas and perceptions, which is further interpreted through another layer of analysis for the exhibition. The reader adds an additional hermeneutic layer (Giddens, 1984; Elliott, 1993a). Readers may compare and contrast this interpretation with their own understandings, derived directly from the portrait and landscape texts, as understood through different personal lenses. The intention, as with any exhibition, is to stimulate thinking and present an interpretation, not to provide resolution.

Three arrangements have been chosen, which draw together emerging analytical themes within the data in relation to the aims of the study. It is appropriate to consider teachers' roles and identities with respect to the broader notion of 'change' rather than 'improvement' because, while school change is introduced with the intention of effecting improvement, this is not always the case according to teachers' interpretations. Individual portraits are located within each of the two organisational contexts to create the contrasting nested case studies. These are distinguished from a multiple case study in that the focus is on how the subunits (individual teachers) 'fit' with the wider case (school context) (Thomas, 2011), recognising the importance of placing stories within their social context as Goodson (1999) suggests.

This chapter offers three 'galleries', each relating to one of the research questions and offering alternative presentations of the evidence. Each of the three galleries of evidence focuses on different aspects of the nested case study structure. The first gallery, 'Constructing identities', is concerned with teachers' understandings of their professional roles and identities in relation to school improvement. Here, the nature of teachers' professional stance in relation to change is considered, which is inevitably influenced by the nature of the school context. In this interpretation, similarities in stance are identified which are conditioned by school cultures. The nested case studies give insights into teachers' responses to the contrasting approaches to leadership and management of change in the two schools. At the same time, the ways in which teachers can override the limitations imposed by organisational culture, in their particular roles and through their own agency, are illustrated and accounted for. The second gallery, 'Contrasting contexts', offers insights into the influences of contrasting school environments through organisational structures, cultures and processes of leadership and change, on teachers' responses and contributions. Thus the first gallery

has more of an individual focus while the second offers an organisational analysis. The third gallery, 'Professionalism to professionalism', explores the essence of teachers' own preferred interpretations of improvement and their identities and roles in relation to this, focusing on illumination of the key relationship between individuals and contexts, agency and structure, such that the interdependence, or 'fit', between individuals and the wider case is examined in the two contrasting settings.

The first gallery: constructing identities

In this first viewing, I return to the idea of the circus images, used earlier as an elicitation tool (Appendix 2), to epitomise the different stances that teachers can take in relation to school change as they perceive it, adopting an analytical perspective focusing on individual teachers. The stances adopted result in the construction of particular professional identities, i.e. the ways in which self is understood and presented. The images presented here are not necessarily the ones used in the interviews or chosen by the teachers, but they illustrate characteristics of identity and stance that arise from the evidence. It is important to note that each stance is not exclusively related to a particular organisational context or set of circumstances which encourages it. Teachers' accounts resist such neat characterisation into types, as exhaustively argued by Stronach et al. (2002). The research evidence demonstrates that teachers combine the elements of different stances as situated selves, negotiating, responding and articulating their identities holistically, in context and over time (Gee, 1997; Stronach et al., 2002; Stark and Stronach, 2005; Coffey, 2001). The categories overlap and interweave. They are not definitive; they could be developed, refined and extended through dialogue and further investigation. Nevertheless, each characterisation is offered as an example of one way in which teachers positioned themselves in relation to change within their organisational context, and illustrated with examples from the research evidence.

The images selected for this gallery are:

1. The spectator
2. Tightrope walking and the flying trapeze
3. Juggling, acrobatics and plate spinning
4. Escapology and endurance
5. The mask.

1. The spectator

Confronted by relentless change, teachers may adopt a stance of denial, indifference or more passive lack of engagement. Some teachers in this study felt that 'improvement' happened on a broader scale than they wanted to be concerned with, were not convinced of its value, or felt that they did not have a contribution to make. They therefore cast themselves passively as spectators, choosing not to engage with what

they perceived to be school improvement activity. They therefore presented a powerful barrier to whole school change in lack of action, which might be caused by a range of different factors such as time pressure, lack of understanding, lack of conviction of the value of the change or direct disagreement with what was proposed.

Jess, the youngest of the teachers, was surprised that she had been asked to contribute to this research about the role of teachers in school change; she said initially that she could not imagine she would have anything of relevance to say. She was intimately concerned with the students in her classes and colleagues in her team and the day to day intensity of managing learning and supporting development. To her, 'school improvement' was not about this, it was represented by the school improvement plan and there was an element of disenfranchisement from this. She felt that it was leaders and managers who 'liked' change, although she was also self-critical of her own caution, wanting things to be tried and tested. Both she and Michael at Castlegate School described sitting in meetings thinking of all the other things they could be doing. While not necessarily overtly cynical or hostile, often they could not see that projects and initiatives would benefit students and they reserved both their energy and their judgment accordingly. Jess simply said that when she had no strong opinion, she would go along with whatever was proposed. Michael found plans, strategies, policies and initiatives uninteresting and irrelevant; he had shelves full of manuals he had never opened and he saw most meetings and paperwork as 'tangential' to his real job.

Nevertheless, both trusted the headteacher to mediate external forces for change and interpret policy in context as well as generating initiatives within the school. Significantly, both Michael and Jess gave examples of accepting change through this trust in leadership and becoming convinced later of its value. Teachers could clearly be coaxed from spectation to participation, either where action was mandatory, through encouragement and persuasion by the headteacher, or in being proactive with regard to particular roles they were interested in developing. Neither Michael nor Jess was averse to leading or initiating change where the right circumstances prevailed and where they judged that there would be clear benefits for students. Their organisational environment and the Castlegate school leadership were conducive to this emergence into participation. It was also clear that at Castlegate, these two teachers presented quite a self-effacing view of themselves, perhaps appearing more passive, while the headteacher was actively engaging them in particular aspects of change where appropriate and was recognising their contributions.

At New Futures Academy, the very different leadership regime encouraged passivity. For James, poor communication and mishandling created distance between him and senior leadership at the outset, including external consultants who he felt had mishandled the transition to academy status, contradicting with times when his autonomy and initiative were apparently encouraged. Lack of trust induced caution; he too described ‘sitting in meetings’, but felt more powerless than resigned, sometimes angry at being patronised and ‘told’, which alienated him from the process of change. Instead of trusting the rationale, he critiqued it, since it contradicted his previous research-based practice. Lorna, as a member of the senior leadership team, said that rationale and strategy for improvement were not evident and believed that too much change was introduced for expediency or centrally directed and controlled through mistrust of teachers’ professional judgment and expertise. As with Jess and Michael, James chose to direct his energy and time towards the classroom and relationships with students, where he sometimes needed to restrain his activity and cultivate some detachment to avoid burn-out. Where he may have had opportunity to contribute within the department beyond his formal role, lack of confidence held him back, for example in relation to challenging retrograde assessment practices. Nevertheless, he had a clear understanding of the priorities for the new Academy and said that he felt himself to be part of the improvement process. James was not always a spectator, but sometimes he felt forced to be, while sometimes he chose to be, for self-protection.

2. Tightrope walking and the flying trapeze

The professional identities of teachers like Michael and James expressed a balancing act within changing contexts in which risks were continually confronted and there was little room for error. Sometimes this was starkly conceived in terms of practical standards of care, particularly in the special school, Castlegate, where incidents threatening safety, health and wellbeing were more likely to occur. Michael was acutely aware of his responsibilities in this respect, working with the vulnerable young people at Castlegate, while Jess in similar circumstances had found her personal safety to be at risk in her previous job. Here, teachers were strongly backed by senior leaders in judging where to compromise or adapt to change and where to comply to the letter. Judgments also had to be made in balancing instinctive human responses against regulations, for example Pam, highly experienced in pastoral leadership, described her

dilemma in wishing to comfort students in distress where physical contact was now forbidden. Here again, the regulations were enforced where there could be no margin for errors of judgment.

Workload pressures were often difficult to balance with life outside school, the tensions creating more personal risk. Although Pam and Christine in particular, working in contrasting school cultures, seemed to take this in their stride, James succumbed to illness under the added pressures of preparing for his new role in the Academy whilst attending to his family and activity out of school, which made him realise the need for better work-life balance. The confused mixture of pressure and support from senior leaders added to his stress. Both Lorna and James were given the impression that they were required to add to their roles or were not working hard enough, when financial pressures forced a restructuring at the Academy, resulting in intensification of roles which both had to challenge.

At Castlegate, Jess, whose life at the start of the year was defined by nothing but work, recognised that this was more to do with her own personal commitment and approach than specific pressure from school management. Here the workload was under less tension, reflecting the more supportive Castlegate regime, in which both Christine and Jess were encouraged to relinquish current roles and tasks in order to tackle new change projects and were involved in the decision making process regarding this. Later in the year, Jess began to gain some perspective in relation to broader terms of reference, considering her ambitions for life as well as her career that would need more careful negotiation, while Christine had begun to learn to delegate. It was clear that the balance of each teacher's professional trajectory was carefully watched, supported and subtly guided by the headteacher, working alongside trusted senior leaders.

The most intolerable pressures, expressed emotionally and vehemently, were not caused by workload. All the teachers expected to work hard, but were challenged in negotiating a pathway between the various tensions and conflicts arising in their complex roles, reflecting the nature rather than the size of workload. The pressure of performativity hung over all three teachers at New Futures, reinforced by a centrally controlling and judgmental regime that was considered to be at best unhelpful and at worst damaging, even given the general agreement that standards of performance had to improve for the school's survival. At Castlegate, there was still a need to show and record continual progress. All of the teachers subscribed to high standards, but some found it difficult to maintain professional integrity where change did not accord with

their knowledge, values and beliefs, in relation to what would benefit their students. Where asked to do something against their judgment, some suffered anxiety in having to make daunting choices. Michael was torn between reporting accurate attainment or falsely demonstrating progress where students' attainment had been cumulatively inflated; it was impossible to be honest and fulfil requirements; there was no safety net. Each response held a different integrity, and he made his eventual decision to protect students and the school, within what he felt to be an inappropriate and flawed accountability system that the headteacher was required to implement. It was an unreasonable choice, which angered and distressed him annually as he turned the frustration in on himself.

At New Futures, these unreasonable demands came not from external requirements but from often chaotic and dysfunctional management of change. Lorna was asked to implement policy that she believed to be dubious and contradictory and to carry out instructions that challenged her strong beliefs about justice, equity and respect. She was forced to break her own promises to people to whom she had become a friend and confidante; she believed in 'treating people well' and found the compromise impossible, walking a tightrope through organisational decision making that was adversely affecting colleagues' lives. Although she tried to find ways to divert her own attention into positive activity and do what she could to alleviate the situation, seizing every opportunity to work strategically as she knew she should, she concluded that she was unable to find an acceptable balance, leading to her eventual resignation.

In both schools, dilemmas and risks threatening integrity were presented as part of teachers' daily lives, requiring a continual balancing act on the part of individuals. However, at Castlegate the leadership structure and culture was supportive, guiding teachers in their judgments and decision making, while at New Futures the school regime often added to the tensions and could undermine teachers' attempts to find the right path.

3. Juggling, acrobatics and plate spinning

At face value, this is perhaps the most obvious set of images representing teachers' professional identity, signifying multiple tasks, busyness and the need to keep all aspects of teaching and management going at once. In this dimension of identity,

teaching as performance was particularly important, with teachers acutely aware that in a target-driven culture, neither they nor their students must let standards or expectations slip.

There is no tolerance of alternative viewpoints for schools in challenging circumstances such as New Futures. The National Challenge benchmarks left the school no alternative but to focus on raising standards of performance. Pam, James, Lorna and the senior leaders of the new academy were all aware of the strands of improvement that should lay the foundation for this improvement: settling in, setting high standards of discipline and developing mutual respect; improved attendance; a sense of belonging in family groups; community support. With all this in place, learning and teaching must be excellent, supported by intelligent use of data and a strong culture of professional development, which Lorna was working hard to establish for all staff at all levels. Neither Pam nor James contested the need for this performance focus, indeed Pam believed that standards within the teaching profession had slipped and approved of the fact that there was 'no place to hide' for teachers who did not 'step up to the mark', while James took his responsibilities for standards seriously within his Key Stage 3 team. He was acutely aware of the need to be able to demonstrate 'Ofsted-readiness' within his area of responsibility, Key Stage 3 English, as judged by teachers' and students' knowledge of levels and sub-levels, targets, strategies and evidence for each student in each subject.

This dimension seems to represent most closely the identity of teachers who were focused on conforming to the national agenda for improving school effectiveness. Christine summed up the relationship between externally driven change and internal interpretation, seeing her role as doing what was asked, getting on with what was 'thrown' at her and 'making the best of it'. Pam also expressed her purpose of supporting the headteacher's leadership and getting on with the job that was required of her, and had shown resilience in this over the years. Jess expressed a similar but more embryonic version of this stance. All were able to reconcile external and internal demands with their own values and concerns such that, with a high level of personal organisation and sheer hard work, conflict and tension were subsumed into commitment and action. All three teachers exercised their individual agency in interpreting change into their own roles and acting with confidence accordingly. This positive stance seemed to rely less on organisational culture and was more to do with individual attitude and approach.

Perhaps less predictable was the strength of reference to collaboration, more specifically teamwork, emerging from teachers' narratives. For Michael and Jess, this involved leading their own classroom team of Teaching Assistants as well as working with a wider group of colleagues including other education and health professionals in consultancy roles. They took great pleasure in such work and derived sustenance from their colleagues daily. Christine was operating across a wider brief than this, in management roles spanning different sites and areas of focus and working with an even wider range of people. She had instigated a great deal of collaborative activity herself in order to manage services better around the children, but this required her to be everywhere. She never allowed herself to be ill, but was gradually learning to delegate. Pam's team included no fully qualified staff; she particularly disliked working alone and had a 'flat' approach to management, seeing her job as smoothing the way for colleagues to lead developments and allowing everyone to have a say. The image of a pyramid of acrobats immediately resonated with her, being mutually supportive, with every person in the team equally needed and valued. She carefully qualified that she was not the person at the top. Structurally, both schools supported such collaboration through the team or subject structure and teachers committed the time and energy to make it work.

All teachers emphasised the enormous importance of teamwork to their personal job satisfaction and wellbeing, using language that communicated ownership, nurture and huge pride, particularly with reference to colleagues who had progressed well and were doing excellent work. All the teachers spoke enthusiastically of the ways in which they worked with colleagues both formally and informally. Michael, in particular, depicted the intensity of this work as a 'five way marriage', suggesting respect, tolerance, mutual understanding and intimacy as well as finding a workable way to co-exist to achieve their common purpose. Jess was immensely proud of her Teaching Assistants who brought empathy, patience, calm enthusiasm and initiative to the classroom as well as 'lots of laughs'.

Beyond the structure of meetings and designated roles, James and Christine actively sought ways of giving support and guidance by sitting side by side with colleagues, giving words of encouragement, listening carefully to pick up issues in conversation and deliberately allowing time for discussion around the edges of the formal schedule. Beth, in the pilot interview, knew the importance of getting together over croissants and coffee for breakfast meetings; for Christine it was a chat 'over a cuppa'. Lorna

knew that colleagues relied upon her to ‘spread the sunshine’. This culture seemed to emanate in both schools from middle leaders, who understood its importance in supporting professionalism in organic ways to underpin change and improvement; it was difficult to see how it could have been engineered by headteachers without seeming contrived.

This was person-centred teamwork which, although it might ultimately be focused on improvement, was also an end in itself, making the professional context meaningful and providing teachers’ positive day to day terms of reference. Part of the juggling and plate spinning was finding the time beyond ‘directed time’ and contrived collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994) to do the collaborative work that teachers felt was important, integrating maintenance and development and building strong relationships. Martin, the headteacher at Castlegate, had taken the bold step of cancelling regular staff meetings and inviting staff to establish their own where needed. Shifting emphasis towards a greater collective responsibility for improvement gave proper acknowledgement of the collaborative ways in which teachers normally like to work. The time for this essential activity might otherwise become squeezed out to the edges of their busy schedules.

4. Escapology and endurance

Teachers depicted other, starker images of aspects of identity in relation to school change, related to pressure in their designated roles. These differ from the balancing acts described in 2, above. In these images, teachers cast themselves as victims and mediators of the actual and potential malign influences of change, bound in the straitjackets of their roles and circumstances, with limited choices, but knowing that they would have to find a way through.

Christine drew her own picture of being ‘sawn in half’ (see Figure 4, p. 75) illustrating the challenges of management roles across different sites, often requiring her to be in two places at once, which she continually addressed through careful organisation. Michael presented three new images of his own. The first was of ‘hundreds of hammers’ over his head, depicting the pressures of managing two classes amidst unreasonably complex and daily changing arrangements, when he had to cover for a colleague. He himself believed that the expectations were ‘impossible’ and decided

that the team would therefore only ‘do what they could do’. He also described himself as a ‘sponge’, soaking up the pressures and complexities surrounding his class and mediating pressures and changing multi-agency arrangements, which the young people found difficult to cope with, his aim being to ensure that they stayed settled. Finally he described a ‘Sword of Damocles’, representing the continual threat from imposed accountability frameworks and requirements, a graphic representation of the ‘sharp edge’ of change (Bascia and Hargreaves, 2000). All these images represent impending danger, which builds into a genuine threat and requires a cool head and a calm and measured response, sometimes involving considerable courage and endurance, to ensure both personal safety and protection for self and students in the face of encroaching change. It is important to note that Michael and Christine were working in the more supportive of the two school cultures, in which the headteacher was aware of the pressures but was steering the school towards a wider moral purpose within the community. Recognising that this asked much of his staff, change was carefully engineered by the headteacher with sensitive and personalised guidance, involving teachers in decision making about their ever changing roles.

5. The mask

The final image depicts an aspect of identity that many describe. The mask represents the presentation of a false outward-facing identity in relation to the teacher’s professional self-identity, indicating severe discontinuity between what is demanded, prescribed and enacted (Evans, 2008; 2011). Here, teachers may decide to subvert, ignore or override requirements in the interests of their students, engaging in ‘ironies of representation’ (ibid) to those to whom they are accountable, both internally and externally. Michael was acutely aware of what he must do, but also of what he need not do, and had an unwritten understanding with Martin, the headteacher, in this respect, ensuring that the best interests of the young people were served whilst ticking the necessary boxes. While he recognised and was self-critical of his own resistance to change, he also believed that some initiatives were cosmetic and would make no difference. Faced with inappropriate change, James had rehearsed his justification to his head of department of his own preferred approach to assessment, where the Academy had a blanket requirement to mark ‘every piece of work’. The stance was felt to be necessary in both schools: in Castlegate, this was mainly for the purposes of

fulfilling external accountability requirements and in New Futures, for fulfilling the additional layer of internal accountability measures that were centrally imposed and controlled.

There is also evidence of ‘ironies of adaptation’ (Evans, 2008) where teachers work around requirements, to their own ends in meeting the needs of their students. In her previous job, Jess felt that some National Curriculum content was completely inappropriate for her class, but she had to demonstrate coverage. She therefore devised ways of approaching this that would at least hold some meaning for the students: French lessons involved experiences with French food and music, maps and signing, while for financial management they made money boxes in papier maché. These were frustrating compromises, but she felt they were necessary under scrutiny. She contrasted this with the regime at Castlegate where she had much more autonomy in her classroom, supported and reassured by senior leaders.

The mask carries the image of compliance, with teachers cast as actors in a scripted system, fulfilling requirements to the letter whilst they themselves might be thinking and even acting differently. Michael and James both experienced tensions in reconciling their beliefs and preferred ways of working with the expectations placed upon them. James, as Key Stage leader in a core subject in a National Challenge school, was understandably more likely to do what was required, even when he had clear alternative preferences, for example in relation to the canon of literature to be studied. This was not least because he must not disadvantage students by diverting from the curriculum. Michael had arrived at a sustainable compromise with his team, distilling learning and teaching down to a simple essence despite the complexities of the class and its environment. He focused on developing patterns and relationships, making progress in learning and skills and gaining more independence towards students being ‘comfortable in their own skins’, which included investing in relationships with parents and carers as well. James and Michael were remarkably frank about the ways in which they addressed the necessary developments and maintained standards, while meeting students’ needs to their own professional satisfaction. The schools contrasted in their response, with James held to account for centrally determined approaches to learning and assessment at New Futures, while at Castlegate, Michael was trusted to manage his classroom with experience and care.

Christine was able to reject explicitly the stance represented by the mask, stating that she would neither persist with something she knew was not working, nor abandon

something successful for the sake of policy. This may have been a reflection of the lower stakes of assessment in her Early Years role, but also demonstrated how the supportive school culture enabled teacher leaders to take risks. It is worth noting that Ofsted awarded her area of responsibility an ‘outstanding’ grading. Lorna clearly preferred such an open, honest style but struggled to practise this in what she experienced as a toxic climate in the Academy. She was the only teacher who chose the mask picture to represent her situation during the interview. She said that she felt compelled to give the impression everything was alright, while she had grave concerns. She was compromised in feeling she must show support for the executive leaders’ strategies, when she disagreed with both substance and process. It is difficult to see how this could have been sustainable – either she must become ‘promiscuous’ (Ball, 2008) and subsume her own values and principles within the new leadership culture at New Futures, or find a professional context where she could express her true identity, which she eventually did, leading to her resignation from the Academy.

Constructing identities

The typology suggested above, although somewhat playful, identifies some important dimensions of teachers’ identities in relation to school change, emerging from and illuminated by the research evidence. These are summarised in the table below.

Identity image	Characteristics of identity in relation to school change
the spectator	passive, lack of engagement, indifference, denial
tightrope walking and the flying trapeze	balancing priorities, negotiating tension, conflict and risk
juggling, acrobatics and plate spinning	busyness, multi-tasking, performance, compliance, teamwork
escapology and endurance	absorbing pressure and threat with courage and resilience
the mask	discontinuity between values and practice, separation of self and identity

In rapidly changing and uncertain times, such as those affecting contemporary schools, people's individual and collective (organisational) capacity for self-development, adaptation and renewal is crucial to their ability to achieve desired outcomes and avoid untoward ones (Bandura, 2001). This is essential to school improvement, since an organisation's capacity to develop, adapt and renew depends on the existence of these capacities amongst its members.

