Using Action Research to Inquire into Assessment for Learning: Implications for

Continuing Professional Development in English Schools.

CATHERINE ANN MCKENNA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Bath Spa University for

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School of Education, Bath Spa University.

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Abstract:

This thesis demonstrates the application of an Action Research framework, drawing on a variety of methodologies in order to understand the nature of my methodological inventiveness. The study was originally based on the attempt to develop an understanding of the pedagogy and practice relating to the implementation of the National Strategies in Assessment for Learning. It was developed by examining the strategies in a real world context using an Action Research framework as a basis for the synthesised methodology. The work on this thesis incorporated the "improve" paradigm of research and was grounded in the notion of social justice. This concept has been central to developing my own and others' practice. The theme of the research on Assessment for Learning was inspired in the first instance by the work by Black and Wiliam on Formative Assessment. The original research on which this thesis is based has taken place in a time frame constrained by the implementation of the strategy to the removal of the support, an action taken by the coalition government. The thesis has examined the pedagogical theories behind the concept of Assessment for Learning and the National Strategies. It has also considered how these ideas have been implemented in schools and the impact this has had on a variety of stakeholders. The work by Black and Wiliam suggests a rolling programme of action research type activities in order to develop the ideas they are postulating. This thesis has taken this concept and applied the idea creating a synthesised methodology which has resulted in my developing my own concept of methodological inventiveness.

This thesis presents a number of original contributions to knowledge, centred on the fact that each school is a unique culture and therefore the implementation of a generic Continued Professional Development (CPD) strategy will prove difficult, the language of individual sites being different. Another significant contribution to knowledge is based on the terminology of assessment and how it is interpreted by practitioners, the different paradigms are discussed and conclusions drawn. This is based on the premise that educational practice equates with embodied knowledge and this thesis examines this concept. It also aims to clarify the meaning of social justice in the context of this study and the reasons for how this concept emerged. The concept of methodological inventiveness is also examined and conclusions drawn from the experience of this research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction, Background and Relevance:

This chapter will outline my personal motivations in engaging in this project and the research will be placed in context as well as establishing the problematical issues faced when examining a National Strategy in a local context. The chapter will also establish the aims of the research and will place the study in its social and educational context. It will introduce the issues faced in the Action Research journey and summarise the findings. This chapter will begin by establishing the rationale for the thesis and my background; as a consequence it will include a brief biography detailing the way in which the research originated and developed and how it links to my previous experience.

1.1: Introduction:

This thesis is the outcome of an Action Research project and consequently my own background and subsequent professional development