This study demonstrates the complexity of teachers' response and development in relation to organisational change. The teachers in this study often found themselves negotiating, adapting and compromising in order to meet requirements whilst maintaining resilience and integrity. Experienced teachers working in supportive contexts such as Castlegate School, where change was managed strategically within a strong vision and purpose, could generally achieve this successfully without resorting to the 'promiscuity' that Ball (2008) describes, managing the inevitable tensions and conflicts with the guidance and understanding of the headteacher and trusted senior leaders. In turn, these teachers were able to compromise in managing and contributing to change when unsure initially of the value or rationale, and in meeting external accountability requirements for the greater good of the school and its students. Others in less conducive cultures might have to learn to jump accountability hoops and define their identities according to the prescribed notions of 'informed professionalism' (Barber, 2005).

This was much more difficult where change was short term and tactical, or had no educational rationale, and where requirements were imposed within a judgmental regime. It caused intolerable tensions for James and Lorna, but Pam drew on her own reserves of educational vision, a deep commitment to the students and community and an ability to find her own opportunities for instigating change that fulfilled the requirements of organisational structures and processes. All the teachers in this study were wrestling with different tensions relating to surveillance and compliance, which had become irritants to live with, deemed relatively inconsequential or impossible to resolve. Some aspects caused considerable stress, unhappiness and frustration, particularly where they felt students were disadvantaged. Teachers battled to steer a course that would be of greatest benefit to their students, whilst meeting imposed requirements and sustaining their own sense of self and work-life balance. Where circumstances were unsupportive, making compliance impossible if integrity was to remain intact and crushing the spirit, personal professional identity became

compromised and destabilised by alienating purposes and processes for change. Where teachers were confused by inconsistency, mistrust and doubt, their prescribed identity could become detached from their sense of self which, as Lorna found, is unsustainable. However, it could be concluded that a stance founded on individual agency enables teachers in some circumstances to challenge, work with and contribute to powerful organisational forces for change. Sometimes this individual agency enables teachers to succeed despite these forces, even where they can be destructive and malign.

According to Day and Gu's study (2010) teachers need 'stable and positive identities' to succeed and make a difference in today's schools, yet the evidence from this study supports the view that professional identities are fluid, contestable and need to be negotiated over time and according to circumstances, as Coffey (2001) and Stark and Stronach (2005) suggest. This gallery of evidence shows that where professional identities and stances are considered in relation to school change, teachers can be extraordinarily resilient, emotionally equipped for hard moral negotiation and decision making in important aspects of practice. They navigate continually between 'ecologies of practice' and 'economies of performance' in the current educational climate (Stronach et al., 2002). They employ emotional intelligence and display their resilience, alongside the necessary commitment and motivation (Day and Gu, 2010), in shaping and reconstituting their identities in such a way that, as far as possible, they can proceed with integrity in relation to their values and moral purpose. Sometimes this requires withdrawal or a passive stance in relation to change; sometimes it requires intensive and complex activity working with the drivers, tensions, conflicts and contradictions of internal and external policy.

Where it is impossible to discern a path that is sufficiently consistent with personal values, this causes stress, illness, unhappiness and disillusionment, but some teachers are more able to compromise and work strategically to make use of opportunities to their own purposes. Still, with the exception of Lorna, the teachers here had found a path they were currently willing to tread within their designated roles and circumstances. Any emotional, moral or physical costs were counted against what Pam called 'the difference that needed to be made', to children's and young people's lives and learning. Where headteachers and senior leaders paved their way, in the words of both Pam and Martin, they could 'fly'.

The second gallery: contrasting contexts

In this viewing, teacher portraits are analysed from the perspective of the two contrasting organisational contexts, using the nested case study structure to examine the ways in which school structures and cultures affect the role of teachers in school change. Although it is important not to slip uncritically into a dualised caricature of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ school, particularly where different types of school cannot be directly comparable, the schools clearly provide a stark contrast in terms of the ways in which school change was communicated, organised and implemented. Broadly, Castlegate demonstrated a positive professional culture to support a coherent vision and strategy for improvement driven by the headteacher. New Futures Academy conversely showed elements of dysfunction in its leadership and change management, employing reactionary, contradictory tactics for financial as well as educational survival. It had a centralised, judgmental culture in which professional expertise and judgment were often neither valued nor enhanced. Each affected teachers’ perceptions of their professional roles and identities, their ability to exercise agency and their perceptions of their contribution to change.

Senior leadership was the most important influence in this respect, with the headteacher at Castlegate emerging as a positive and supportive influence, backed by a trusted senior leadership team. At the Academy, senior leaders imposed a punitive, centralised regime in which there was no sanctuary, struggled to communicate a rationale for change and blamed teachers’ lack of competence for low standards. In this gallery, the theoretical basis for this contrast in organisational cultures and the effects on the role of teachers in school change is explored.

Interpretations of each school are related to Bandura’s (2001) identification of a continuum of different environmental structures, representing a gradation of the scope and focus of people’s personal agency, from imposed, to selected, to constructed environments. In the imposed environment, individuals have reduced agency – less scope and capacity for taking action to achieve their desired outcomes. In the selected environment, their scope and capacity is greater, as applied to particular aspects of their situations and relationships. At a smaller scale still, people are able to construct their environment, making decisions and taking action to shape their local world and influence its components and interactions. It follows that the potential for structuration

is stronger and people's agency is likely to be more powerful and effective in the localised, 'constructed' environment. The two schools contrasted sharply in the extent to which teachers were subject to imposed environments and the concomitant extent to which they could construct their environment or influence selected aspects of it.

New Futures Academy: a 'school on the edge'

New Futures Academy was, at the time of study, in transition. It had just launched as a new organisation and was under pressure to raise standards. The evidence characterises, almost caricatures, a school focused on tactical, short term measures to improve effectiveness (Gray et al., 1999) that became ever more reactionary as flaws of structure and design were exposed, first internally and then externally. The emphasis on 'economies of performance' within an 'audit culture', rather than 'ecologies of practice' (Stronach et al., 2002) forced teachers into obeying prescription, using a language of military surveillance and expectation which Pam recounted: teachers had 'nowhere to hide' and must 'step up to the mark'. Lorna saw that teachers were being trained to rectify their deficiencies, felt disappointed in the lack of promised resources and buildings and were worn down by change. The imposed environment therefore encroached to the extent that only limited construction by teachers of their environments might be expected.

The Academy's implicit view was that teachers were to blame for low standards, along with the legacy from the past administration, despite some small improvement in results which Lorna attributes to relentless training. Even experienced and effective practitioners were, in Lorna's words, de-professionalised by prescription and reduced to 'hoop jumping' (another circus metaphor), required to implement imposed blanket requirements in their core work of teaching, learning and assessment, as James also testified. Pam's analysis, drawing on 33 years' experience at the site, was more sophisticated and contextualised, according with widely held understandings which were reinforced by school improvement research, although she did not cite this directly. She clearly understood the deeply rooted and long-standing deprivation of the local community's culture and socio-economic context and the effects of societal changes, exacerbated by the removal of the more able children to selective schools, reinforcing students' and teachers' sense of failure and abandonment. She was also able to account, first hand, for the enormous damage that league tables had done to reputation and status. The school was trapped in the uncompromising pursuit of results

to combat spiralling demoralisation and decline, a cycle recognised in MacBeath et al.'s research (2006), where teachers in the most challenging schools habitually become the scapegoats for failure under an ethos of threat.

The confusion expressed in Academy teachers' accounts indicates that the launch and merging of schools was not handled well by the external consultants employed to manage it, leading to lack of trust, frustration, uncertainty and suspicion. Lorna's later account details many flaws in the system-focused approach. The new school was undermined by confusion of purpose and an apparent absence of values and strategy, therefore was thrown back on systems and structures that failed to take account of people's motivations and meaning making, allowing the systemworld to drive the lifeworld, which Sergiovanni (2000) argues leads to destruction. The imposed environment's dysfunction reduced even further the opportunity to contribute to improvement. The ineffectiveness of a top-heavy executive and senior leadership hierarchy (accounting for 80% of salaries according to Lorna) coupled with a distant and disengaged sponsor, was compounded by lack of co-ordination between senior leadership roles and responsibilities. This resulted in inadequate and fragmented development planning, underpinned by a flawed curriculum model. Further schisms were caused by the vertical division of the academy into schools, creating internal competition and conflict. All of these deficiencies were identified in a later Ofsted inspection.

From the start, decisions were made reactively and communicated erratically, with a damaging lack of transparency which eroded teachers' trust and diminished teachers' social and intellectual capital (Hargreaves, 2001) and their creativity and voice (Whitty, 2006), in direct opposition to Lorna's preferred collaborative, capacity building approach. As a senior leader, she was drawn into fire-fighting in an attempt to mollify daily occurring problems. She knew she should be working strategically and creatively to contribute to school development, but she had no terms of reference through which to operate.

Nevertheless, in a predominantly imposed environment, there are examples both of selection and construction of the organisational environment, indicating that structuration (Giddens, 1984; Bandura, 2001) was still possible. With regard to selection, Pam was proactive in developing a vision for food within the Academy's new family structure, while James was able to negotiate his role and initiate classroom innovation. Lorna renamed her role (substituting 'co-ordinator' with 'leader') and

established a quality-marked CPD programme, focusing on building capacity for improvement through professional development to promote excellent learning and teaching, distributed leadership capacity and a vibrant professional culture, igniting and infusing the lifeworld, counter-cultural to the directed training approaches insisted upon by the leadership executive. There was therefore a clash in this territory between overall imposed and locally constructed environments (Bandura, 2001), competing for teachers' time and attention. The power of the executive could always be enforced, while Lorna played for teachers' professional engagement, inspiration and enlightenment.

Although tensions and clashes were evident with regard to the constructed environment, there were opportunities for teachers to exercise some agency in their immediate contexts and designated roles. Pam, in taking up her role as head of food, wrote a paper setting out her vision for the vertical Family Units, which she was in the process of implementing with her team. She had many ideas for initiatives extending out into the community, following the pattern of many years' experience, working with the academy's priorities and structure to pursue her own agenda. James was spending many hours planning bespoke lessons which reclaimed the classroom for himself and his students. He rejected schemes of work which, while not imposed, would have saved him work but would have compromised enjoyment and satisfaction. Finally, all three teachers were constructing relationships, Pam and James with their students and teams and Lorna mainly with colleagues in her non-teaching role. The emphasis placed on the importance of relationships in their accounts suggests that these figured powerfully in their conceptions and constructions of their immediate environments. Arguably, the ways in which teachers defined their constructed environment (for example as people, as structures, as activities, as priorities) determined the extent to which they could be said to have influenced it.

Subjected to a highly performative regime, James selected carefully the aspects of the environment that he was prepared to influence, depending on a range of factors: professional confidence, formal authority, risk in relation to accountability structures, conviction about the best ways of working, personal satisfaction and enjoyment, benefit to the students and the effect on his workload. Lorna was subjected to the greatest imposition, in a double bind where she herself was required to contribute to the imposition process, which clashed directly with the professional culture towards improvement that she was intending to construct. Pam was more of a strategist, acutely

aware of how to fit her own agenda to that of the Academy whilst leading her team to meet the requirements of the imposed regime. She, of all the teachers, thriving on challenge and in a non-core subject role that allowed her scope, had greatest purchase on the organisational environment and her constructive role within it. Within a managed, systems-driven culture, she made meaning for herself.

Castlegate School: building a learning and leading community

At Castlegate, the headteacher's own philosophy of change had powerful influence over the ways in which teachers conceived of their roles and identities in relation to change and the extent to which they exercised agency in construction of their environment. All three teachers felt trusted and empowered in their own classrooms, welcomed the 'open door' approach to leadership and derived great satisfaction in working with their teams, often communicating the importance of positive relationships as central to their work. It is clear that despite the imposition of external requirements and directives, teachers were made explicitly aware of their scope for constructing the classroom environment and team activity around the children's needs and were supported and reassured in decision making by senior leaders. Furthermore, they expected and encouraged this initiative and autonomy from their colleagues and within their teams. Here the lifeworld predominated, allowing teachers to make meaning for themselves and build capacity for improvement.

The headteacher's expectation was that teachers would also select aspects of the wider organisational environment to which they could contribute. Many examples of his influence and support emerge from the evidence, showing how the headteacher was orchestrating change, recognising strengths and weaknesses and actively drawing people's influence together in conjoint agency (Gronn, 2003). For example, he used performance management processes to link teachers' work into the school improvement plan, also allocating time for consultation, discussion and choice around organisational priorities and who would take the lead in addressing them. Carefully judged personalised words of encouragement, offers of support and presentation of opportunities ensured that teachers felt they could take risks and innovate with strong organisational backing, for example where Christine was leading the implementation of a new reporting system. Jess was prompted by the headteacher to consider a leadership role, which she initially rejected, but by the end of the year she had set her

sights on a responsibility post and registered for a Masters degree, nurtured and gently challenged by the headteacher to find her niche within her chosen field of special education.

Thus Martin, as headteacher, constructed the school environment himself, but an important element of this was his belief in co-construction. He exercised his personal agency to draw his staff into the process of improvement and the realisation of his vision, reaching into the wider community. Teachers and other staff became part of this construction and undertook the same responsibility within an organic system of change. All three teachers described a mutually supportive, collaborative culture in which they took responsibility for nurturing colleagues and from which they themselves derived sustenance. They therefore followed the constructive ethos by enabling their teams and other colleagues to engage in construction within their spheres of influence. Christine in particular explained how she nurtured this in informal, friendly ways, building relationships, encouraging, modelling and listening. Although she normally had a clear idea of what she intended to achieve, she also allowed for other opinions and contributions, orchestrating activity at middle leadership level to co-construct improvement.

The interface between imposed, selected and constructed environments is particularly interesting at Castlegate. All teachers cast Martin, the headteacher, as the mediator and interpreter of policy and external initiatives, relying on him to explain implications and judge what needed to be done. They trusted him implicitly to mediate externally prompted change and would support him in contributing to change even when not yet convinced of its rationale. Christine was also engaging in this process with regard to her area of responsibility, explaining that she had designed the curriculum that would meet students' needs and would then map the new external requirements to fit. Thus even where imposition might have been expected, it was converted into a construction in the best interests of the school, reflecting the tenor of Fullan's 'lessons of change' (1993), where every situation is an opportunity, while what matters is decided by those directly concerned, not centrally mandated.

Nevertheless, there was still some discontinuity at Castlegate between some of the imposed change, usually linked to external demands for accountability, and the responses of the teachers. As explained earlier, some teachers distanced themselves from change and chose a passive stance. External accountability structures, coupled

with the many initiatives and projects, overlaid onto myriad daily arrangements in a busy, multi-agency school, sometimes over-complicated improvement activity and created unreasonable expectations and tensions. Michael protected students by trying to construct an oasis of calm in the immediate classroom environment and he and his team understood that not all expectations could be met. Sometimes, agency could be used to reduce activity in negotiation with the headteacher, such as putting Christine's Artsmark work on hold for another year, aiming for settling and consolidation. Doing less things, but the right things, and properly, might be preferable to continual change.

Negotiating imposed and constructed environments

These two examples could well be reconciled into a duality of 'good school / bad school', holding up Castlegate as a beacon of good practice and denigrating New Futures which, at the time of writing, had recently failed another inspection. Yet, notwithstanding the contrasting circumstances of the two schools, both demonstrated powerful examples of teacher agency in the construction of immediate and wider environments and both also included elements of imposition and constraint. In each school, teachers variously avoided, coped with, contributed to and embraced change, but while at Castlegate there was a sense of working together for shared moral and educational purpose within the given policy climate for the intrinsic benefit of students, at New Futures there was a lack of coherent direction or process in the imposed quest for the extrinsic reward of a good inspection and higher league table status. Ironically, sometime after the period of study, Castlegate's inspection demoted the school to 'satisfactory', on the basis that there was insufficient evidence of robust accountability systems. These might have undermined the organic capacity building approach, although there was no opportunity to investigate this notion.

The significance of headteachers' and senior leaders' personal and conjoint agency in mediating imposition, enabling teachers to construct their professional environments of influence and select aspects for wider influence, should not be underestimated. The lack of this kind of support at New Futures made some teachers' professional situations untenable, resulting in Lorna leaving the school, followed by James some time later. Beyond this more or less successful mediation, teachers, through their own agency, responded individually to enablement or constraint and were sometimes able to override organisational limitations to achieve their goals.

In the final gallery of evidence, teachers' professionalism is examined in more detail, in order to explore their personal professional agendas for change and the extent to which they felt able to pursue them.

The third gallery: professionalism to professionality

This final viewing is an attempt to ‘get in touch with people’s lives’, not just listening to, but searching for the story that the teachers wanted to tell, as Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis (1997) suggest. This has involved an element of ‘generosity’ as well as creativity, empathy and insight on my own part in seeking ‘goodness’ in the accounts. It reveals the ‘pearl earring’ of each teacher portrait, without which it would not be considered, either by artist or subject, to be complete (Chevalier, 2008). Day et al. (2006) suggest that not enough attention has been paid to the relationships between identity and teacher effectiveness, but this is based upon the assumptions of the current hegemony. In this viewing, I sought to explore the selected teachers’ own definitions of improvement, capturing their ideas about what motivated and excited them, their commitments and passions, their cares and concerns, the aspects of their work into which they chose to pour time and energy.

This was where the portraiture evidence seemed to come into its own, since it had attempted to capture the essence of teachers’ professional lives and interpretations of their work. Teachers themselves revealed how important the accounts were, not only in factual terms but also in expressing more profound aspects of their beliefs, attitudes and motivations, for example Michael described being ‘laid bare’, while Christine was concerned to tell me that she still ‘stood by’ what she had said. The accounts were therefore authenticated at this deeper level. The intention in this interpretation was not to idealise the profession or the individual teachers themselves (against which Stronach et al. (2002) warn). However, this more intuitive analysis provided something of a counterbalance to more dispassionate academic analysis, where researchers generally aim to inform, rather than inspire; portraiture, it is argued, can do both (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997).

The final viewing, then, was achieved by selecting the parts of these accounts that expressed and interpreted teachers’ ideas about what they felt was important and what they felt they had to do - aspects to which they felt a personal, emotional and moral commitment and about which they became excited and animated. Thus it represents my interpretation of teachers’ understandings of their roles and identities in relation to priorities according to their own definitions. This is expressed in terms of elements of their professionality – their individual stance expressed within their ‘ecologies of practice’ (Evans, 2008; Stronach et al., 2002). However, it moves beyond Evans’

concept of ‘enacted’ professionalism, defined primarily in relation to organisational and external requirements, which in turn are part of the imposed environment, to consider an authentic professionalism, bound up in professional identity, defined in relation to the self. This viewing brings together teaching as teachers feel it should be (the ideal), along with the reality of teaching as it is now. It can perhaps be conceived as demonstrating what teachers are working to improve, within or despite policy and accountability frameworks.

Iterative analysis of the portrait texts revealed remarkable consistency in this respect, with interpretations reinforced by the summaries based on elicitation tools exploring professional priorities and aspirations (see Appendices 12 and 13). The themes below emerged clearly from the data:

- passion for subject or phase specialism
- quality, relevance and flexibility of learning
- research and innovation
- holistic outcomes
- relationships, respect and care
- collegiality
- families and communities
- inclusion and equity.

With the exception of Lorna, whose account was differently focused since she occupied a non-teaching role, all the teachers, whether from Castlegate School or from New Futures Academy, spoke about all of these themes, and no additional themes emerged prominently in this respect. Lorna spoke about those which related to her CPD role. Since the themes were not introduced explicitly through questioning or in the tools used, this interpretation represents with some confidence the focus of the teachers’ attention and commitment. With the caveat that this is not intended to be a generalisation, but an interpretation on the basis of six individual accounts, each theme is explained and illuminated below.

Passion for subject or phase specialism

This theme was particularly pertinent for Pam and James as secondary school teachers, who spoke with a real love for their subjects of food and English literature

respectively. They wanted to communicate this passion and intrinsic motivation for learning. James believed that texts should be enjoyed for their own sake, listing many that he would have liked to study, given the freedom. Pam believed fervently that food brought people and communities together, including the mixed-age ‘families’ in the new Academy structure, and that knowledge and skills in food and nutrition were a key to health and longevity. She fuelled her own interest with local and international projects and networks and loved to bring this learning into her classroom.

For Castlegate teachers, this ‘subject’ theme was reflected in their commitment to their chosen phase of special education where they recognised, with the headteacher, that a process of deskilling and reskilling had taken place. Jess in particular recognised that her professional knowledge needed to be updated continually; by the end of the year of study she had committed herself to a specialist Masters degree. In all the accounts, igniting love of learning in students was central to teachers’ work, reflecting their own learning and scholarship. For Lorna, lifelong learning for teachers and other education professionals as well as for students was her passion and at the heart of her CPD programme.

Quality, relevance and flexibility of learning

Within the constraints of the prescribed curriculum and given resources, teachers planned learning that was fun, interesting, varied and engaging. All the teachers in this study wanted to excite, inspire and motivate children and young people in the classroom, ranging from James’ lessons using technology and based on contemporary television programmes, to Jess’s sensory and communications work. Teachers sometimes looked for opportunities to involve others, for example in Pam’s gardening and cooking with celebrities and Christine’s infant learning journeys to other lands in song, story and play through a Creative Partnerships project. The focus on effective and enjoyable learning was strongly evident in teachers’ professional priorities (Appendix 13) and in their expressions of how they would like teaching to be (Appendix 12b).

Teachers did not generally choose to compartmentalise learning in terms of targets and levels, although these were referenced continually by some. Jess distinguished learning clearly from therapy or babysitting, while Pam rejected the notion of learning either as entertainment or as ‘dumbed down’, wanting students to emerge with widened

horizons and knowledge and understanding of the real world, with practical life skills to support healthy choices and wellbeing. She also encouraged them as activists in the world and in their neighbourhoods. Within her traditionally non-academic subject, she applauded academic disciplines of critical thinking, accurate writing and accumulation of knowledge that ‘had to be learnt’. James wished to impart his own lifelong love of literature, with English language studies seen as a means to that end, speaking enthusiastically about his students’ eagerness to read. Where Christine was building bridges with families of the youngest children, it was learning, rather than pastoral support, that she wanted to emphasise in the conversations.

Relevance and personalisation were seen by many as key to motivation, engagement and inspiration. Michael’s work with one student was the most extreme example of a tailored response for a young person who needed almost his full time attention. While many wished for more choice and flexibility in their practice (see Appendix 12), this could still be found within and beyond the requirements of the National Curriculum to a certain extent, although Pam recalled more halcyon days of trips, activities, sports and summer camps. Above all, teachers wanted to be engaging children and young people in classroom activity that they knew would be meaningful and beneficial, helping them to develop, progress and ultimately ‘shine’.

Research and innovation

While few of the teachers referred to research as such, all expressed the view that practice needed to develop and move on, through experimentation, investigation and renewal. Sometimes this was at the level of fine-tuning, for example where Michael described balancing his class ‘ecosystem’ at the start of the year. The Creative Partnerships work at Castlegate was an example of formal research that supported classroom and whole school change and was additionally conceived by the headteacher as a critical exploration of the change process. Beyond this, teachers cited many other projects and initiatives, including much activity instigated by themselves. There was much reference to the importance of maintaining interest and enjoyment both for students and teachers, by changing content and pedagogy, injecting enthusiasm with new ideas and projects and refreshing knowledge. Research might involve a collaborative pilot, such as Pam’s work in the mathematics curriculum, or individual reading to keep updated on developments in the subject field, to which Jess had

personally committed. Christine was continually researching, developing and innovating in relation to core aspects of her work, including leadership development, while Lorna had established a comprehensive programme for staff learning in the early days of the academy, founded upon collaborative enquiry and critical reflective practice.

Consensus about the importance of variety and interest expressed a much more egalitarian view of classrooms than might have been expected, as a mutual learning experience for teachers and students. James, in particular, challenged the wisdom of delivering the same schemes of work based on the same texts year after year, wanting much more variety and choice: if he was interested and excited, this would motivate students as well. Some teachers begrudged time spent on monitoring and tracking paperwork when they preferred to spend the time on planning and investigating fresh, interesting and relevant learning; others accepted its necessity, while Christine's approach was to investigate, trial and implement a new system through an action research type process.

Holistic outcomes

Alongside commitment to their subject or phase specialisms, all the teachers conveyed a resolutely holistic view of the purpose of schooling, citing 'making a difference to children's lives' as the highest of their professional priorities (Appendix 13). They wanted students to develop self-esteem and pride in themselves, to be not only motivated learners but confident people. Fitness, health and wellbeing were set alongside effective communication, behaviour and ability to make the right choices. It was difficult to separate academic, social and emotional benefits of learning since they were seen as contributing to each other and as ends in themselves. Progress in the broadest sense was a source of pride for teachers as they saw students better able to cope with current and future lives and, as Michael put it, more 'comfortable in their own skins'. Teachers did not express these ideas in relation to explicit mention of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda, which still influenced outcomes for which schools were accountable at the time of the study. They believed fundamentally in a holistic purpose for schooling, whatever the current directives. The moving examples they gave of ways in which they felt they had made a significant difference to children and young people were usually about these holistic outcomes.

Relationships, respect and care

Linked to holistic outcomes, teachers continually emphasised the centrality of developing and nurturing positive relationships with students, another factor emerging strongly in the summarised data in Appendix 12 and 13. This included a classroom ethic of respect, which was seen not in an authoritarian sense but, as Pam explained, ‘because we are all human beings’. Both she and Jess preferred students to use their first names. Similarly, Pam could not see the point of uniform, a form of social control. She understood that teachers had to win respect in an immensely challenging and stressful job. Her relationships with students extended beyond the school gates and over time, having taught the grandparents of current students; she did not delineate what happened inside and outside of school. Michael, too, stressed that his job was essentially about ensuring that students felt comfortable and safe and this involved getting to know them well, including sometimes visiting their homes. This was balanced by multi-agency approaches that stretched and challenged the students to explore and extend beyond the safe classroom base.

These teachers genuinely cared for their students and wanted them to be happy and to thrive. There was general agreement with Jess’s comment that improvement would be seen in the smiles on children’s faces. Small triumphs mattered: Christine said that the first words of one previously silent little boy evoked an emotional response for her whole team, reminding her of the reason she wanted to teach, which was a turning point in her induction to special education. Teachers’ overriding concern was for children to be happy and to have better lives, with learning as part of the equation. As Lorna said, this meant ‘treating people well’, whether students or colleagues, and expecting this to be returned.

Collegiality

This aspect of teachers’ work was the only theme that did not relate directly to students but was nevertheless mentioned by all. As explained earlier, collegiality and teamwork were central to job satisfaction and imperative in supporting teachers’ effectiveness and development. Relationships with colleagues were viewed in the same light as those with students. For these teachers, authoritarian approaches were less appropriate than patient, fine grained support, often informally arranged with an ad-hoc conversation, a word, a nudge of encouragement, listening, advising and working alongside one

another to deal with day to day complexities. Teachers worked within habitually designated roles to enable and empower colleagues, share leadership and encourage creativity and initiative, as Jess, Pam, Michael, James and Christine described for their teams and Lorna effected across the curriculum. In these accounts, colleagues were affirmed and praised, with teachers taking personal pride in watching and nurturing people's professional development. Lorna understood this when planning professional development and leading improvement that, where possible, built collaboration and shared leadership capacity. Both maintenance and improvement were undertaken collaboratively. Although performance was managed individually, teachers clearly and deliberately chose to meet the demands of students, organisation and state by working together.

Families and communities

All the teachers' accounts included significant reference to the importance of relationships with families and community. Teachers needed to gain support for students' learning and development, as Christine was so keen to promote through her parental liaison work. Michael was proud of the relationships that he had built with families over the years, which involved home visits as well as communications in school and via contact books. For his vulnerable students, omissions and mistakes could be catastrophic. While Michael did not believe that schooling could change society, Pam wanted to spread learning more widely, with a vision to teach budgeting, healthy eating and the implications of lifestyle choices to students who would then take the knowledge and skills back into their families. James, previously responsible for inclusion, spoke of the importance of communicating carefully with families and addressing problems straight away. Formal interactions such as parents' evenings were hardly mentioned; teachers saw these relationships as much more organic and the school boundaries as permeable, such that working with the child or young person could be seen to involve a much wider set of relationships and learning activity with parents, carers and families as well.

Inclusion and equity

Teachers were continually confronted by inequities and injustice and were most concerned to ensure that students encountered fairness and equal access in their learning. Although this might be expected particularly in the special school, this conviction was universal in teachers' accounts. Pam and James both felt concern for students who did not normally thrive and understood the need to act swiftly where problems such as bullying occurred. Pam worked through projects and initiatives to address issues such as teenage pregnancy, while she and James knew the importance of building relationships with families. Jess had always felt compelled to work with those who were most marginalised and vulnerable - 'the children in the corner' - and after a time of travelling and reflection she returned with an even stronger commitment. All the teachers were advocates for children and young people, praised them, believed in them and were indignant on their behalf where they were maligned in the media. They gave them fresh chances every day and wanted them to celebrate their difference and diversity and learn from one another.

Some more negative experiences and perceptions may have gone unsaid, and this was not a representative sample from which generalisations about teachers can be made, but the third gallery shows that teachers seemed to be genuinely engaged in a 'search for goodness' (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997) in their classrooms and schools.

Agency for improvement

The gallery's evidence has borne out wider research showing that teachers have strong commitments to children's wellbeing and achievement, the passionate communication of subject knowledge, inculcation of positive values and attitudes and the building of individual and community relationships (Crosswell, 2006 in Day and Gu, 2010). The evidence from the teachers' accounts here shows that this is considered to be the focus of the improvements that teachers want to make, but is not generally labelled as such, reflecting a discontinuity between the projects, initiatives and reforms characterising the formal discourse of school change and teachers' understandings about what they wish to improve, enhance and benefit. When asked about their role in school improvement, they tended to cite plans, meetings, folders, initiatives and projects, generated by others. When asked what they cared about, the above set of themes

emerged. This was often conceived as a different kind of work from implementing policy. It was work which teachers often had to fight for time to do, while sometimes policy, certainly process, was often at odds with their purposes, or was simply viewed as irrelevant. In such circumstances, teachers demonstrated Bandura's core features of human agency (2001), which are shown in brackets.

- choosing to implement policy that helped to achieve desired outcomes and using it as a vehicle for their own agendas (intentionality);
- colluding and compromising where no harm would be done, or in an exercise of damage limitation (self-reactiveness);
- working 'under the radar' to effect desired changes despite imposed requirements (forethought and self-reactiveness);
- initiating their own projects and involving others through collaboration and shared leadership (intentionality);
- contributing additional effort and committing time well beyond what was expected or required, to achieve their own aims in meeting students' needs (intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness);
- subverting requirements altogether, so as to concentrate on what matters (self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness).

Here, teachers are not victims (Galton and MacBeath, 2008) but are using their professional imaginations, creativity and sheer hard work to achieve desired outcomes. Practice and decision making is governed by sophisticated ethical codes, as Lunt (2008) suggests, for example embracing provisionality, qualifying different kinds of truth and enacting nuanced interpretations of professionalism, according to situation within the socio-economic and political context.

Where people are required to behave in ways that conflict with their personal value systems, moral purposes and preferred outcomes, they are willing to put the welfare of others above their own self-interest (Bandura, 2001). The effects of this can range from inconvenience to hard work and long hours, illness and stress. The evidence from this study suggests that teachers' interests are usually focused firmly on students' needs, particularly those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged. Themes of learning, inclusion, broader outcomes, respectful relationships, community outreach and subject specialism are not unfamiliar in the policy literature. Teachers can therefore make links between policy and their own preferred processes and personal and humanitarian focus. They do not reject the wider discourses, but engage with, negotiate and deploy them (Barnett,

2008), introducing their own contributions, to achieve their own ends. In effect, they exercise agency in relation to their own agency, making decisions and choices about where and how to direct their time and energy. Their ability to make a difference through their own actions, and seeing evidence of this, as Bandura (2001) suggests, is what gives them the incentive to persevere. It is vital to seek and retell these positive stories in order to reinforce our understanding of the conditions and attitudes that support improvement, as Apple (2009) and Goodson (1999) suggest. The implications of this evidence were considered alongside the conceptual development exploring the relationship between teachers' professional identity, professionalism and school improvement, pivoting on concepts of agency and structuration. This suggested that it would be valuable to develop a model for schooling in which the concept of agency is given greater prominence.

A new model for schooling: developing an agentic perspective

The analysis of this research evidence in relation to the conceptual developments that marked the progress of the research, as summarised at the end of each chapter, confirms the inadequacy of the concepts of school effectiveness and school improvement to scaffold authentic understandings and analysis of school change and the actual and potential role of teachers in the process. In Chapter Two, it is argued that school effectiveness emphasises epistemological processes, relationships and outcomes – concerned with knowing, while school improvement also encompasses ontological processes, relationships and outcomes – concerned with being. The evidence presented through the teacher portraits and in the appended summaries (Appendices 12 and 13) shows that much of teachers' professional activity lies beyond these parameters, particularly where school improvement and school effectiveness have become synonymous. In response to this, I conceived a further dimension of schooling, to express and frame teachers' commitments, energy and moral purpose channelled into action through their own agency, as illustrated in the teachers' accounts. This agency includes both the instigation of teachers' own activity and the interpretation of internally and externally driven change. It can be positively mediated through supportive organisational contexts, but can also overcome considerable limitations imposed by organisational regimes, as illustrated in the gallery viewings in this chapter.

The combination of analysis of the empirical evidence, along with the conceptual developments that occurred as the research progressed, has led to the detailed characterisation of a third, agentic perspective for schooling, to complement the epistemological and ontological dimensions. This dimension emphasises agential processes, relationships and outcomes – concerned with doing. Bandura's consideration of psychological aspects of agency in relation to professional environments (2001) is extended to include teachers' agency in relation to their professional identities, with sociological aspects in relation to discursive consciousness, agency and structuration, as initially explored in Chapter Two. These ideas encapsulate, illuminate and extend the concept of organic systems (Mitchell and Sackney, 2009).

A new framework for schooling is outlined in the table, Figure 8, where elements of the agentic dimension are set out in the final column for comparison with ontological and epistemological dimensions. The agentic perspective is not intended as an alternative, but offers a working framework for an essential and distinctive additional dimension. The three dimensions together have been used to create a model for conceptualising and developing schooling that gives due recognition to the agential aspects of the process. This is to be considered as a starting point, a framework for discussion and interpretation, rather than a conclusion, moving on from the cycles of material, cultural and structural reproduction shown diagrammatically in Figures 1 and 2 (see Chapter Two). Here, the teacher's professional role and identity as an agent of school change takes into account both formal and informal roles and contributions, as shown in the empirical data in this study. Building in the theoretical understandings derived from the literature review and from the methodological developments, the broader dimensions of agency, sense of self-efficacy and contribution to school change that emerge from the empirical evidence are reflected in this third, agentic dimension.

This typology offers a fresh lens with which to approach the development of schools and conceive of teacher professionalism. The agentic dimension represents a transition from the building of material, social and intellectual capital and the building of capacity for improvement, to achieve their respective educational outcomes, towards the building of agency that underpins all these aspects of organisational and personal growth and is in itself an integral educational purpose.

Figure 8: Analytical framework comparing epistemological, ontological and agentic perspectives for schooling

Purpose and outcomes for schooling	EPISTEMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE	ONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE	AGENTIC PERSPECTIVE
Central concern	knowledge and ways of knowing	identity and ways of being	agency and ways of acting
Areas of emphasis (process in bold)	transmission of knowledge, understanding, information	development of relationships, interactions, self- knowledge, emotional intelligence and emotional literacy	enactment of participation, democracy, citizenship, voice, self-efficacy, agency, activism
Policy landscape	imposition by external decision makers; national reforms; global comparisons	implementation of national or organisational policy by individuals, groups and agencies	generation of ideas and actions by local participants; interpretation and choice in relation to external ideas
Structure and culture	hierarchical; emphasis on roles, tasks, status and authority; managerialism; performativity	attention to organisational culture as well as structure; emphasis on processes and collaboration but may retain elements of managerialism and performativity	people both influence and are influenced by their environment; individuals' agency is enabled and constrained by local context and senior leaders
People related to context	individuals exist within organisation	social groups operate within system	people interact within community
Leadership	hierarchical, charismatic; possibly autocratic, dictatorial; hero-innovators; super-heads; line management; monitoring and surveillance; structured support and backup	distributed and shared leadership as a value or a tool; empowering people to implement; leadership at all levels; leaders of learning; mutual support within teams; all are stakeholders	headteachers orchestrate conjoint agency; people's self-belief in their own efficacy increases agency; high leadership capacity and density; trust is paramount
Theoretical standpoint	school effectiveness systemsworld managed systems dependent learning modernity	school improvement lifeworld organic systems independent learning post-modernity	school transformation localism in systemic and global context complex communities interdependent learning liquidity
Research emphasis	quantitative; formulae for effective classroom and leadership practice; dissemination and roll-out	qualitative; research into practice and self-evaluation; recognition of contexts and cultures affecting implementation	narrative and discourse; participation in collaborative, enquiry-based learning to inform and support change

Success criteria: individual	academic performance and progress measured against targets and predictions by tests and examinations	broader range of outcomes (e.g. 'Every Child Matters') including health, safety, wellbeing and participation	determined locally by, with and for individuals; fit for purpose and context; used flexibly and formatively; agency itself as outcome
Success criteria: organisational	performance and progress measured against national benchmarks for academic performance; inspection against national framework	self-evaluation as part of school development within a learning community; views of all stakeholders taken into account	ongoing evaluation by members of community; participation, decision making and action as part of normal discourse of development
Success criteria: national	PISA comparisons of achievement in core academic subjects	international comparisons recognise diversity of cultures and contexts; value added; case study allows qualitative evidence and research into process	assimilation of personal narrative experience; learning and from diversity; national comparative statistics are irrelevant
Accountability	nested accountability: individual > school > Local Authority > national government	collective responsibility and accountability in relation to external and internal requirements	internal shared responsibility and internal accountability to and for each other
Students	products, statistics, cohorts	learners, stakeholders, customers, respondents; future citizens and leaders	participants, citizens, co-learners, co-constructors, researchers, decision makers, leaders, agents
Teachers	technicians, implementers, managers; knowledge and expertise in curriculum content and pedagogy including behaviour management restricted professionalism	reflective practitioners, collaborators, researchers, coaches and mentors, implementers; emotional / interpersonal understanding extended professionalism	learners, leaders, agents of change; participants in democratic community of practice; capacity builders change agency
Professional discourse	technical-rational: technical debate about how to perpetuate the system	practical consciousness: professional debate about the nature and implications of the system	discursive consciousness: critical debate about the purpose and potential improvement of the system
Professional development	transmission, transaction, prescription; courses and training; performance management; leadership pathways	sharing 'good practice' and 'what works'; teacher research; informal and formal support; critical reflective practice; coaching and mentoring	democratic participation in processes of change; critical enquiry linking theory, policy and practice; collaboration in extended school communities
Sustainability	approaches remain traditional; standards plateau; questionable importance of academic performance in times of social, economic and environmental uncertainty; contestable validity of performance measures (targets and grades); disadvantage gap widens	danger that school improvement becomes subsumed into effectiveness; initiative overload leading to intensification and burnout; lack of debate about educational purpose; systemic reform fails to meet expectations; funding is withdrawn	relies on human initiative, creativity, enterprise and mutual commitment for sustainable local change; low-cost activity for greater reward (high leverage); sustainable retreat from standards agenda trades performance for other commodities: trust, equity, integrity; risk of no central control

During the development of these ideas I have used the concept of an agentic perspective to frame and challenge my work as a teacher educator, researcher, school improvement consultant and advocate. There is much left to explore, but in Chapter Eight I consider the implications and possible applications of this model, discussing how an agentic perspective, drawing and building upon the ideas and elements in the final column of the table above, can be introduced to support the development and extension of teachers' professionalism and professionality, in which agency is integral to process and outcome, linking professional identity explicitly with school change. The analysis of the empirical evidence concerning how individuals work within, contribute to, and are influenced by, their changing school environments, combined with the conceptual discussion as the research has progressed, has led to a 'call to action' to conclude this chapter.

Call to action: reinstating teachers into discourse and proactivity

Negotiating, discussing and enacting professionalism are more valuable to the wellbeing and continuation of the profession than definition. The struggle of professionalism is recognised by Stronach et al. (2002), as teachers "traffic between twin abstractions, the 'ideal' and the 'unrealised'" (p.132), practice being merely the residue of this abstraction. While this 'residue' may command the most attention, in order to embrace the agentic perspective of schooling, "professionals must re-story themselves" (p.131), developing a 'narrative ethic' of identity formation 'via restoration of trust'. From the organisational point of view, storying is central to fostering school improvement (Doyle, 1997). Through narrative approaches, teachers not only engage with their own professional identity formation but gain influence over the process of identity creation.

The final chapter of this thesis is concerned with the implications of applying an agentic perspective for schooling, as characterised in Figure 8, in terms of reinstatement of teachers within the discourse of professionalism and school improvement. Here I discuss how the application of tools and frameworks from this study, within an agentic framework, can enable teachers to reconceptualise their roles and identities in relation to school development. Beyond this, if teachers are not to work in the abstract, there is practical work to be done.

To make their way successfully through a complex world full of challenges and hazards, people have to make good judgements about their capabilities, anticipate the probable effects of different events and causes of action, size up socio-structural opportunities and constraints, and regulate their behaviour accordingly.

(Bandura, 2001: 2)

A perspective that brings agency and structuration explicitly into the discourse provides a foundation and impetus for action, in working towards those 'ideal' and 'unrealised' aspects of practice towards which teachers aspire. This means that they should not only be exhorted to provide solutions, but must also be allowed to identify issues and contribute to decisions about the very nature and purpose of schooling, both in generating change and in responding to initiatives and aspects of reform, as the basis for playing an active role in school change. This includes using these ideas as a basis for constructing their professional identities explicitly in relation to their role in all aspects of school change.

Chapter Eight

Implications of an agentic perspective for schooling: possibilities for constructing professional environments and identities in the school improvement landscape

As this research has progressed, I have found its influence increasingly powerful in my own practice as a teacher educator, inter-relating the domains of research, postgraduate teaching and small-scale school improvement consultancy. It would be disingenuous to omit this dimension of development emanating from the study, although it is discussed with the caution that these are experiences lived and claims made that were not planned as part of the research, but arose organically from it. In this chapter, I consider shifts in my own thinking that have distanced me from ‘professional development for school improvement’ and drawn me towards involving teachers in their own ‘identity work’ (Coffey, 2001). This has involved introducing new tools and approaches, extrapolating and applying the theoretical and methodological thinking in this study, to enable teachers to represent, reflect upon and develop their situated selves in the context of their changing schools. Building on previous work (Durrant and Holden, 2006), teachers’ ‘biographical projects’ (MacLure, 1993) are supported within a conceptual framework for improvement that recognises an agentic dimension.

The intention here is not to argue for complete decentralisation of school change. Fullan’s review of evidence nearly a decade ago demonstrated unconvincing evidence that either centralised reform or decentralised change necessarily achieved the desired improvement (Fullan, 1994). He concluded that whilst centralised reform was concerned with restructuring, it was not necessarily concerned with education; it was ‘local motivation, skill, knowhow and commitment’ that mattered most, but even then, this did not necessarily reach into the ‘teaching-learning core of schools’. Levers for both are needed. Conceptually and empirically, Fullan argues for a more sophisticated blend of both top-down and bottom-up strategies.

In order to achieve this, teachers need to be able to work within existing and wholly appropriate political and regulatory frameworks, whilst contributing to school improvement in meaningful ways, drawing on their knowledge, skills, enthusiasm and commitment which is based in their personal professional values and concerns.

Making an agentic dimension to professionalism explicit enables schools to build organisational capacity for improvement through both locally initiated, teacher-led change and the mediation and interpretation of external agendas for change. This is particularly challenging in current times, where the rhetoric of localism from the English Department for Education arguably contrasts with greater centralisation of power (Vaughan, 2011). Thomas (2012), drawing on evidence from the Royal Society for the Arts' 'Area Based Curriculum' project, argues that teachers need to be intellectual and civic leaders in order to provide guidance to children and young people, which demands much more than academic qualification and pedagogic skill. Recognising increasing emphasis on localism and 'civic activism', she contends that what is needed is a form of teacher professionalism which meets society's complex and multiple needs whilst developing more localised and engaged education systems. This returns to the concept of teachers as extended professionals, in this particular case working as 'curriculum designers'. Here, Thomas urges that accountability driven by attainment indicators can undermine creative autonomy, while narrow definitions of 'teacher quality' can prevent full local engagement in and between schools and communities. Alternatively structural reform, in providing the context for improvement, should offer opportunities for localised, more creative and collaborative developments. The empirical evidence from this study concurs that teachers can exercise agency in constructing their professional environments and identities in the context of wider change agendas, so that top-down and bottom-up change are complementary.

In this concluding chapter, I consider such an alternative perspective for teachers within school improvement. Here the insights gained from the study of teachers within their school contexts are combined with what has been learnt from the methodology of portraiture and the use of visual and textual elicitation tools, together with the theoretical explorations that began with the reading represented in Chapter Two and were modified as the study progressed. The combination of these avenues of enquiry, empirical, methodological and conceptual, considered in the light of my professional experience, has pointed towards counter-hegemonic approaches for school improvement that may be closer to teachers' professional reality, balancing wider reform with opportunities and support for greater localised engagement. The combination of visual and narrative methodologies for change, within an agentic framework as introduced in Chapter Seven (see Figure 8, p.241), can be used to allow teachers to move beyond stories of 'being and becoming' (Pinnegar and Hamilton,

2011; Fielding, 1999), to stories of strategy and action. It casts teachers not as characters within the workplace landscape, but as ‘landscapers’ at local and organisational scales (Reynolds, 1996). Here, I reflect on the tensions and delights of the implications of this study for my everyday work in an academic and consultancy role. This has involved investigation of the possibilities and meanings for my own situated self and identity as a teacher educator, negotiating complex boundaries between ‘outsider’ and ‘insider’ roles in volatile times.

This research has spanned a change in government, bringing new policies but little change in emphasis, as discussed in Chapter Two. Despite strong counter arguments, school improvement theory and policy still place predominant emphasis on systemic improvement and strong leadership of organisations (Harris and Chrispeels, 2008) in order to raise standards of attainment. In so doing, they may undermine local engagement and creativity as Thomas (2012) and Fullan (1994) suggest. Developments in my own practice are therefore considered against the current socio-political backdrop of national and global educational priorities. A recent ‘State of the Art Review’ of school and system improvement, from leading figures in the International Congress of School Effectiveness and Improvement, provides an appropriate contemporary overview against which to consider the conclusion to this study, as it not only charts development but claims to ‘reflect on the future’ in systems and school development. In it, Hopkins et al. (2011:1) state the aim that

What is needed is a grand theory of system change in education that results in relatively predictable increases in student learning and achievement over time.

A ‘grand theory’ of systemic change?

Following a review of the developments in school and systemic improvement, involving processes of school improvement leading to greater effectiveness, Hopkins et al. (2011) provide a formula for highly effective educational systems that resonates with current school regimes of performativity. Although this view is contestable, as already argued, it still holds powerful sway within the global educational discourse. The focus is on achievement, learning and high quality teaching for which ‘only the best people’ will be selected and developed through “...professional learning opportunities that develop a ‘common’ practice out of the integration of curriculum,

teaching and learning” (ibid:12-13). The authors go on to list other conditions of effective systems, characterised by language reflecting the current hegemony: ‘high expectations’; ‘unrelenting teaching and learning focus’; ‘challenging tasks’; ‘clarity of standards of professional practice’; ‘procedures’; ‘data’; ‘performance’; ‘intervention’; ‘addressing inequities for those falling behind’ and ‘disciplined intervention’ (p.13). The language implies that teachers should be passively selected, developed and held accountable. While balance is advocated here between ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches, people are still seen here in terms of ‘capital’ in the efficient production of results, echoing Hargreaves’ (2001) theory of a decade ago, as discussed in Chapter Two.

In search of ‘real’ improvement: actors, agents and activists

This study has shown, first, that systems-based approaches to school improvement do not easily accommodate the potential for teachers’ individual agency; indeed they can ignore it and limit it, where opportunities could be provided for teachers’ engagement and leadership. The language characterised above does not automatically become teachers’ language; indeed there is little similarity in the words and phrases used by Hopkins et al. (2011) and those used by the six teachers in this study to describe what they saw as their core work. They counted achievement as important, but wanted to encompass broader aims than those espoused by policy, focusing more directly on children’s local and individual needs (see Appendices 12 and 13). To greater or lesser degrees, they often felt disenfranchised from what is labelled as school improvement, while their genuine commitments could be marginalised, or even undermined. There was certainly a mismatch between change initiation and enactment (Evans, 2011; Fink, 2001). Yet the evidence from this study contradicts the notion that this was because teachers lacked the ability to determine their direction of development or the vision to participate in the ‘bigger picture’ (Evans, 2011). None of the six teachers presented themselves as mere implementers of policy; change was a subject of negotiation, but at the same time they found themselves operating ‘under the radar’ to make the differences to children’s lives that they felt were important. They had to work harder to achieve this whilst also meeting centralised requirements, but they generally expressed this in active rather than passive terms, involving grappling with choices and discourses according to their own values and wider expectations, rather than simply carrying out directives.

In classrooms, there may still be a considerable gap between professionalism as prescribed and enacted, as Evans (2008; 2011) suggests. Teachers' accounts show clearly that to assume that this is an 'implementation gap', requiring more attention to their transition from 'prescription to professionalism' as centrally defined (Barber, 2005; Hopkins et al., 2011), is an over-simplification. Evans (2011) asserts that

The 'real' shape of teacher professionalism will be that that teachers forge for themselves, within the confines and limitations of the context set by the government's demanded professionalism

(p.868).

However, Evans conceives of such agency in terms of the extent to which teachers 'buy in' to a particular professionalism, which does not quite chime with supported construction of the professional self and identity within a constructed professional environment, as discussed in Chapter Seven. Although there are individual and organisational variations, it is clear even from the limited number of examples here that teachers exercise considerable discretion and agency in the extent to which they subscribe to imposed performance regimes or engage with internal change projects. They demonstrate a more nuanced approach than would be possible with a 'common' view of practice as espoused by Hopkins et al. (2011) for systemic reform, according more closely with Elliott's (1993b) 'situational understanding':

Good practice is not a matter of reproducing pre-programmed responses but responding intelligently and wisely to a situation as it unfolds on the basis of discernment, discrimination and insight

(p.18).

Teachers' professional identities here are clearly a reflection of complex situated selves, responding holistically and in context, recognised in relation to different people, things, environments and situations (Gee, 1997; Stark and Stronach, 2005). This influences professionalism, including teachers' decisions about what constitutes school improvement and how they choose to respond in the 'dynamic tension' between agency and structure (Day et al., 2006). Teachers' accounts, as reflected in their portraits, demonstrate sophisticated processes of discretion, interpretation and action in this respect. The casting of policymaking and policy implementation into 'two solitudes' as suggested by Fink (2001) is too stark a duality. The concept of 'enactment' is too restricting; actors are directed according to a script, which they interpret with different levels of effectiveness. Acting contrasts with agency, where the impetus comes from within, much more akin to script writing, direction or improvisation. The notion of teachers as 'activists' (Sachs, 2003b) allows them more

intellectual and political scope to achieve their ends. According to the teachers in this study, their professional role is more sophisticated and more engaged than that of policy implementation. It comes closer to Barnett's deployment of discourses (2008), seeking opportunities afforded by systemic reform and political initiative as well as internally driven change to achieve individual and collective purposes, including the shaping of their own organisational environments and cultures.

'Stories of action in theories of context'

The evidence from the nested case studies of individuals operating within their organisational contexts shows that these teachers not only exercised different degrees of agency in constructing their environments, but also in constructing their situated selves, thereby their professional identities, as agents of change. The environment was therefore not always the overriding factor in the extent to which teachers could exercise agency, since this also depended greatly on the teacher's character and disposition. This applied both in their interpretation of formal roles and in the development of informal approaches (Frost and Harris, 2003; Frost, 2011). Sometimes it involved creation of new roles, which they then interpreted for themselves. The evidence shows, therefore, that teachers' identities – the meaning they attach to 'being a teacher' - in relation to school improvement cannot easily be imposed within grand theories of systemic reform. It follows that the subtleties of practice cannot easily be evaluated using standardised frameworks, or assessed according to limited quality criteria and stated competencies.

Professional identities can, however, be developed (i.e. constructed) through a reflexive learning process, around a sense of self that is reconstructed over time (Day et al., 2006; Giddens, 1991), taking proper account of the socio-political context. Thus professional identity in relation to change draws on personal experience and character, but also on the developing and nurturing forces surrounding teachers, the messages they pick up from headteachers and senior leaders and the structures surrounding school development and accountability. The recognised instability and constructed nature of teachers' professional identities suggests that their development as agents in school improvement processes demands proper attention from policymakers, headteachers and those of us currently known as 'CPD providers', in which systemic reform provides a backdrop of opportunities for localised initiative and development.

Gee (1997) argues that a person's trajectory is 'meaningless' unless it has been narrated by self and others. However, Goodson (1999) warns that if teachers' stories are used only as a 'breathing space', focusing on a 'vernacular of the particular' as divorced from the 'vernacular of power', then the breathing space quickly becomes a stifling vacuum. He asserts that

It is a matter of some urgency that we develop stories of action within theories of context – contextualising stories if you like – that act against the kinds of divorce of the discourses which are all too readily imaginable

(p.132).

Narratives may be coerced for the purposes of constraining and controlling belief, or encourage emancipation through freer expression and creation of new meanings (McEwan, 1997). It has become increasingly clear, through experimentation and evaluation within my own practice, that the real significance of using visual and narrative approaches and tools to support teachers in clarifying and developing their professional roles and identities lies in relating these to school improvement. This helps in bridging the discontinuities of purpose and expectation that teachers may experience, and that are evidenced in this study, between 'ecologies of practice' and 'economies of performance' (Stark and Stronach, 2005). The stories are used by teachers to investigate the 'vernacular of power' and to navigate, and where necessary challenge, the interface between discourses (Barnett, 2008). This contrasts sharply with establishing a new narrative paradigm as a comfortable retreat from reality as Goodson (1999) warns against. Within my own work, it has been helpful to approach this conceptually as the development of 'portraits of teachers in landscapes of change'. Experimentation with these approaches suggests that they are particularly powerful where used within a discourse that makes the agentic dimension of improvement explicit.

Brokering into practice: stories and pictures

The intention for this study was to use portraiture and its derivative in school landscapes to generate rich and detailed evidence to explore and gain insights into the roles and identities of teachers in relation to school improvement. It was designed as distinctive from more generic studies into teacher professionalism and identity, in searching for the teachers' perceptions of their roles and identities specifically in relation to school change. Although planned over a period of time in order to capture

change trajectories in schools and individual lives, it was essentially intended to produce a 'static' summary of what had been learnt, in which I positioned myself as an outsider. This contrasted with interventions through second order action research, focused on supporting teacher-led school improvement, in which I had previously been involved (Frost et al., 2000; Durrant and Holden, 2006) and to which I continued to contribute (see Frost, 2011). I have been challenged by this research, as a teacher educator, to explore the implications of this for my practice, not in response to 'findings', but rather as a parallel, reflexive, dialogic process between my research and my work with teachers, school-based partners and higher education colleagues. This is, in effect, a 'brokering into practice' of this small scale research, concomitant with the 'brokering into policy' that Saunders (2005) advocates.

Echoing Tooth and Renshaw's (2012) 'storythread' methodology, portraits of teachers, situated within their own workplace landscapes (Reynolds, 1996) of organisation and community, combine conceptual knowledge with process knowledge and knowledge about strategic action for change. There are examples of all these kinds of knowledge woven through the evidence in Chapters Five and Six. Inevitably, as the study progressed, the ideas emerging from the data influenced my own practice. This demonstrated the power of portraiture and other narrative and visual interpretations, not only as research instruments but as dialogic artefacts (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008), where stories are as important for the tellers as for the listeners (Anderson, 1997). People directly involved in creating and sharing such artefacts engage 'emotionally and imaginatively' with one another and with their contexts, in discursive consciousness that provides the basis for change (Frost, 2011; Giddens, 1984; Elliott, 1998). It is challenging for teachers to conceive of and articulate their own influence more widely, particularly beyond formal roles and responsibilities (Frost, 2011; Frost and Harris, 2003). In introducing an agentic perspective, teachers' identities and roles - interpreted and shared as portraits and narratives - are collectively conceived as part of the landscape of change. These understandings, tools and approaches have been integrated into my school improvement projects and programmes.

Recapturing narratives: the dynamics of the storied world in school improvement

Starting with my own postgraduate teaching, which always involves elements of enquiry, I have encouraged teachers to experiment with more innovative

methodologies. This includes visual questionnaires, versions of critical incident analysis, use of pictures such as the circus images (Appendix 2) and other sets of pictures, fictional stories, photographs, films and play scripts to elicit, share and critically consider their own, colleagues' and students' stories. Through capturing interest and imagination, stories and images create space for creativity and self-expression, to allow a new kind of individual and collective meaning-making. They offer people access to one another. This kind of professional meaning-making is illuminated as teachers in a variety of roles situate their images, sketches and stories as individual portraits within organisational landscapes, offering new perspectives on themselves and their professional environments.

Stories and pictures can become lost in persistent and pervading 'training, delivery and roll-out' models of professional and leadership development. Indeed Clandinin and Connelly's research (1995) showed that there is a lack of 'safe places' in which narrative work can take place in schools. Yet it has been argued that the creative leadership needed for contemporary times needs to develop through evolving small stories (Kay, 2011), enabling teachers to make use of their own and others' critical knowledge and 'social and pedagogical intuitions'. Apple (2009), too, has argued that

...we need to use and expand the spaces in which critical pedagogical "stories" are made available so that these positions do not remain only on the theoretical or rhetorical level.....[but] seem actually doable in "ordinary" institutions such as schools and local communities

(p.38).

These approaches allow teachers to engage with and challenge the grand narratives of policy (Lyotard, 1979) and negotiate their work within them. Kay (2011), writing from the perspective of leadership within the cultural sector, asserts that the accumulation of stories is both counter-cultural and creative:

... individuals sculpt the shape of their stories, find new locations, introduce new characters, add new voices and make new landscapes.

(p.33, my emphasis)

She has found that this process appeals to people's 'better selves' and enables the 'transgression' necessary for organisational and systemic change. The quest for a grand theory of school improvement (Hopkins et al., 2011) should not be solely about finding formulae for systemic improvement of results, but about providing an overarching narrative within which people can interweave and evolve their own small stories.

Making the agentic perspective explicit

Scaffolding such activity with supportive frameworks and facilitation emphasising teacher agency is essential to guard against indulgent reflexivity, unproductive discussion or individually focused professional development. It challenges teachers to become agents of change and then supports their progress in this respect. This applies not only in their own professional environments, but also in reconceptualising their formal or informal roles, developing their identity and professionalism in relation to school improvement. This includes both contributing to the discussion about purposes and processes of school improvement and responding to mandated change, internally and externally directed. Teachers themselves are indeed the subject of reform (Ball, 2008), but when supported in developing their concept of self-efficacy and agency, they have greater potential to construct self and identity. As professionals with agency and voice, they are less likely to succumb to the ‘promiscuity’ that Ball (2003) describes, where they focus on making themselves successful as ‘calculable rather than memorable’ within imposed performative agendas. An agentic perspective emphasises the characteristics shown below, derived from the framework in Chapter Seven, which challenge the current hegemony.

- teachers are cast as agents of change, leaders and collaborative learners;
- students are participants, leaders and learners in a democratic, inclusive community;
- leadership density and capacity are high within the organisation;
- the headteacher, with senior leaders, orchestrates conjoint agency to move the school in a particular direction;
- everyone within the community is involved in research and decision making, including critical debate about change emanating from different sources;
- some ideas and action are generated locally, on a small scale, along with interpretation, adaptation and choice in relation to external ideas;
- professional development focuses on developing discursive consciousness, self-efficacy and agency, recognising the reciprocal relationship between people and their environment and context;
- enquiry supports the development of situational understanding, self-knowledge and contextual knowledge;
- learning is interdependent, co-constructed and negotiated;
- assessment is meaningful, flexible and formative;
- there is shared internal accountability and responsibility based on high levels of trust and moral purpose, including in response to externally driven reform;
- dialogic and narrative methodologies predominate;
- whatever the source of change, the nature of change is that schools are transformed from within.

It must be stressed that it is not intended that these characteristics substitute for school effectiveness or school improvement perspectives. Rather, they overlap and enhance the work to add a new dimension. An agentic emphasis allows teachers to increase the scope of their constructed environments and gain greater influence where they have the choice within the selected environment (Bandura, 2001), lending greater power and purpose to the epistemological and ontological dimensions of improvement. As the Castlegate example shows, constructed environments can still be created in the context of externally driven reform.

Moreover, understanding and presenting themselves, along with colleagues, within their contextual landscape can prompt the discursive consciousness that enables teachers to envisage and enact a role in school change. This can reduce the discontinuities between professionalism as demanded and as enacted, that can cause so much soul searching, tension and stress (Evans, 2008). Visual and narrative approaches and tools used in such ways are not intended to be therapeutic. Having acknowledged the barriers to progress and success, teachers recognise personal and collective strengths and resources - the components of 'complex hope' (Wrigley et al., 2012). With an agentic perspective, explicitly communicated and continually reinforced, and with appropriate external and internal support, this hope can be turned into planning and action.

Narrative and visual approaches in meaning-making

I have discovered over the course of this study that the use of visual imagery and portraiture offers a particularly powerful dimension to this narrative meaning-making. Tools such as the set of circus pictures (Appendix 2) catch people unawares, but give 'permission' for creativity and honesty when set within carefully established, trustful boundaries. There are no formulaic answers, therefore they prompt an authentic, creative response by inviting engagement and requiring new thinking and explanation amongst peers. This enables groups of practitioners to bring tacit understandings and new ideas into collective understanding as a basis for moving forward, in immediate ways that do not require the discipline of sustained writing or academic endeavour and are therefore more inclusive and accessible.

As I found in the research encounters with teachers, these approaches universally capture imagination and stimulate interest. They make people smile; they break the ice,

intrigue the mind and offer the opportunity for people to indulge their capacity for play. This reflects the attributes of fun, happiness and enjoyment that teachers in this study highlighted in ‘teaching as they would like it to be’ (Appendix 12) and in their professional priorities (Appendix 13). The tools break into the ennui of professional routines of procedure, performance, discipline and intervention, where a child falling behind or through the net is an ‘inequity in student performance’ that must be addressed (Hopkins et al., 2011). Through the finding of shared ideas and common ground, they connect people with their values and re-energise commitment, opening up new lines of enquiry and discourse. This has been unexpectedly endorsed elsewhere, for example a teacher responded enthusiastically by email to a conference presentation more than a year previously, asking if she could adapt the approaches for use in her own research:

I have been working my way through so many publications over the last two months that were boring, complicated, irrelevant and confusing that I nearly lost sight of why I wanted to do this research in the first place: To find out how teachers actually cope with the constant demands of their jobs. I LOVED your use of pictures and portraiture! It is so much more creative than the usual questionnaire!

(Email, Appendix 14)

Initial positive responses with my postgraduate teaching groups have led to wider experimentation with narrative methodologies. Both text- and image-based portraiture approaches have been used with wider groups of teachers, extending well established ideas but incorporating methods and tools from this study. Often these are limited by the constraints of funding and time to sketches and snapshots, that can only whet the appetite and stimulate initial thinking, as might happen when browsing a brochure, or glimpsing images while passing swiftly through a gallery. However, allowing time for structured dialogue as opposed to sustained ‘input’ has, without exception, been fruitful. Recent examples have included several interactive school development days, working with ‘directed’ groups of teachers rather than volunteers, in schools in the most challenging of circumstances. In one school, working with all the members of staff, an opening activity involved simply sharing ‘one positive story from the previous week’ in pairs, then inviting sharing of emerging themes with the whole group. A series of glimpses of classroom practice and relationships with students, parents and colleagues were contributed, creating an ‘oral montage’ representing the school. From this, a list of shared professional values and priorities was generated, including holistic outcomes alongside high expectations of achievement, quality of relationships with

students and the fun and mutual learning of enjoyable lessons. Teachers said afterwards that they appreciated the opportunity to articulate their own commitments and to be 'allowed to think'. After this, there was a choice of workshops to explore different areas of focus for teacher-led development.

In other schools, Hofstede's 'onion' model of layers of organisational culture (Hofstede et al., 2010) has been widely used as a device for generating an accessible image of school landscape, identifying the symbols, heroes, rituals and values represented in the school. Visual representation of such theoretical frameworks is immediately intriguing, removes threat and adds interest to invite a response. Although such models and frameworks can be simplistic, reflections shared and summarised can offer important new insights amongst teachers, for example acknowledging negative behaviour that has become ritualised, exploring the differences between a school's espoused culture and its student subcultures, or demonstrating dominance of traditional or managerialist practices.

In a school where more time was available, another approach to investigating and depicting school landscapes imbued with practitioners' values and perspectives was teachers' creation and collaborative analysis of films, capturing moving (both dynamic and emotionally engaging) images of current practice that represented their own and students' aspirations for learning. This kind of approach can open the door for discussion linking individual and shared values and aspirations with school improvement. Action learning sets or appreciative enquiry (Kaser and Halbert, 2009) can enable structured and facilitated problem-solving, sharing of practice and action planning around visual portraits. The overwhelmingly positive responses from teachers endorse these counter-hegemonic approaches, the more so in schools in the most challenging circumstances dominated by performativity. Anecdotally, evaluations show a thirst for antidotes to 'training' along with appreciation for 'valuing' of teachers' perspectives and ideas, coupled with opportunities to attend collaboratively to personal agendas for change.

From professional development to agency in school improvement

Collaborative professional development using these kinds of tools and approaches is not new; it has many of the characteristics of professional development identified by Cordingley et al. (2003) as having greatest impact on the quality of learning and

teaching. Narrative approaches themselves are established as tools for teacher education (Kitchen et al., 2011). However, shifting the emphasis from professional development to school improvement gives such discussions and activities particular direction and momentum (see Frost, 2007; 2011). Teachers, along with their headteachers and senior leaders are challenged to embrace the notion that anyone can influence the organisational structures and cultures around them, and should be encouraged to do so, whether in formal roles or within their own informal spheres of influence. Powerful evidence of the value of such developmental work is contained in evaluations of the influence and impact of programmes and projects facilitated by my own university department in the last few years, including the testimonies of teachers and headteachers (CCCU, 2006-12).

The clarification of the distinction between this conceptual approach focusing on agency and the paradigms of school effectiveness and improvement, as explained in Chapter Seven, breaks through the ceiling imposed upon improvement within professional learning communities (Mitchell and Sackney, 2009). Teachers have appreciated the opportunity to engage intellectually with theory and wider research, as well as practically with processes of change. They can be ground down by surveillance and demoralised by pathologising, deficit discourses of schools under pressure to raise standards, as Wrigley et al. (2012) suggest. They may be in need of professional refreshment. Here, they are given permission to state their commitments and priorities and share experiences they themselves select as meaningful, intended as a basis for action. They can also seize opportunities presented in national and local agendas for change, to achieve their own purposes by working strategically. With careful facilitation, such approaches are powerful enough to transcend national borders and cultures and cross language barriers (Frost, 2011). The tacit energy generated makes individual and collective agency visible ‘in the room’, represented orally, visually and textually and formalised as part of the organisational improvement process. Perhaps the most difficult challenge, then, is to prepare headteachers, senior leaders and education directorates for the possibility that teachers may propose, and instigate, real and radical change.

Challenging the ‘two solitudes’

The implications of this argument for school communities, education leaders and education policymakers are complex. It is perhaps naive to suggest that the ‘two solitudes’ identified by Fink (2001), separating policymakers and policy implementers, could and should be fully reconciled, as is assumed by policymakers themselves where teachers are cast merely as implementers. Many of the incongruities in experience and tensions and contradictions for individuals and schools in this study arise from discontinuities between the terms and conditions imposed by policy directives and external accountability requirements, compared with the values, moral purposes, intellectual foci and practical aspirations of teachers. These may be concerned primarily with the systemsworld, while practitioners relate more closely to the lifeworld (Fink, 2001). However, teachers’ accounts within these two contrasting contexts demonstrate clearly that policy is differently mediated by headteachers and senior leaders. The erosion of the lifeworld by systemsworld dominance may be more a function of internal change management strategies than of the nature of policy itself. Moreover, there are plenty of examples here of teachers using political priorities and externally mandated change as levers to enact their own vision and achieve their educational purposes, for example Christine working within the Every Child Matters agenda and Pam using the opportunity of the Academy’s launch to promote her subject more widely in school and community.

In a performative regime planned against a grand theory of systems reform (Hopkins et al., 2011), many teachers experience the frustration of restriction of their agency within a powerful imposed environment. While it is clear from this study that individual teachers may respond differently in the same organisational environment, the cultural norms, organisational priorities and leadership approaches, govern the ways in which external pressures and accountability requirements affect teachers’ roles, identities and actions. Shared, sensitive acknowledgement of political and micro-political contexts and a wide range of experiences, views and perceptions, enable teachers to negotiate and deploy multiple discourses, navigating between policy and its implementation, as agents of change. This can be skilfully orchestrated by headteachers and their senior leadership teams, to maximise opportunities for the intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness that characterise human agency (Bandura, 2001). Conversely, heavy-handed, centrally controlled leadership approaches can stifle this activity to the extent that the environment becomes almost entirely imposed, with no

room for manoeuvre. Nevertheless, teachers' accounts show that the balance between constructed and imposed environments and identities (Bandura, 2001) is mediated not only by the influences within organisational cultures, particularly of headteachers and senior leaders, but also by the extent to which individuals' self-efficacy and decision making is effective in relation to their own agency.

Headteachers, along with their senior leadership teams or executive groups, can develop strategies to enable teachers to increase the constructed environment where, from the evidence of this study, the commitment, knowledge, skills, creativity, moral purpose and vocational energy of teachers are already operating. In other words, they can construct an environment in which teachers can each engage more effectively in their construction of environment. This requires and also inculcates the kinds of professional values suggested by Bottery (2004). These include the need for ecological and political awareness of factors influencing practice, a sense of moral purpose, an internalised and reflexive accountability, inclusive approaches to leadership and management of change, acceptance of the provisionality of knowledge and, perhaps most importantly, the need for critical questioning of their role and situation in relation to educational purposes. This is how the gulf between the 'two solitudes' of policymaking and policy implementation may be bridged.

Where teachers' sphere of influence is severely limited by encroachment of the imposed environment, reinforced by a top-down, surveillance culture, their contributions to school improvement can have only individual and parochial effect. The most disturbing aspect of this ceiling on individual agency imposed by governments, which can be reinforced by headteachers and their leadership hierarchies, is its effect on children and young people. In managerialist regimes, subject to performativity targets and imposed ways of working, deprived and marginalised individuals and communities are particularly likely to become disenfranchised (Hargreaves, 2003; Wrigley et al., 2012). If education is to be more successful for all, deficit-based educational models should be replaced by approaches based on children's funds of knowledge (Moll and Greenberg, 1990) and co-constructive potential, as implied by all teachers in this study. These counterbalance academic focus with social and emotional attributes of love, care, recognition and respect, which might be seen as foundations for an agentic perspective for schooling. The teachers here were trying to capture and nurture these capacities, as evidenced in the ways in which they expressed

their attitudes and relationships with their students, wanting them to realise their potential in the world.

Young people are fantastic. I think they are. They do have a conscience. They are interested in people less fortunate than themselves... (Pam)

I've helped to make that child happy. I like the care and I like the nurture role and trying to make a difference to their lives in that way... (Jess)

I say hello every single day, give him that chance, because in the end, he's a kid (James)

...they make so much progress that it shines out of them (Michael)

The students really liked their teachers because for them [the teachers] were a point of reference... so I think there were some very good relationships. (Lorna)

It's for the children; that's why we come into teaching, isn't it, it's for the children, to give them the best start they can possibly get. (Christine)

Emancipatory, dialogic pedagogies concerned with participation, voice, discovery, fun and choice embody values which are reflected in teachers' aspirations as they describe 'teaching as I would like it to be' (Appendix 12) and which thread through their narratives. Here, as Michael, James, Pam, Christine, Jess and Lorna each express in different ways, learning is not just for progress, but for liberation. It has personal and global purpose, reaching far beyond school, rather than being a mechanistic means to jump through assessment and accountability hoops and fulfil the political ends of league table success. It is founded on relationships, respect and enjoyment in being together. Such approaches reduce dualities (high / low ability; good / bad school; teacher / student; leader / led) and flatten hierarchies. They render policy as something to work with, rather than fight against, which involves deploying professional knowledge and experience and applying critical, social and political understanding. Thus people's self-efficacy and agency is enhanced in co-constructing their world, their collective knowledge of their world and their role and identity within that world.

Alternative realities: creating the right conditions for teacher agency

The thesis is concerned not only with what schools are, but with hopefulness and speculation about what schools might become and what people aspire for them to be.

School improvement and school effectiveness, as bodies of thinking and research cannot be rejected, since they govern and frame the current socio-political situation within which this study has been conducted and contribute globally important knowledge, understanding and evidence. Portraiture, examining individuals in their settings using a nested case study approach, has captured something of the range of overlapping ideologies and forces influencing teachers' perceptions of their roles. It has illuminated the practical ways in which they contribute and respond to change that spills over organisational boundaries into lives, families and communities, which has led to the suggestion of an additional agentic dimension for schooling, as explained in Chapter Seven. Interestingly, 'futures thinking' on a global scale and notions of 'community cohesion' may resonate more closely with individual teachers' values and concerns than current reform agendas at national level.

A top-down focus on education systems and strong leadership within a performative regime is clearly not adequate for the challenges facing our society and our planet. It sidesteps the concerns of many individuals within school communities, fails to recognise the potential for individual agency and limits the change that matters to people. In Bandura's (2001) terms, imposition of performative regimes can leave many teachers and schools personally and organisationally compromised in terms of moral purpose and intended outcome and blamed for lack of success as externally defined. In relation to the agentic cycle that Bandura identifies, the imposed environment closes in, limiting teachers' sense of self-efficacy and thereby constraining their individual and collective capacity to contribute to change and strive for improvement. This explains why, despite their rhetoric of empowerment, professional learning communities can hit a ceiling in their improvement trajectories and fail to live up to expectations (Mitchell and Sackney, 2009), either in ethos or in outcome. A 'sustainable retreat' from the upward trajectories of performance is not only acceptable, but may be desirable (Clarke, 2009; Hannon, 2009). This involves acceptance that traditional methods and methodologies, too, are inadequate, both in purpose and in process, if we wish to adopt more enlightened and appropriate ideas about educational processes and outcomes incorporating an emphasis on agency. This opens up not only the possibility but the necessity of moving beyond 'human being and becoming' (Fielding, 1999), towards supporting greater individual pro-activity for change.

School improvement ‘against the tide’

It has been suggested that capacity for school improvement depends upon a school’s ability to ‘swim with the tide’ of external reform and cope with the pressures of imposed change, by building strong professional communities that are collaborative, inclusive and empowering (Harris, 2002). Turning Harris’s metaphor around, MacBeath (2009) concludes that the real hope for schools, teachers and children may lie in finding ways not to swim with the tide, but against it. In the wider educational discourse there are growing arguments for improvement on a human, local and individual scale, emphasising social and environmental, rather than academic, sustainability through more ecological models as already suggested. However, here it may be necessary to change our criteria for success by asking different questions - questions with an agentic perspective. For example, are teachers and other education professionals engaged fully in the processes that govern their lives and by which they might influence the lives of others? Are teachers empowered as participants and activists in their organisations and communities and in society?

Interestingly, these questions resonate with the principles underpinning indigenous knowledge systems and cultures. Traditional knowledge systems have been reinstated in some contemporary societies, for example in the Inuit territories of Canada, as a foundation for public services of education and health care (Nunavut Government, 2012; NCCAH, 2010). The knowledge system of the Inuit culture, ‘Qaujimajatuqangit’, is based on the guiding principles of mutual trust and respect, stewardship, living in balance and harmony with one another and with the environment, collaborative relationships, consensual decision making and resourceful problem solving, with the aim of enhancing humanity. These principles, underpinned by values of ‘connection’, ‘work’ and ‘coping’, are about people taking responsibility for changing their world for the better, for themselves and for each other. Epistemologically, this recaptures contextualised and emotional knowledge that tends to be negatively framed or marginalised in formal curriculum discourse (Coffey, 2001, after Stanley and Wise). Ontologically, it echoes traditional professional values of trust, respect and loyalty that many teachers still recognise and strive for. In these cultures, epistemological, ontological and agentic perspectives, respectively supporting ways of knowing, being and acting, are bound together, to recapture the authenticity of community and improve individuals’ experience, development and wellbeing.

Central to such societies is the use of stories, artefacts and songs as ‘topographical maps’ to navigate through landscapes and identify aspects of significance (Tooth and Renshaw, 2012), allowing individuals to make meaning for themselves. By articulating and comparing their views of organisational culture in relation to reflections on the state of the world, they can (and must) challenge the “reproductive logic ... supported by default structures, habits and norms” that perpetuates injustice and reduces reform to “insignificant rearrangements of inherited modes of schooling” as Wrigley et al. have suggested (2012: 212). People engaging with one another’s stories develop their individual and collective pedagogical and social vision, as agents in the construction of their own identities, environments and cultures. As Keating (2009) suggests, ‘status-quo stories’ about current situations, which can sometimes be profoundly destructive, can alternatively be transformed around relationships, using innovative frameworks, to support learning and social change. Thus ideology and methodology are significantly and valuably linked in humanity.

Constructing environments and identities in school improvement

Within such educational processes and practices, categories of identity can only be “fluid sites for meaning making” (Fine and Weis, 2008:90). Professional selves are a hermeneutic construction - fluid, multiple, negotiated, articulated and subject to contestation (Coffey, 2001; Stark and Stronach, 2005), therefore the search for new definitions of professionalism may be futile. Professional identities can be influenced, but they certainly cannot be entirely imposed. Personal constructs of professional identity and resulting professionalism should be understood, accounted for, negotiated and supported as part of the school improvement process. This requires methods akin to ‘artistic composition’ (Fine and Weis, 2008) within teachers’ authentic communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). Conceiving this construction, negotiation, articulation and representation of roles and identities as part of teachers’ professional work (Coffey, 2001) is part of the negotiation, giving voice to teachers both in research, as narrators of their world, and in school improvement, as educational activists.

This sense-making process enhances teachers’ sense of self-efficacy and thereby agency, expanding the constructed environment and enabling them to operate more effectively within the selected environment as Bandura (2001) suggests. In so doing, teachers assume their own constructed identities, leading them to re-conceptualise their

role in school improvement, compared with that which is enshrined in the policy rhetoric, which so often disappoints or frustrates. This mutual recognition and enhanced understanding gives teachers greater confidence and choice in interpreting the organisational landscape, defining their place within it around formal roles and informal opportunities, and changing it through their own influence. Teachers thus create their own self-portraits, as ‘landscapers’ (Reynolds, 1996) on a local and organisational scale.

This agentic perspective offers a framework for challenging our practice in all phases of education, exploring how we might deploy pervading contemporary discourses, in order to focus on advocacy and support for teachers as agents of change. Emphasising an agentic perspective with teachers affords them greater potential and opportunity to construct not only their environments but also their identities, in order to make meaning of externally driven school improvement for themselves and their colleagues and students. This includes working strategically to identify and make use of opportunities within the grand narratives of systemic reform, contributing proactively to internally instigated change and pursuing their own change agendas.

Headteachers and senior leaders have a vital role in mediating processes of change, recognising the agentic dimension in school improvement and facilitating the key components of teacher agency, in order to construct school environments and nurture professional identities so that these powerful influences for positive and meaningful change can happen. Evaluating this change as improvement may require new questions to be asked from an agentic perspective, focusing on the extent to which teachers and others are engaged in shaping their organisations, communities and cultures, as an integral dimension of their professionalism and identity.

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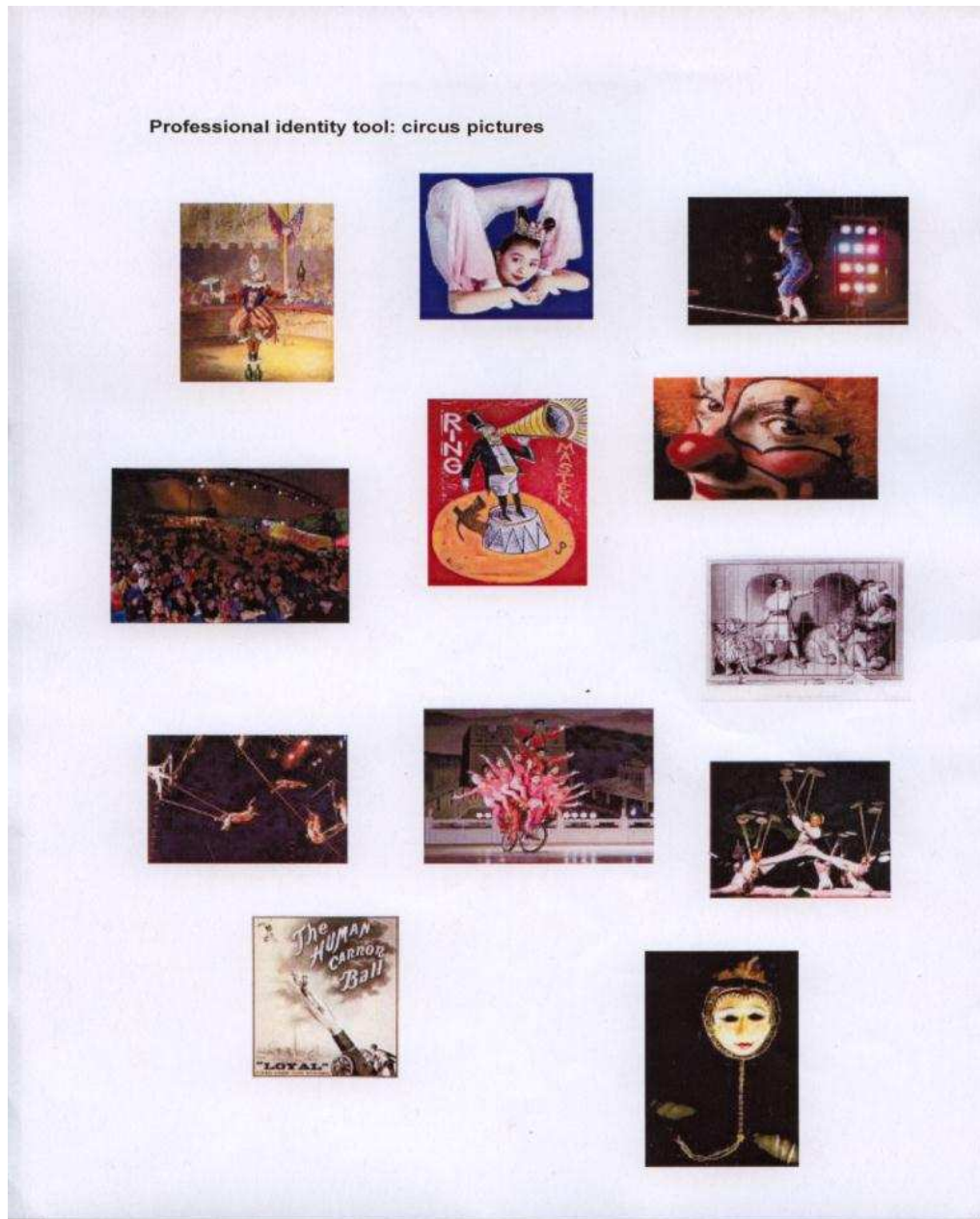
Appendices

1. Characteristics of teachers in the study
2. Professional identity tool
3. Professional priorities tool
4. Professional values tool
5. Teacher interview schedule
6. Headteacher interview schedule
7. Summary of headteacher interview, Castlegate
8. Ten indicators of school culture and context
9. Headteacher briefing sheet
10. 'Christine' and 'Pam', notes from interview with analytic memos
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12. Teaching as it is now/ as I would like it to be: summary and Wordle
13. Summary of professional priorities data
14. Correspondence

Appendix 1: Characteristics of teachers in the study

		Gender	Age	Training and experience	Role	Location of main work	Main age range
New Futures (secondary school)	James	M	30s	Untrained teacher > Graduate Teaching Programme. 6 years of teaching. Head of Inclusion (Primary)	KS 3 English Co-ordinator	Classroom	Secondary mainly KS3. Primary experience
	Lorna	F	53	PGCE. variety of roles in education including primary / secondary school and LA	Assistant Head	Office	non-teaching role experience in all phases
	Pam	F	59	Cert. Ed. Secondary. 25 years in this school. Previously Head of Year	Head of Food	Classroom	11-18 secondary specialist
Castlegate (special school)	Jess	F	20s	PGCE 2 years this school	Class Teacher. KS 3 English Co-ordinator	Classroom	11-14 experience of all ages in special education
	Michael	M	40s	Almost whole career in teaching. PGCE infant > primary > special. 8 years in this school	Yr 11 Class Teacher. Key Stage 4 Manager	Classroom	14-16 experience of all ages in special education
	Christine	F	30s	PGCE. part time infant > special. several years in this school	Phase Manager for Foundation and KS 1. Leader of Observation and Assessment Unit	Office, classroom, O&A unit	3-7 Early Years specialist

Appendix 2: Professional identity tool

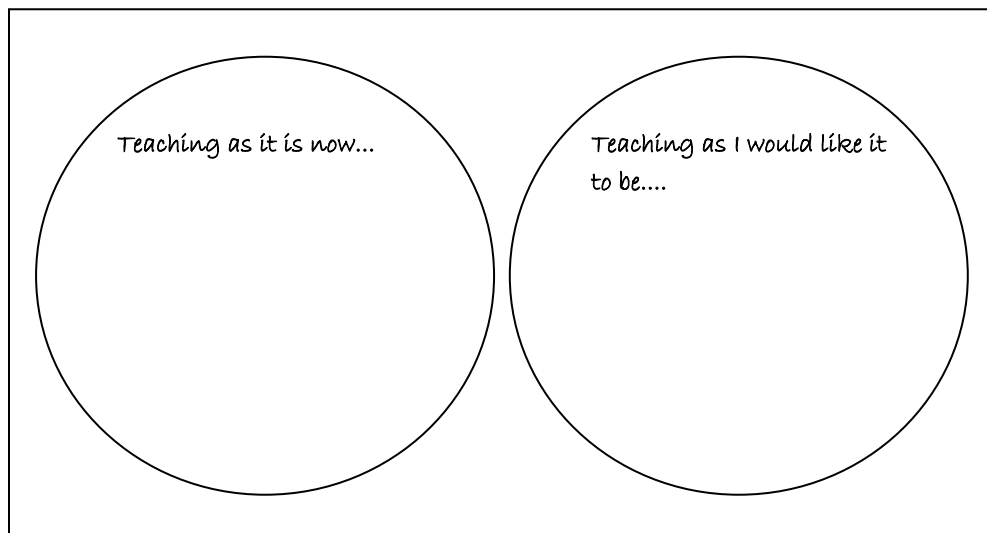


Appendix 3: Professional priorities tool

Making a difference to children's lives	Sharing my practice	Challenging and shaping organisational structure / culture
Addressing shortcomings in my own practice	Being part of a professional community	Getting good test or examination results
Building the school community	cultivating a positive environment for learning	Being an excellent classroom teacher
Implementing policy	Leading learning	Contributing to current and future society
Supporting effective learning	Helping colleagues to improve their practice	Caring for children's wellbeing
Making links with the local community	Keeping order in my classroom	Being an effective learner
Making learning interesting, enjoyable and fun	Evaluating learning and teaching	Meeting school performance targets
Testing research in my own classroom and school context	Meeting my individual professional targets	Contributing to school improvement planning
Improving my practice	Supporting the head in realising her / his vision	Belonging to a learning community
Keeping up to date with subject knowledge	Investigating my practice	Applying findings of educational research
Reflecting on my practice	Contributing to knowledge of learning and teaching	Taking a leadership role in relation to the curriculum
Being a role model for pupils	Taking a pastoral leadership role	Supporting development of children's self-esteem

Rank: 1= central to my practice, 2= part of my practice, 3= not part of my practice.

Appendix 4: Professional values tool



(This was enlarged to fit an A4 sheet)

Appendix 5: Teacher interview schedule

Start with full explanation, permission for tape.

1. Tell me about your career to date. Why did you start teaching and how has your career progressed? What roles have you taken up over what timescales?
2. What does your day to day work involve at the moment?
3. How would you sum up your current professional role(s) and responsibilities?
4. **(Identity exercise, see circus pictures tool, Appendix 2)**
5. How has your job changed over the course of your career? Do you think the actual work has changed? Do you think your attitudes have changed?
6. Can you think of particular factors that have affected your views about your work?
7. We talk about ‘the teaching profession’ – what does that mean to you?
8. Do you feel views of ‘the teaching profession’ have changed over time, and if so, in what ways?
9. **(Professional values exercise, see Appendix 4)**
10. Very broadly speaking, how would you say teachers are viewed by these different groups?
 - Your headteacher
 - Pupils in your school
 - Governors in your school
 - Parents of your pupils
 - The public
 - The media
11. What are your school’s priorities at the moment?
12. What are your own priorities at the moment?
13. **(Priorities exercise, see Appendix 3)**

14. How is the success of your school judged?
15. All schools have an improvement plan. Have you seen it? Do you know how this plan is constructed and managed in your school?
16. How would you know that improvement is happening in your school?
17. Where does the drive for change come from in your school? (give examples)
18. What is your own role in the school's improvement process?
19. Tell me about 'leadership' in your school. Is there a leadership structure? Who are the leaders in your school?
20. What is the general response to change amongst staff? Do different groups respond in different ways?

Conclude interview with thanks, promise to feed back.

Appendix 6: Headteacher interview schedule

Start with full explanation of all the research and the role of this interview. Permission for tape.

A conversation will be developed around the following themes. Ideally this will be combined with a tour of the school either before or afterwards, if this has not been done on a previous visit, or there is more to see. Any additional information or access would be welcome, e.g. to meet key people or to observe work in progress.

1. What are the school's current priorities – any major changes that have taken place last year and the agenda for this year
2. How are the priorities determined? Balance between externally imposed and internally driven change.
3. The school improvement plan and any other plans (e.g. Ofsted action plan) – see copies if possible.
4. How is change approached – is there a philosophy or model?
5. What is the school's leadership structure?
6. How do you see the role of teachers in relation to change in your school?
7. How do you support teachers where they are involved in change?
8. Which previous or current changes are you most pleased about? What has gone well?
9. Which changes are you excited about?
10. Which may be difficult?

Conclude interview with thanks, promise to feed back and invitation to respond.

Appendix 7: summary of headteacher interview, Castlegate

The main priorities for change in the current academic year are very clear and mostly affect the teachers in Key Stages 4 and 5, although they also touch on teachers in primary and Key Stage 3.

First, the school is continuing to expand and is required to accommodate a wider range of needs. Students have special needs and a variety of difficulties which are qualitatively different from those which they are used to dealing with, which challenges the school's curriculum, organisation and learning relationships.

Second is the question of how to manage difficult behaviour, which is absolutely key and always a major concern for staff. Lots of time and effort is put into this issue but not everyone is confident and additional support mechanisms need to be put in place so that staff have had appropriate training and are skilled up to manage the most difficult situations.

Amongst many things on the change agenda, these are the things that need to happen 'faster'. On the school development plan these overall priorities are broken down into bits and pervade everything rather than being explicitly articulated as a whole. Teachers are working on the bits.

The Creative Partnerships work is part of the overall change strategy, incorporating these issues. Instead of sitting in the training room brainstorming how the issues might be tackled, how the school might do things differently, the Creative Partnerships project is itself about change, so the Head is using this as a mechanism for the school to think about how things are done. As the number and needs of students have expanded, the Head believes the school has not changed quickly enough but behaviour is a 'dynamic thing' anyway, it is about the child in their environment and where the needs change, the environment has to change. There will always be behaviour difficulties but it is not reasonable to carry on with the same approaches and curriculum and expect other students to just fit into it and cope with it, the learning environment has got to change.

Also very high in the Head's strategic leadership this year is working with 'satellites' where classes of students leave this site to work in other local schools. Four secondary schools have signed up and are enthusiastic in the long-term project. The headline and public rationale for this is the need for more space for the expanding numbers. The other strand to this is that the Head believes that it is not right to simply pull up the shutters and say there is no room for these additional students, so it is important to think creatively about how their needs can be met. Although this is less a part of the public case, this is what plays on his mind. He doesn't want this to be just a great big special school children come into, he wants it to be part of the local community of schools. He believes that students as well as staff need to be in other places to prevent them from being inward looking; he believes that they need to be evolving with others.

It is a necessary process they need to undergo in order to be inclusive and widen opportunities. The Castlegate site is not always the most appropriate learning environment for students and the school's approaches, values and philosophies can be moved out to support the student experience in other places. This carries a message more powerful than staff doing outreach in the satellite centres.

The Head is aware that working at Castlegate is a pressured job with many stresses, strains, worries and concerns. This is the nature of teaching but these aspects are perhaps more concentrated in this kind of school, the day to day pressures more intensive. Any additional changes are layered onto this and the Head is acutely aware that this only works because of his committed and experienced staff. So he does worry about them but he cannot stop still. It would be easier to say, "No, we're full, they can't come here," and he believes people would back this stance. It would be easier with smaller classes or if those with the most challenging behaviour were excluded, but actually the associated problems and stresses still existed when it was a much smaller school. The Head says, "I just have to think, no, actually, I'd much rather have those students and know that we're doing the right thing, than that we retreat and become inward looking and make it perfect here".

In terms of supporting teachers to cope with change, the Head says that a lot of it comes from them. He believes in constant change but he does not believe he is creative or clever enough to lead constant change so he needs to create a culture where "...people can say things and it will have an impact". For example with the satellite classes initiative, this has come from him and he knows how it is going to play out generally, working up to a September launch with a rough timeframe until then, but he needs people to tell him what their ideas are, it won't work if the change relies on him alone. Another example is the major structural change of introducing Phase Managers. It was becoming clear that the previous structure of Head / Deputy / Assistant Head and Key Stage Managers could not manage to carry out what they were giving themselves to do, so they needed to strengthen the management structure and delegate. There was not much change in primary, but for Key Stage Managers in the secondary phase, in particular, their management role had expanded from 3 classes to 6, managing two different curriculum models, with a wider spread of ability, a greater range of accredited examinations and they were also class teachers – it was impossible. Things were not being done and they were wondering why. Proper management development was needed as well. They did quite a lot of work on the issue including a formal review by a management consultant on what was and was not working and the issues that needed to be tackled, the evidence for which included interviews with staff. There was no clear recommendation for what should be developed except that it was clear that it would make sense to merge Key Stages 4 and 5 and appoint a Phase Manager in order to ease transition age 14-19 (including leaving school and the location of the Post-16 unit at the FE College) and to cope with the additional students. This led to a plan for every phase to have an appointed manager with the intention to address transition problems which seemed to occur even when students remained in the same building. The Head's written proposal for restructuring to appoint Phase Managers was put to staff and feedback was welcomed. The feeling was that while

they were fine with the idea of Phase Managers (although not quite sure why they were needed) they still felt that the Key Stage Managers would be needed for problem solving in teams, staffing issues, organisation of who was where and with whom. The Head was concerned initially about costs but he has been impressed by what has been gained in return for a few thousand pounds of extra payments to individuals in the new structure. Benefits include the amount of development that can now be managed and also professional development for those in the management roles. The Head is really pleased with it after the first couple of months, and sees people in these new roles “starting to really operate and enjoy it”, forming new sub-management teams. Along with this is a new approach to meetings. There is still a weekly briefing and there are occasional whole staff meetings but otherwise it is left to people to arrange their own meetings when needed, which has freed up people’s time considerably compared with the previous weekly whole staff meeting.

The Creative Partnerships work is also high on the agenda. The school is in the second year of a three year project and the Head has deliberately approached this in a non-directive way. The development process is built into the projects; they are about change. Last year the work involved individual teachers bidding to lead projects and planning the work with Creative Practitioners, managing the budget themselves. It was “wonderful”; 8 teachers, representing half the classes in the school, presented what they had done at the staff meeting at the start of this year, some joined by the Creative Practitioners they had been working with. This year the Creative Partnerships work is organised to strengthen phases, with each phase deciding what on a project, then planning and budgeting. At least two teachers will need to work on this across classes in each of the three phases. This will start next year with the planning taking place now. A 4th project involves all teachers in the school learning the skills to make use of video with their classes, as there was feedback from the first year about how powerful and valuable it was where Creative Practitioners used video with students. In the third year there will be even more emphasis on collaboration to involve the whole school in the Creative Partnerships work.

When asked to outline his model or philosophy for change, the Head breaks this into two parts. First, there is the need to ‘get things done’ so he has change strategies to achieve these things. This is not mysterious - it involves the kinds of things covered in management courses and he will coach people to enable them to tackle what needs doing. Beyond this, there is a sense of the school as a community with its own culture and memories of how we did things, how we do things. The philosophy driving change, for the Head, is that we each create the future, we are all part of the creative process. This includes everybody he comes across who has something serious to say about the school. He believes he cannot manage change on his own, so he encourages people to help him and relies on them.

It is interesting that the most awkward people are often the most helpful and he does not begrudge the difficulties in managing them as they repay him by telling him what is wrong, identifying issues, giving opinions and asking questions. They need to speak up and give their views and the Head actively seeks this, not only in relation to his own plans but also in making new suggestions. He also counts on people to put actions

against their words – having made a suggestion, can they then take the responsibility to lead it through.

It is difficult to actually recruit people who are going to work in this way – recruitment is to do with whether people can work with the culture but primarily he looks for people who he thinks will be good teachers. But generally it is people who say they want to work here, including teachers coming from mainstream schools and artists who have worked in schools. Normally they mention to him that they would be interested if there are vacancies, because they see a culture that is supportive of their creativity. The school has created something of a magnet and recruitment is often by human connections as much as by advertising, with people wanting to be part of this particular community.

However, all appointments are a risk and there is a difficult transition period as people's professional identities are challenged and they have to rely on their commitment, rather than skills and experience, to carry them through. They find that approaches and strategies and classroom organisation that worked in their previous school do not work here, the students do not respond in the same way. They are totally deskilled and have to give up their notion of being a successful mainstream teacher – that is not who they are any more. Once they have relinquished that previous professional identity, they find that within the new mindset they can transfer and adapt their strategies in new ways for new situations. "And then they fly." Working here is more about personality than about skills and experience. Some people take longer than others to adapt. Appointed as teachers, the hope is that people will then grow into making a wider contribution to school development.

Appendix 8: Ten indicators of school culture and context

Perspective	Indicator	How the information was obtained in the academic year of study, 2009-10
The headteacher's view	Headteacher's perspective	NF: conversation with Executive Principal and with Assistant Head at start of study; statement on Academy website; press releases reported in local paper; discussion with Assistant Head at end of study CG: interview with headteacher at start of study
	School improvement plan	NF: plans set out in Academy proposal document CG: explained by headteacher
How the school presents itself publicly	School prospectus	NF: school and sixth form prospectus available from website CG: school prospectus available from website
	School website	NF: Academy website CG: school website including bulletin
How the school is judged	Most recent Ofsted report	NF: report from monitoring visit spring 2011, covering the year of study; full report winter 2011/2 CG: reports in spring 2009 and winter 2012
	Representation in the media	NF: reports in local newspapers and on radio; Specialist Schools and Academies trust website - case study; New Year Honours List and National Award Ceremony reported in press; Research report on local socio-economic context and issues commissioned by local charity CG: reports in local newspapers and on radio; Creative Partnerships website - case study
How the school is observed	General school environment	NF and CG: observations when visiting schools
	School reception area	NF and CG: Observations when visiting schools
	Students' appearance and attitude	NF and CG: Observations when visiting schools
	Staffroom	NF and CG: No access, but visited staff offices and teachers' classrooms

NF: New Futures Academy. CG: Castlegate School

Appendix 9: Headteacher briefing sheet

The Role of Teachers in Changing Schools Judy Durrant, Canterbury Christ Church University. PhD research briefing sheet, June 2009

Aims of the research:

- To investigate teachers' perceptions of their role and professional identity in relation to school change, including both their responses and their contributions to organisational change.
- To find out what supports and hinders teachers in contributing to school improvement.

Outline of methodology:

The research involves creating a series of 'portraits' of teachers in relation to their changing schools. 4 'improving' schools will be selected: 1 primary, 1 special, 2 secondary. 3 teachers will be selected from each school giving 12 teachers in all. The selection of teachers will be discussed with the headteacher to include male and female, different roles and different levels of experience within and between schools. While obviously not a systematic sample, the aim is to represent teachers with different perspectives.

For the main part of the research, each teacher will be interviewed three times over the course of the year about their perceptions of their professional identity and their roles in relation to changes taking place in their schools. This includes examining their reflections and actions in relation to different kinds of change e.g. national policy changes, school initiatives and individually instigated change. A general summary of issues and ideas emerging will be circulated to teachers by email after each interview round and they will be invited to comment further if they wish.

10 'indicators' will be used to investigate the school's culture and context, as shown in the table below. It is important to note that this aspect of the research is to provide secondary information as a background to the interviews and will concentrate on what the headteacher and teachers offer, along with information that is publicly available:

Indicator	How will the information be obtained?
Headteacher's perspective	Discussion with headteacher at start and end of the year
School improvement plan or other relevant documentation	Anything offered by headteacher in support of the above discussion
Most recent Ofsted report	Internet
School prospectus	Available in schools and usually from internet
School website	Internet
Representation in the media	Local newspapers; any information supplied by the school
General school environment	Observations when visiting schools
School reception area	Observations when visiting schools
Students' appearance and attitude	Observations when visiting schools
Staffroom	Observations when visiting schools

Timescale of the research:

The data gathering will take place during the school year 2009-2010.

A meeting or, if impractical, an email or telephone discussion with each headteacher will be arranged to explain the process of the research and select the teachers.

Headteachers will be asked to gain initial consent of three teachers who will then meet the researcher, to explain the research and make arrangements for the first interviews.

Meetings with headteachers will be arranged at the start and the end of the school year to gain insights into current developments and priorities for the school and processes of improvement.

Each teacher will be interviewed three times (autumn/winter, spring and summer).

A general update and summary of ideas and issues emerging will be circulated to teachers by email after each interview round and they will be invited to send any additional comments. Headteachers will also receive a summary of this information.

The aim is to complete the thesis by the end of 2011.

Ensuring an ethical approach

The following principles and safeguards will be adhered to:

- The research will conform to the University's strict ethical requirements.
- Headteachers will be kept informed of the progress of the research and may contact the researcher at any time where there are any concerns.
- Headteachers and participating teachers will receive an update after each round of interviews, with a brief summary of the ideas and issues emerging, and will be invited to comment.
- Any participant may withdraw from the research at any time.
- All individual contributions will remain confidential.
- Permission will be sought to tape record interviews. Tapes, transcriptions and any field notes pertaining to individuals will be destroyed on completion of the research.
- Participants and schools will remain anonymous in the thesis and in any publications arising from the research. Any details likely to lead to identification will be removed.
- All publications relating to the research (e.g. conference papers, articles, books) will be shown in advance to the headteacher and teachers involved.

It is important to note that the researcher is working from a value position of support for schools and advocacy of teachers and headteachers and understands the pressures and complexities of school change. The utmost care will be taken to ensure that the research is in no way detrimental to participants, headteachers or schools. Indeed it is hoped that participants will find the research process and dialogue with the researcher interesting and affirming and the outcomes informative.

Appendix 10: ‘Christine’ and ‘Pam’, paraphrased notes from interviews with analytic memos

Teacher Portrait: Christine

Christine's background is in Performing Arts. After completing her degree she postponed her PGCE which she completed when her children were 1 and 2, then did supply for a while followed by some part time teaching in the village school. She worked her way up through the age groups from reception and was eventually made SENCO. When children came from St. Christopher's to her school 'on inclusion' she was approached by the TA to say she would love it here and this was how she moved into special education. Christine is currently running the local unit for observation and assessment and has just been made a phase manager for Foundation Stage at St. Christopher's. She is also Art Co-ordinator and manages inclusion. Her description of how her time is organised sounds complicated but she finds that she is not really 'juggling' the two roles as she is very organised, wears her different hats simultaneously and tends to deal with things as they come in, so keeps on top of her day to day work as a matter of course. This may also be to do with the open leadership approach of the headteacher, meaning that there is negotiation about who taken on which responsibilities and tasks so that individuals have a say in their own workload and priorities.

Christine is a very positive person as well as very efficient and there is hardly a single negative comment during our encounter. She has a holistic view of education in which all aspects relate to all others, so she finds it difficult to parcel out her role into different tasks of areas of emphasis, or to prioritise certain elements against others; she automatically and subconsciously links the work with individual children in school with improvements in society. She sees no divide between the academic, social and emotional aspects of learning and between these and pastoral support. She is quite surprised that others may not see it this way. Her holistic approach is helped by the fact that in her phase and sector of education there is continual monitoring of progress rather than examinations and tests.

Christine has had to negotiate her role and timetable considerably both in terms of general organisation and then on a day to day basis. She had to work full time at the O&A unit while the person who covered the rest of her timetable was on maternity leave, but now the teacher is back, that has been resolved. She had two afternoons for management and has now organised another half day of PPA time through an HLTA covering her class. This patchwork works fine but she also has to manage meetings that do not coincide with the different days at different sites so she can feel 'sawn in half' but is able to prioritise effectively. She did not come into teaching for a 9-3 job; coming from a family of teachers she was well aware of the commitments involved.

Christine is a resilient professional learner and takes new roles in her stride and shapes them through her own particular style which is quite informal but seems to be effective: 'we have a chat', 'I badgered', 'we had a go', 'we tried it out'...and so on. Coming from mainstream she had learnt a great deal from TAs, for example about Makatron signing and use of symbols. She had to endure some cynicism when she arrived at St. Christopher's in the sense that the TAs felt they knew better and that she was not experienced in special education but she continued to have a chat with people, say they would try things, give it a go and then review. In this way she started to gain credibility and make her mark. She does not believe that she has changed her teaching significantly, she always includes variety and activity, singing, visuals so this suits her well.

Comment [F1]: Opportunistic career development and leadership roles

Comment [F2]: Multiple roles and responsibilities

Comment [F3]: How to manage multiple roles and responsibilities through organisation

Comment [F4]: Management of her role by the head: negotiation, prioritisation, consultation, empowering and enabling; teacher voice

Comment [F5]: Positive identity, takes job in her stride

Comment [F6]: Holistic view of purpose and outcomes: individual to societal scale /range of outcomes ac/soc/emotional

Comment [F7]: Holistic approach to assessment

Comment [F8]: Organising: ... effectively again with split roles and sites

Comment [F9]: Realistic view of what teaching entails

Comment [F10]: Professional learning mindset

Comment [F11]: Leadership style supporting and cajoling colleagues to change. Alongside rather than top-down. Leader from within. Agency.

Comment [F12]: Willing to learn from colleagues and deploy expertise elsewhere

Comment [F13]: Difficulty of winning credibility

Comment [F14]: As above: leadership from within and alongside

Comment [F15]: Sustainable and transferable skills and comfortable with own teaching style. Adaptable to new context.

The thing that keeps her in teaching is the children. Although she loves the management work and feels she has a good balance, she cannot envisage leaving the classroom completely. She feels she is so lucky that her own children are healthy, but what she gets back from the children is more than what she is able to give. She found the new school challenging at first and was 'floundering' when faced with her class of such varying needs and realised how much she had to learn. The turning point was three weeks in. They were singing the 'hello' song and a little boy who had never spoken a word said 'hello'. Christine and her team were moved to tears. The priorities for the children are clear: helping them to develop effective communication is the most important aspect of her work. Teachers are trusted by the students and their parents and the children build strong attachments but transition is carefully managed over a long time to mediate the inevitable difficulties. The school's priorities emphasise personalised learning: it is important to ensure that every child's Individual Education Plan and programmes are in place and that the curriculum is in place and appropriate for their needs. Christine's philosophy and view of professionalism is that you always have to do your job to the best of your ability, for the children's benefit, to give them the best start you can. She feels teachers are respected and parents particularly in Early Years look to them for support but it is their involvement in the learning that she is most interested in.

Christine's O&A unit work was built up from scratch and has involved considerable initiative on her part. This unit takes children for a year so that they can undergo assessment and observation, including seeing them work with different therapists, in order to advise parents whether they need statements and where they will attend school. Most come to St. Christopher's (90% want to but not all these are appropriate) and only a small number to a handful of other schools. Generally children will start at the unit in September and may be working with more than one therapist, which may include speech, language, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, eyes and general health. However there is quite an influx at Christmas when children are failing to thrive in mainstream and have to be moved; not everything is as obvious as conditions like Downs. In developing her role, Christine has instigated several improvements. For example she found that she was being asked her opinion on referrals so has now 'badgered' her way onto the panel making decisions which has led to all the teachers being asked to participate where their areas are concerned, saving extra work as everyone is in the room at the same time. Christine has to keep close connections with the different schools and agencies and conducts home visits and nursery visits in the first two weeks of September. All Individual Learning Plans are created and shared with the mainstream schools. She is also developing a great deal of parental liaison and support, including parent workshops and support groups, links with children's Centres and taking the work out into the community, all of which Christine organises. She thinks that ideally all children should be educated together but realises this is idealistic 'in this world'. Increasing numbers of children go into mainstream but she believes that this is failing the children where there are not adequate resources and expertise. She bridges this divide by knowing schools and staff well in her inclusion role where children visit mainstream settings for short periods. This might well be a school where she did supply work herself, she will meet the SENCO and the teacher and have a chat. Generally she finds the staff in the schools are very keen, they are approaching learning through child-initiated play anyway and talk through why the child from St. Christopher's is going there. Parents are also involved and everything is jointly planned.

Comment [F16]: Purpose: the children, balance contact and relationships with management role

Comment [F17]: Humility and learner mindset

Comment [CD18]: Gaining confidence from small successes; emotional payback; making a difference to children's lives

Comment [CD19]: Very clear priorities

Comment [F20]: Internal quality control, internal accountability, takes responsibility for standards of I&I

Comment [F21]: Identity: feels valued by parents and society. Holistic view again – supporting families beyond the classroom

Comment [F22]: Leading change: creating own role and job description (given space and support to do this)

Comment [F23]: Leading change: recognising practical improvements and making them happen

Comment [F24]: Informal but confident and purposeful style to make things happen. Agency

Comment [F25]: Impact wider than own role and voice being heard. Agency

Comment [F26]: Always practical rational for change - benefits staff as well as students, involves people, improves decision making and efficiency

Comment [F27]: Vital development of connections, contacts and communications

Comment [CD28]: Shortfall of practice compared with policy

Comment [CD29]: Communication, contact and collaboration. Agency based on developing relationships and feeling confidence in range of settings with people fulfilling range of roles – derived from experience

Comment [CD30]: Consultation, discussion, collaboration, involvement, joint planning

In holding such a pivotal role, Christine says with a laugh that she 'cannot be ill'. It is not possible but fortunately she is rarely ill anyway. In fact this is an issue for the school because there is no slack in the staffing and there cannot be any supply cover, even in terms of a regular pool to draw upon, because of the specialised work entailed. Therefore if anyone is absent or there are visits and meetings to be covered, this has to be managed internally.

Christine has now worked her way into middle management in the phase leader position and is now on a six month 'aspiring leaders' course (she does not like the term as it sounds too self-indulgent). She has to develop a project from a senior management point of view and has chosen the theme of involving parents in children's learning journeys while implementing the Foundation Curriculum into Key Stage 1. The primary curriculum matches ages to stages, which is helpful as students here are about 18 months behind where they would be in mainstream. She feels that there is a lot of communication about practical matters with the school giving support on things like toileting, feeding, behaviour, speech and communication, but less focus on learning and she would like to address this. She has lots of ideas, including surveying parents and considering children's learning at home. This means bridging the divide where children are transported in on buses to St. Christopher's while at the Unit there is direct contact. She writes in their books each day and rings them regularly, so the contact is maintained. In any case she feels it is vital to know what is going on in class to support her management role.

Success of the school is obviously judged by Ofsted but in a broader sense it is communally judged by the extended school community including parents and the wide range of professionals with whom they work, and internally by staff. Improvement is a balance between government directives and internal initiatives: 'doing as we are asked and making it right for our school'. For externally driven change, staff rely on the headteacher to gather information and explore the implications of policy, then put the options to them. Christine sees the School Development plan along with everyone else and knows which elements are her own responsibility, such as the ArtsMark. However the plan is representative of what she does, rather than the plan driving what she does. The plan is written by the head and deputy head and then discussed fully. Everyone is able to comment and make contributions at a staff meeting, people volunteer for different tasks and aspects of the development plan – people 'put their initials against things'. Staff can also initiate change and parents are encouraged to make suggestions and comments, which Christine is following up for her project. It is also accepted if someone cannot do any more and asks to be absolved of a particular responsibility and normally someone else is found. Initials are swapped around until everyone is happy; it is proper consultation and negotiation.

Managing teams is the most difficult job with the need to negotiate and compromise – the smallest things become very important. Teams meet regularly with a proper agenda and if additional things crop up they are built in. Christine also meets with her TAs even more often and she keeps her ear to the ground in between to pick up issues that people may be reluctant to raise at meetings. She feels it is important to find out what is going on day to day and this includes people's feelings and opinions. She makes sure she is around in between lessons when everyone talks 'over a cuppa' because that's when you hear things – both positive and negative. Opportunities are given at the start of every term to suggest improvements and comment on progress; ideas are jotted down and they discuss as they go. These meetings are extremely important with a careful balance of structure and open-

Comment [CD31]: Identity – individual teacher is indispensable implications for wellbeing

Comment [CD32]: Career development; rejects focus on self as leader

Comment [CD33]: Importance of focussing on learning albeit within holistic view; bringing parents on board through creative enquiry; importance of enthusiasm. Again agency based on excellent and genuine links and relationships.

Comment [CD34]: Communication again

Comment [CD35]: Keeping in touch as a leader in informal as well as formal ways

Comment [CD36]: Success criteria vary between Ofsted, community and staff

Comment [CD37]: Mediating change for this school

Comment [CD38]: Head's pivotal role in mediating change

Comment [CD39]: Sharing out responsibilities: collaborative approach to development; ownership, negotiation, consultation is genuine. Transparent approach viewed positively.

Comment [CD40]: Managing teams challenging: keep informed informally. Support other people's sense of belonging and self-efficacy

endedness; the time is obtained by other teams covering the class or phase team. She has an agenda and allows space for TAs to raise issues, but not everyone wants to speak out formally. There are formal and informal assessments and lesson observations by the headteacher to pick up teaching and learning issues quickly. There is also a self-evaluation day for internal monitoring. Christine contributes a survey response towards the formal school self-evaluation form.

Christine likes things done in a certain way – essentially they have to be done properly and she needs to know they are completed or in place. However she has learnt a new skill of delegation this term: 'now I do pass the odd thing over and try to let go'. Some colleagues including TAs are able to lead aspects of development but others will say 'I'm just a teacher'. There are plenty of opportunities and choices to be made in relation to professional and career development.

However Christine feels that generally the staff response to change is not good as many are well established and set in their ways so that it is hard to change their minds about doing things differently. It therefore takes a bit longer than it should. She has found this particularly as a relative newcomer to special education; colleagues would say 'what does she know, she was 'mainstream'?' However her approach has been to say 'let's try – work with me' and to make clear that the outcome is open until something has been tried. An example is the new system for IEPs, - 'B Squared' - which Christine piloted 4 years ago and the Head now wants staff to introduce across the school. The beauty of it is that it breaks the curriculum down into tiny steps – touch the cup, grasp the cup, lift the cup - so that the targets are manageable. Staff simply highlight the next steps and the system creates the IEP including the skills needed and the criteria used to measure success, with a review date. Previously there was some discrepancy in how targets were set, how many and how important they were for different subjects and they were reviewed three times a year. Essentially staff could set the targets any way they wanted. In the new system a maximum of 4 longer term targets are set and reviewed annually. It should therefore lighten the load for staff as well as ensuring consistency. The Head will instigate the change and evaluate it but as Christine has piloted it and is an advocate she will be talking about it at a staff meeting and showing everyone how to do it. She knows some staff will feel inadequate because it is based on a computer system. It can be personalised even further by adding how the targets will be met and additional success criteria, so it is very responsive and prompts more reflection than the previous system.

In relation to the way she herself is managed, Christine feels her professional judgement is trusted by the headteacher and is happy to be left to manage her 'own little world' of Early Years. At the same time she knows the head's door is always open and has never felt any barriers to raising issues if need be. Following the move to create phase managers as well as Key Stage managers there is a feeling that the management structure might be top-heavy but at the same time there are gaps to be filled, for example the assistant head is running KS3 in the absence of an appointment.

Regarding her Art Co-ordinator role, Christine is self-effacing, since art and music is the way that classes work here, so 'it runs itself really' –singing and acting and moving and the visual element are integral. Christine's main task is to write policy and budget. She has gained the school a Silver ArtsMark when she had just joined the school and was not fully aware of the

Comment [CD41]: Formal and informal discussion and consultation: issues picked up on agenda, added to agenda and discovered informally by 'being around'. Structure and space.

Comment [CD42]: Head keeps the agenda tight re: learning and teaching and addresses issues directly.

Comment [CD43]: Participation in self-evaluation complements other processes; everything is built in and connected up to inform change.

Comment [CD44]: Personal high standards and takes responsibility to lead team on this.

Comment [CD45]: New skill of delegation, how to do this while maintaining high standards - no compromise on standards.

Comment [CD46]: Encouraging colleagues in professional and career development is important part of valuing them.

Comment [CD47]: Even so a negative view by some (TAs as well as staff) – professional inertia and cynicism.

Comment [CD48]: Practical trialling and evaluation of new approaches is vital to convince people; effective approach to leading change is to trial yourself first.

Comment [CD49]: Again improvement with benefits for both students and staff - leverage.

Comment [CD50]: Very practical and grounded approach. Demonstrate with advocacy and empathy.

Comment [CD51]: Reflective evaluation to ensure benefits before implementing more widely.

Comment [CD52]: Given responsibility and allowed to lead....

Comment [CD53]: ...but with support where needed. Balance again.

Comment [CD54]: Leader allows teachers to do what they are already doing.

Comment [CD55]: Administrative tasks to structure and document change but it reflects what they are already doing.

range of activity – in fact she applied for the Bronze and it was upgraded. There are some gaps suggesting that they are not ready for Gold and although this has been one of the school's targets and on her list for three years, she has been allowed to put it aside again as they are doing much artistic work through Creative Partnerships which is co-ordinated by the deputy head. She knows what needs to be done: the music co-ordinator is going to help her next year and they will need to introduce some INSET on dance and so on. The ArtsMark gives staff pride and confidence in recognising that the school is doing well.

Christine would like to see more resources in school. If she had infinite money she would purchase specialist equipment such as sensory tools and she would like a special infant playground. She would also bring in more resources since there is no supply cover; when teachers or TAs are ill, it has to be covered from within the school which stretches everyone too far. There are no regular supply teachers attached to the school and bringing in people the children do not know does not work. She would like a room to take out smaller classes and to have smaller ratios – she has 11 children in the room with herself and 5 TAs. Classroom management is quite problematic particularly with 5 children who have autism and find it even more difficult to wait their turn in a larger group. Beyond this there is little she would change.

Comment [CD56]: Professional judgement trusted. Allowed to prioritise.

Comment [CD57]: Clarity of vision

Comment [CD58]: External recognition is important; in this case school did not realise their own strengths and were upgraded

Comment [CD59]: Wanting the best for the children, would like more resources but contented with role and identity. Works within the system and changes it from within. Change is small scale on a one to one basis with both students and staff.

Christine: Key points

1. Multiple roles and responsibilities achieved through organisation and positive approach
2. Consultative, open and valuing culture enables professionals to flourish
3. Opportunities for leadership, flexibility, creativity and experimentation
4. Prioritising own responsibilities and tasks
5. Leadership style consultative, collaborative, supportive, friendly, flat hierarchy, mixing formal and informal, structured and open
6. Collaboration and involvement extends to parents and other professionals and agencies
7. Working across boundaries: school and home; school and other settings; cross-curriculum
8. Children's learning, enjoyment and wellbeing seen holistically; range of outcomes
9. Leading change by trialling, demonstrating, supporting, offering, evaluating
10. School planning and policy to reflect what is already being done: tasks and responsibilities negotiated and agreed together
11. High standards and expectations with children's interests central; empathy but insistence when people do not want to change
12. Team leadership; thrives on professional relationships and in the classroom
13. Learner mindset; humility, learning from others, wanting to improve and progress
14. Enthusiasm and positive energy; works within constraints but turns to advantage and children's benefit
15. Manages multiple discourses, agendas and outcomes

Teacher Portrait: Pam

This portrait is derived from one long meeting with Pam when the Academy had just launched. Subsequent emails, albeit after much longer than the promised interval and without the support of my original senior contact, brought no response and it was assumed that Pam was not available for further interviews. Nevertheless, her narrative has a strong temporal dimension, reflecting back to long experience particularly in the school on the current site in its difference guises, and expressing intentionality for the future and therefore gives many insights into her perceived role and identity in relation to school change. Pam met me in her own domain of the Food and Nutrition department. She clearly owned the space and was relaxed and on excellent terms with colleagues. She was happy for the technicians to finish off quietly while we talked. She was more than happy to continue for much longer than the time allocated, seeming to greatly enjoy the opportunity for reflection and to put forward her own views.

Pam has always been a teacher apart from a brief initial spell learning Cordon Bleu cookery in France and doing private cooking until she was 21. Her father was a businessman, hotelier and wine merchant and her mother a college lecturer and as an only child she considers herself to be fortunate to have had every advantage in life including a good education. She always wanted to be a teacher, to do something more. She trained at Gloucester College, in the first year that Certificate of Education was not automatically awarded a degree. A range of subjects had to be studied as well as the generic education work: she took Home Economics, Nutrition, Art and Design and Physical Education. Since then she has always been interested to learn more. She believes fervently in the value of education in its widest sense, that everyone has to be a lifelong learner and that no-one can know everything, while no-one should impose their will on anyone else.

Pam was never one for the easy option. After teaching practice in a grammar school she went straight to a secondary modern school in Arbury, a deprived inner city area of Cambridge. Her current headmaster was impressed when he heard this, recognising that it must have been 'a tough call'. Pam supplemented her challenging day job by teaching adults two nights a week, which she enjoyed, and undertook further art training at Cambridge Institute of Education, not for career reasons but because it was available and interested her. In school she developed a strong interest in pastoral care and 'kids that didn't thrive'. From there she wanted to move to a girls' board school in the London Borough of Newham but the accommodation was too expensive. She would have liked that job – the fact that the previous Home Economics teacher had been stabbed did not put her off at all. She applied instead for the job in the former school on this site, intending to stay for a couple of years. That was in 1976, 33 years ago, and she is now 59. So why did she stay? She says it is silly to think that it is about saving the world, but it is not about that:

... people say you stay because you make a difference. I came here because a difference needed to be made. Sometimes I think I can make a contribution to that.

Despite this long period on the current site, Pam has does not want to imply she has been standing still in her career and professional activity. She has taken on many different roles and has been involved in projects 'too many to mention', taking local pilots, research and development in her stride and enjoying fruitful collaborations with colleagues from other local schools, with the Local Authority, the community and business. Her contextual understanding has great depth and breadth, spanning more than three decades and political and local changes. She highlights some of her professional roles and activities, which see her moving between pastoral and subject roles. She entered the school as a Division Tutor, responsible for 5 tutor groups, then became Deputy Head of Faculty and temporarily Head of Faculty, overseeing Craft, Design and Technology, Food and Nutrition, Child Care and Art. She speaks with greatest enthusiasm of her 15 years as Head of Year, a role she agreed to take on to allow the previous post holder experience in a more senior role. She

Comment [CD1]: Reflection (backwards) and intentionality (forwards) gives a good perspective on change

Comment [CD2]: Confident professional identity, open, relaxed and comfortable in her space and with her team

Comment [CD3]: A good education as a passport to a good life – a value to be passed on

Comment [CD4]: Learning disposition vital to her identity and outlook

Comment [CD5]: Core values – in education and learning, in voice and equity, in flat hierarchies

Comment [CD6]: Formative experiences as a teacher; tough, likes a challenge; cares about pastoral aspects and want to help most vulnerable and disaffected students

Comment [CD7]: Values and moral purpose, making a difference at a local and individual scale

Comment [CD8]: Always a change agent taking on new research and development projects to push practice forwards. Very collaborative.

Comment [CD9]: Wide range of experience and expertise to draw upon – knowledge and understanding.

imposed the condition that she would stop if she was not happy in the role, but *loved* it. It was even noticed that in those years she took through the school, there were more enrolments and therefore more students, and although the link was never formally investigated there did seem to be public confidence in her work to mirror her own self-confidence.

Pam sees this as a 'halcyon' and 'innovative' time in education which contributed to her enjoyment of the role, 20 or so years ago. She looked after about 470 students, supported by 20 staff and 3 deputies. There were trips and summer camps and sports teams thrived. Other professional activities included teaching younger children with the Children's University, art in the community supported by a school artist in residence and a 'Maths in Home Economics' pilot with a colleague who is now a local headteacher. Pam remembers that pilots, new courses and projects used people's skills and creativity; they knew they were doing pioneering work and enjoyed fresh challenges and productive collaborative relationships. Significantly, the school took in the whole range of ability at that time, because students had to attend school locally; once there was access to selective schools further away, families took advantage of the system, able children moved away and 'the rest is history': the school was left with the 'tail' of lower ability students as school by school comparisons of performance became increasingly powerful, and its profile and reputation plummeted, a story taken up in the school landscape.

The energy with which Pam recounts this time is palpable and some of these contacts have been sustained. Her professional community reaches far beyond her school into the locality and connects with a much bigger picture of educational development. Not content with her influence in this sphere, Pam has found opportunities to do more. She has spent part of her holiday teaching abroad for the last four years, including some work with the victims of the tsunami in Sri Lanka, teaching 'A' level English in a tiny village, which was organised by friends. The previous year she was in Nepal setting up a nursery 'way up in the jungle'. These encounters contribute to her professional learning both in terms of educational practice and in her subject, for example she was interested in the food programmes in Sri Lanka.

Pam's community understanding and her ability to innovate using her subjects to link learning and wellbeing, combined with her strong desire to make a difference, has led to some important projects back at school. She has worked hard with her colleagues to bring the community into the school, 'from tea dances to crèches to pregnant mums'. She spent five years working with the Primary Care Trust and Sure Start on teenage pregnancy, has been a co-leader of the PSHE programme in the school and has worked with Jamie Oliver's '15 Foundation' giving opportunities for young people in the catering industry. The school has been involved in Creative Partnerships. In all these activities, which are 'ticking along nicely' at the launch of the new academy, Pam and her colleagues operate across the permeable boundaries of the school to make learning relevant, improve the educational experience for students and contribute to community development and wellbeing.

In relation to maintaining these high standards, Pam is very worried that the profession is now awash with people with no qualifications; although some do demonstrate excellent practice she thinks this is education on the cheap. She sees teachers who cannot speak in grammatically correct English, people who cannot dress appropriately, people who should not have been allowed to qualify as teachers. She shows in her own life and work that the role modelling aspect is as important as the content and instruction. She also disagrees with initiatives like using money to draw people from senior business roles into teaching, suggesting that 'anyone can do it'. A well-qualified profession that values quality and experience is the answer and she feels teachers are partly responsible for the current situation. The very best people should be in classrooms and there needs to be quality control. The way in which Pam manages her team demonstrates how people can be inducted into teaching and support roles; one young colleague is an ex-pupil who is now gaining

Comment [CD10]: Taking control of own professional role and situation

Comment [CD11]: Innovation linked to enjoyment – teacher-initiated change. Interestingly today is not seen as so innovative despite all the reform

Comment [CD12]: Breadth of activity and outcome – fostering relationships

Comment [CD13]: Cross-phase, cross-curricular, across the boundaries of the school into the community

Comment [CD14]: Reinforcing importance and benefit of innovative projects and collaboration

Comment [CD15]: Local school within community and decimating effects of competition at entry and in league tables, damaging for this school

Comment [CD16]: Energy and collaborative links

Comment [CD17]: Importance of professional community fuels change

Comment [CD18]: International influence based on values and experience and bringing back more knowledge and cross cultural understanding to enrich learning – shares with the children

Comment [CD19]: Holistic view – learning, wellbeing, life changing

Comment [CD20]: Community into the school: teenage pregnancy, childcare, elderly care, creativity, food, employment. Relevance, enjoyment, community development, wellbeing are all connected.

Comment [CD21]: Qualifications of teachers – professionalism undermined by those with none. Belief in importance of education and 'doing it properly'

Comment [CD22]: Standards and quality

qualified teacher status and is doing marvellous work with his tutor group, while her technicians are very much part of her team.

As well as the recent diversification of teaching roles and qualifications, Pam sees changes in society that have affected the nature of teaching. With greater litigation parents' attitudes are often fuelled by standing up for their children's rights. There is less innate respect for the teacher, by which Pam means not that she should be seen standing on her expert status, but that she should enjoy 'quiet respect', won by leading students in the right direction in their education, towards a better life. Another issue is that parents have been deskilled in parenting and are less confident about what to do with their children. She feels the influence of technology should not be underestimated: the instant gratification of Nintendo Wiis, Playstations and so on takes the place of children and families learning, researching, debating, talking and *thinking* about things, so that when they come to school they find it incredibly difficult to cope without interactive high resolution graphics packages in front of them.

As a result, teachers are expected to meet expectations of entertainment as well as education, with all singing, all dancing 3 part lessons. Pam feels sometimes it is necessary to get down to learning things straight: children have to do exams, they have to be able to reason, write and punctuate. Teachers are also battling against what she sees as an appalling lack of worldly knowledge displayed by students. Now teaching the third generation ("...they say, you taught my nan"...), she has seen a deterioration in knowledge of the world and everything in it: they do not read a newspaper and they talk in 'soap speak', a daily diet of gossip about 'absolutely nothing'. The deprived locality within which the school is located fuels insularity and narrowness. All of Pam's work could be seen as trying to confront this and open people's horizons. She sees a relevant education as the answer and the means of emancipation. The highest expectations and the right practical support can inspire students in unexpected ways. For example now that each sixth former in the academy is given £60 to buy smart business attire rather than uniform, young people who were walking around as 'Goths and Emos' are now loving their new smart image in suits and ties and pin stripes, especially the young sportsmen. Confidence is also built when issues are dealt with immediately and effectively, showing parents that teachers will look after their children.

In this educative work, particularly in this school, Pam knows that effective relationships with students are essential. There are 'teachers they like, and teachers they don't'; they scorn weakness and will 'rip weak teachers to shreds'. On the other hand they appreciate teachers who give them time, don't challenge them and 'effect change in ways they enjoy'. They are not tough at all, they lack resilience and soon disengage if they do not value what they are experiencing. Jane is under no illusions about the difficulty of the task in this school, particularly with regard to behaviour, remembering that students' social and economic environments are impoverished and that they may see themselves as failures within the selective system. One shocked newcomer said that it was harder here than in her previous role teaching in a secure unit, informing Pam's husband that he could have no idea of how challenging the children are and of what she had been up against all these years. Answering this accusation on behalf of her students, Pam counters with an impassioned statement of her own beliefs and in the process suggests that role modelling is central to her work. There is also an important political message here about the purposes of education not only for individual ends but for the good of society on a global scale:

Young people are FANTASTIC. I think they are. They do have a conscience. They are interested in people less fortunate than themselves, you can see that from the charity things they do. They sponsored my work in Nepal - they were dead keen, dead interested. So they're fantastic and they're the gateway to the future and so it's no good knocking them. We've got to give them every skill in the book to get through the 21st Century, 'cos they've got to save the planet - they have - and if they haven't got the educational skills to do it, well.....

Comment [CD23]: Team management and induction

Comment [CD24]: Respect for the supportive educating role of the teacher rather than discipline 'because I say so' - needs to be won

Comment [CD25]: Teacher supporting critical discourse amongst students and families instead of entertaining

Comment [CD26]: Importance of knowledge and skills to change lives

Comment [CD27]: Teacher's role in emancipation of disadvantaged children in deprived community - broadening minds. Holistic notion of change and improvement

Comment [CD28]: Teacher's role in being child's advocate and protector in school - swift resolution to issues important. Trust.

Comment [CD29]: Importance of relationships and respect

Comment [CD30]: Change at the individual level - time, enjoyment of learning when not resilient

Comment [CD31]: Role modelling to make a difference individually and broaden perspectives

Comment [CD32]: Environmental sustainability to the fore - beyond subject knowledge and skills; moral purpose to education that has to be passed on to children

She goes on to say that perhaps where people have had it too easy, it may take a catastrophe to encourage them to work together, indeed she believes this is part of the human condition and that some tough times might galvanise people into action. She may be well qualified to offer this opinion given her experience of developing countries and emergency situations. Pam's professional life models extraordinary resilience; she has shown herself to relish tough challenges, and flexibility, she habitually uses the word 'interesting' to describe some of the apparently daunting situations she has encountered and she never refers to anything as a problem or admits to fear or anxiety. She does admit mistakes, however. She feels it is important to offer an apology where appropriate, citing the example of speaking harshly or rudely to a student when her mind is overburdened. She talks to students face to face as people and is willing to make herself vulnerable and give something of herself, to admit she was wrong and try to explain why. She has never had any personal difficulties from this in her 33 years here, even though her address is in the 'phone book. Just as with her leadership and management style, she prefers equitable discussion with students to hierarchical domination and tries to model this daily: they are all human beings.

In an overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic account of her role, Pam allows no criticism of students themselves and is a powerful advocate for them. She does not view every aspect of education positively, however. While recognising the limitations and implications of their social context, she reserves her negativity for the system within which she is required to work. She feels that the main characteristic of teaching as it is now is 'the challenge of change'. Speaking about teachers in general rather than personally, Pam says that as well as having to deal with difficult student behaviour, teachers work long hours and there is a lot of stress. The increase in pressure is due to changes in accountability and emphasis:

We're exam mad, it's all structures and systems and processes and policies and follow this, follow that.

The surveillance culture has also eroded relationships; although she knows that children do have to be protected, she disagrees vehemently with the rules that prevent touch, resenting that this suggests some kind of perversion:

I'm a mother, I'm a grandmother....You can't pick a kid up in the playground because they're sobbing their hearts out – that's absolutely mad. What am I to do – say 'I'm not allowed to touch you'?

Nevertheless, sometimes there are still girls who will fling themselves into her arms when they're upset. For these students, Pam's role as a teacher encompasses far more than instruction and represents enormous trust, compassion and empathy that accompany and probably result from her advocacy. She would like to see longer lessons, less formality and more flexibility, including with uniform, and she cannot see why students cannot call her 'Pam', as they do when they leave school. In her book, such structures and rules have nothing to do with respect.

Pam feels that it is essential that teachers are confident to ask students about their experiences and opinions. Previously staff felt let down by some students who gave a disappointing account to Ofsted, saying it was a dump and expressing dissatisfaction. In her first indication that there were flaws in the previous model for the school, Pam says that if they really felt this way, it was important to do something about it. She believes that they need to be asked about happiness, safety, wellbeing, belonging, enjoyment and whether they understand the rationale for their learning. The academy needs to check that they feel cared for, respected, treated fairly and are able to work well together.

Pam's current role is Team Leader for food across both academy sites. The pivotal role of food within the academy's vision prompted Pam to offer a written response in taking on the role, because she

Comment [CD33]: A resilient learner, teacher and survivor; leader of change

Comment [CD34]: Humility and admits mistakes and does not know all the answers

Comment [CD35]: Leadership and management style – flat hierarchies, equitable discussion, human relationships, listening and debating

Comment [CD36]: Advocacy for children, all change geared towards improving their life chances

Comment [CD37]: Change as main challenge

Comment [CD38]: Over-emphasis on systemsworld, increased pressure on results

Comment [CD39]: Surveillance culture – less trust and erodes relationships

Comment [CD40]: Trust, empathy, compassion, advocacy of children and young people – these eroded by performativity

Comment [CD41]: More informality and less structure would help – does not erode respect but acknowledges lifeworld and balances out to a more humane approach

Comment [CD42]: Importance of dialogue – student voice

Comment [CD43]: Broader outcomes to do with positive student experience not mentioning results

was so supportive of what 'they' ('The Academy') are trying to do in placing food centrally within the new family units. Food plays a vital role in people's social and emotional welfare and development and, in an exciting development for Pam, students cook and eat together in mixed age social ('family') groups. They have planned an initial healthy menu (pasta carbonara with green salad and fruit salad) and will change this as they go on, trialling the scheme on one site and developing as they go. She therefore finds herself once again at the forefront of new developments and is delighted that there are greater opportunities now for her and her team to talk with students about food.

The connection between good nutrition and learning, wellbeing and longevity is evident, but Jane is not sure that people in the local community understand this. There is much deprivation and life-spans are shorter, giving much scope for changing attitudes and improving life skills so that students and families can make good choices about what to cook and learn to budget and shop effectively. There is land on the school site that could be used for allotments, a 'green gym', and Jane is thinking about involving a celebrity gardener. Over time they will build in discussion of ethical and moral issues including organic production and Fair Trade. The ideas are snowballing, powered by Pam's formidable energy. She is pleased that this represents her career coming 'full circle' so that she can focus again on her subject and its potential to improve life chances. Alongside these new developments there is no shortage of curriculum innovation; the department is still running the normal courses of GCSE Food and Nutrition and Child Development and a Real Care Baby scheme (with 'dummy babies') in Family Unit Time, which she feels is "where it should sit". Pam is passionate about such schemes as she is well aware of the socio-political context – the local area did not meet government targets for reducing teenage pregnancy and this scheme really helps. The vision for the academy fits well with her personal vision and is providing plenty of opportunity for new challenges and innovation.

Pam articulates a very clear philosophy for her leadership and management roles. She is a team player, dislikes working on her own and believes in a 'flat' management style in which everyone has equal say, disagreements and misgivings are aired and discussed and change is implemented when everyone is in agreement, which may require compromising her own ideas. Pam knows it is in people's nature to 'knock the boss' but "anyone can take the lead and they know I'll back them 100%" and she knows the team can function perfectly well without her. Working with these colleagues is not simply a means to achieve the desired outcomes, but also a source of immense personal satisfaction and part of the reason she continues with the job. She expects everyone to pitch in and enables them to contribute - she uses the metaphor of 'rolling boulders off the runway'. However she is well aware that as the only fully qualified person on the team she is the guardian of high standards and she sets the highest expectations. Pam's notion of standards is concerned less with performance outcomes and more with quality of teaching. She acknowledges herself as something of a control freak - she wants students to be 'taught properly' and will not allow anything to be 'slipshod' and this is where her support of her team is focussed. In these first few weeks of term they have been dealing with all the practical matters of getting courses running, managing the staggered starts for different year groups and staggered lunchtimes, alongside analysing data and keeping up with paperwork and coursework and shopping for the department's lesson materials. Managing change is the most challenging aspect but the whole department have risen to the challenge, working extra hard so as to be ready for the Academy launch.

In these early days of the academy, she feels she can rely on the Executive Headteacher of her site (whom she refers to as the Head) to support them and put them at ease. She feels he is very fair and does not belittle teachers but is willing to 'roll up his sleeves' and work alongside them – sometimes even physically, in preparing the new buildings for the start of term. Again this is not about standing on dignity but about displaying humanity. The students are picking this up as well. Jane feels she will be able to do business with him, but she does feel that this is her job anyway, to

Comment [CD44]: Leading development in current role – seeing bigger picture for developments, pitches in with understanding about what the academy is trying to do

Comment [CD45]: Holistic view of subject's place in curriculum and lifelong learning

Comment [CD46]: Change: ideas, energy, connections, motivation to make happen

Comment [CD47]: Curriculum innovation still as powerful as ever

Comment [CD48]: Connecting individual vision, organisational priorities and government targets

Comment [CD49]: Leadership and management style – flat hierarchy, team, collaboration, everything on the table

Comment [CD50]: Team is reason for enjoyment of job – work together for change

Comment [CD51]: Combines high expectations with enabling colleagues to contribute to internal developments and meeting requirements of new academy

Comment [CD52]: Standards to do with things being in place and running smoothly and with quality of teaching and learning

Comment [CD53]: Headteacher manages by standing alongside, supporting, listening, being human

get along with senior colleagues and support them in their very difficult jobs through her own role. She views the five Headteachers of schools (under the two Executive Heads) as having the same role and function as Year Heads. She has also been quite impressed so far with the governance with a celebrity chair of governors linked to the sponsoring authority who has sent a personal letter to each member of staff with thanks and support. The headteacher has also sent personal letters to individual teachers who are doing good work, for example her young colleague who is working so effectively in Family Unit Time. The Staff Association is to continue with social events, particularly important for all the new staff who have arrived this term, many of them from Ireland. So everything seems as positive as with the school in its previous guise. She is under no illusions, however, about this honeymoon period as she knows that 20-30% of staff often leave in the first year of an academy and with a large influx of new staff this year who are building new social networks and finding accommodation, there will be some hard work to retain them at New Futures.

The priorities for the coming year will be to get the school settled and students attending, behaving and wanting to be here, which includes respect for one another and teachers, good manners, uniform and teamwork. The Family Units are essential to this strategy and parents will want to know their children are happy and safe, want to come to school, feel they belong and are looked after. Academic success will follow. The school will need to stay fully staffed and retention is crucial to see the plans through but it will be difficult for staff, who will be subject to these additional pressures with the prospect of working on a building site.

Pam knows that attention will rightly turn to a strong sense of purpose in the classroom, engaging and meaningful lessons and achieving excellent quality of teaching and learning in all areas of the curriculum. Jane has understood from a senior colleague that areas of weakness have been uncovered, with members of staff who have built structures that obscure the fact that they are not working effectively. There is also the impact of the merging of schools to consider. The secondary school has been subject to notices of special measures and serious weaknesses in the past, which have forced them to take their accountability seriously and scrutinise lessons and data. The merging schools have not had to do this to such a great degree. It is clear that now there will be 'no place to hide' for anyone, there will be high expectations and teachers as well as the school will be judged ultimately on results. This may have left some colleagues feeling vulnerable and exposed. Pam likes this kind of clarity though; she prefers clear expectations in her own role, and to be told when she is not 'stepping up to the mark'. Again she cites the example of her young colleague who has risen to the challenge ten times over and is very much enjoying his enhanced role, showing that enhanced accountability for good teachers, instead of being problematic, highlights and gives credit for the quality of their work.

There are also other criteria that Pam feels are important for success, especially locally. These include improvements in attitude and conduct, students' demeanour as they are seen in their uniforms and, for parents, homework is always a priority. Eventually improvements will result in more children from the community wanting to attend the school instead of applying elsewhere. Still, unfortunately in Pam's view, results will be expected instantly, even though the Year 11 will only have attended the academy for less than a year. It is clear that there is a range of local opinion from those who will be supportive and excited to those who are always cynical and will comment on smoking around the school gates when this is true of every school, even Eton. Status and publicity from events such as concerts and other performances, visits from celebrities and community work will all help to portray a positive image. Results have already been getting better but such a shift takes time, it depends on nurturing younger students into the new culture and the drive has to come from parents and the students themselves.

While Pam knows that it is often on short term and surface measures that the school's success will be judged, she also knows that it is not possible to see the results of change until a long time

Comment [CD54]: Middle leader's role to support senior leaders. Policy context taken as read

Comment [CD55]: Importance of personal touch in managing staff, setting in, social, making feel welcome and supported

Comment [CD56]: Mediating different agendas –relationships and behaviour, safety and enjoyment, retention, performance

Comment [CD57]: Crucial focus of quality teaching and learning in classrooms with data and observation used in support – crux of accountability. Teachers should not be able to hide behind structures. Can the systems and surveillance approach actually obscure poor practice?

Comment [CD58]: Clarity welcomed, unequivocal focus on quality in classroom

Comment [CD59]: Confidence within the community judged on behaviour and demeanour – a 'positive image'

Comment [CD60]: Drive for change from students and families or won't work, requires hope and trust and self-belief

afterwards. She realises that the causes and effects of change are complex and may defy even sophisticated analysis. This does not deter her from wanting to make a difference and spurs her on to extend her sphere of influence. Whatever the structures and processes around her, she will hold to her values and is prepared for the long haul.

Comment [CD61]: Shallow and deep, short term and long-term change

Comment [CD62]: Actively wanting to make a difference based on own personal professional values. No quick fix. Fits into any policy framework or school setting.

Pam: Key points

1. Fundamental belief in education and lifelong learning as emancipatory, to do with making a difference to people's lives individuals, organisationally, within the community and internationally
2. Personal professional disposition to learning; resilience, reflection, investigation, experimentation, evaluation within a professional community; enjoying challenges
3. Professional confidence and experience enables risk taking, creativity; innovation generates interest and enjoyment for teachers and students
4. Teacher as instigator and facilitator of critical dialogue with students, colleagues, families and communities; multiple discourses and priorities; student voice matters
5. High standards and clear expectations crucial; things to be done properly; quality of process; qualifications, knowledge and skills matter; important to discover and address weaknesses
6. Leadership style of flat hierarchies, sharing and collaboration, discussion, negotiation and agreement within mutually supportive team; gives immense satisfaction
7. Change is main challenge. Headteachers working alongside and being approachable and human is vital with genuine encouragement and praise. Parents and students must want improvement for it to happen
8. Interconnection between achievement, enjoyment, behaviour and demeanour, wellbeing, safety, self-confidence and self-efficacy; broad educational outcomes; holistic view
9. Working across boundaries of schools, curriculum subjects, classrooms, relationships, age groups and phases
10. Relationships crucial - fun, respect, professional confidence and strength, role modelling, empathy and being human including admitting mistakes
11. Performativity, surveillance and competition devalue education, damage schools and increase pressure; systemsworld approach; needs less formality, more flexibility which will not diminish respect
12. Policy needs underpinning values and to be connected up nationally, locally within community, organisationally, individually
13. Moral purpose extends beyond individuals, school and community to issues of environmental sustainability and students need to be connected with this discourse
14. Advocacy of children and young people, as participating members of society and key to future.

Appendix 11: Glossary and explanation of terms

Artsmark	quality benchmark for schools in arts education from Arts Council England
BSF	Building Schools for the Future (government schools building programme)
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
Creative Partnerships	Arts Council / government funded initiative to raise standards through creative projects involving arts practitioners working alongside teachers and students
Creative Practitioner	Person coming into school to work with students and teachers on Creative Partnerships project
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau (check required before people are allowed to work in school)
EBD	Emotional and Behavioural Disorders / Difficulties
ECM	Every Child Matters (policy agenda)
EdD	Education Doctorate (a taught doctorate programme)
EMA	Education Maintenance Allowance (for post-16 students from lower income families)
FE	Further Education (normally at college)
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary
GTP	Graduate Teacher Programme
HLTA	Higher Level Teaching Assistant
HoD	Head of Department
I(C)T	Information (and Communications) Technology
IEP	Individual Education Plan
INSET	In-Service Education and Training
KS	Key Stage (1/2: primary; 3/4: secondary; 5/6: post-16)
LEAP	Leading Arts Practice
MA	Master of Arts (postgraduate qualification)

Makaton	a sign language
MOVE	Movement Opportunities Via Education
NC	National Curriculum
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
O & A	Observation and Assessment (Unit)
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education (schools inspection)
Performance Management	annual review of teacher performance,
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate of Education
PMLD	profound and multiple learning difficulties
PPA	Planning, Preparation, Assessment time
PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SLD	Severe Learning Difficulties
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SoW	Schemes of Work
TA	Teaching Assistant
Threshold	Set of criteria within performance management; successful applicants move to a new pay scale
TLR	Teaching and Learning Responsibility: carries payment for additional responsibilities

Appendix 12: Summary of teaching a) ‘as it is now’ and
b) ‘teaching as I would like it to be’

Name and school		Teaching as it is now	Teaching as I would like it to be
New Futures	James	worthwhile; enjoyable; good holidays; good colleagues; pressure; deadlines; marking	technology: ‘tech-ed-up’ classroom; more relevant curriculum; text selection; flexible; choice
	Pam	challenge of change; teachers find behavior difficult; work long hours; stress	Longer lessons; happier students; [less] stressed; [less] tired; less structured; less formal; less exam [orientated]
	Lorna	purposeful; busy; fun; obstacle-strewn! accommodation / resources [issues]; empowering for me and them	collegiate; collaborative; empowering; fun; inclusive; exciting; being valued; valuing others; possibilities; well-resourced; effective-learners learn and are engaged
Castlegate	Christine	rewarding; exciting; every day is different; variety; communication	More resources; sensory; infant playground; staff supply cover (TA); smaller classes
	Jess	paperwork; busy; caring; happy; stressful – staffing and paperwork; tiredness!	Less (!); free of paperwork! More staff; still fun; caring; nurturing; free curriculum
	Michael	very stressed; target-led; obsessive interest in accountability which = paperwork; time consuming and pointless assessment tools; very complicated now in this school	I would like to have my class to myself more of the time; lessons planned on thematic and life-skills basis rather than N.C.; smaller classes; less emphasis on irrelevant and deceitful forms of accountability; realistic expectation of what can be achieved with our students

[explanatory notes in italics]

The above statements are further summarised into the ‘Wordle’ charts below (Wordle, 2011) in which words used most frequently are shown in larger font.

b) Teaching as I would like it to be...



Appendix 13: Summary of professional priorities data

Professional priorities summary

Statement scores given by each teacher are listed with positions corresponding to those on the original grid in Appendix 3.

Scores are totalled in the second column. One respondent did not score three of the statements, as indicated with an asterisk. The mean score for each statement has therefore been calculated to remove this effect.

The statements are then ranked by mean score to show the relative priority given to each aspect of their work by these teachers. Highest rank scores are shown in green (broadly showing 'central to my work'), middle ranked scores are shown in yellow (broadly, 'an aspect of my work') and lowest rankings in pink ('not part of my work').

Most teachers recognised most statements as at least part of their work, skewing data towards the higher scores.

statement scores	total	mean	statement scores	total	mean	statement scores	total	mean
1 1 1 1 1 1	6	1.0	1 1 1 1 2 1	7	1.2	2 2 2 1 2 2	11	1.8
2 1 1 2 2 2	10	1.7	1 1 1 1 2 2	8	1.3	3 3 3 2 2 2	15	2.5
2 2 1 2 2 2	11	1.8	1 1 1 1 – 1	5*	1.0	1 1 1 1 1 2	7	1.2
2 2 2 2 2 2	12	2.0	1 1 1 1 2 1	7	1.2	3 2 1 1 2 1	10	1.7
1 1 1 1 2 1	7	1.2	1 2 1 1 2 1	8	1.3	3 1 1 1 1 1	8	1.3
3 2 1 2 2 2	12	2.0	3 1 1 1 1 2	9	1.5	1 1 1 1 2 1	7	1.2
1 1 1 1 1 1	6	1.0	1 1 1 2 2 2	9	1.5	3 2 1 2 2 2	12	2.0
2 3 2 2 3 2	14	2.3	1 1 1 2 2 2	9	1.5	2 2 1 3 2 2	12	2.0
1 1 1 1 2 1	7	1.2	1 2 1 2 2 2	10	1.7	1 1 1 1 2 1	7	1.2
1 1 2 1 – 1	6*	1.2	2 1 1 2 3 2	11	1.8	3 3 2 3 3 2	16	2.7
1 1 2 2 2 1	9	1.5	1 1 1 2 3 1	9	1.5	2 1 2 1 – 1	7*	1.4
3 1 1 1 1 1	8	1.3	3 1 1 2 1 3	11	1.8	3 1 1 1 1 1	8	1.3

*score not given by one respondent

One additional priority was added by Christine, 'monitoring progress', which she scored 1, as 'central to her work'.

Professional priorities statements ranked according to mean scores

The rankings are shaded so that, broadly speaking, they correspond to the following categories:

	central to my work		an aspect of my work		not part of my work
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Mean score	Statements
1.0	making a difference to children's lives making learning interesting, enjoyable and fun cultivating a positive environment for learning
1.2	being an effective learner supporting effective learning belonging to a learning community being an excellent classroom teacher leading learning improving my practice keeping up to date with subject knowledge sharing my practice
1.3	being a role model for pupils caring for children's wellbeing supporting development of children's self-esteem helping colleagues to improve their practice being part of a professional community
1.4	taking a leadership role in relation to the curriculum
1.5	keeping order in my classroom evaluating learning and teaching meeting my individual professional targets reflecting on my practice contributing to knowledge of learning and teaching
1.7	addressing shortcomings in my own practice supporting the head in realising his/ her vision contributing to current and future society
1.8	building the school community investigating my practice taking a pastoral leadership role challenging and shaping organisational structure and culture
2.0	meeting school performance targets contributing to school improvement planning implementing policy making links with the local community
2.3	testing research in my own classroom and context
2.5	getting good test or examination results
2.7	applying findings of educational research

Appendix 14: Correspondence

Emails received January 2012 with reference to the paper 'Portraits of Teachers in Landscapes of Schools: Investigating the Role of Teachers in School Change, presented at BERA 2012 (Durrant, 2010) (reproduced with permission).

Dear Judy,

I am a student at the University of Leicester, studying for my Masters in teaching and learning. My professional enquiry is about the National Curriculum review and teachers responses to the proposed changes. I would like to use your research paper:

Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Warwick, 1-4 September 2010 Judy Durrant Canterbury Christ Church University, UK Portraits of Teachers in Landscapes of Schools: Investigating the Role of Teachers in School Change.

Have you published anything else on this topic?

Thank you! Yours sincerely.

Anna Honsel

Dear Judy!

Now that I have actually read your research paper, I just wanted to let you know how impressed I am!

I have been working my way through so many publications over the last two months that were boring, complicated, irrelevant and confusing that I nearly lost sight of why I wanted to do this research in the first place: To find out how Teachers actually cope with the constant demands of their jobs.

Talking is a teacher thinking of seriously of giving it up!

Anyway- I LOVED your use of pictures and portraiture! It is so much more creative than the usual questionnaire!

Would you mind if I do a similar thing to Appendix 2 Professional values tool: teaching as it is now and as I would like it to be

I would like to change it to The National Curriculum as it is now and The National Curriculum as I would like it to be?

Thanks again!
Anna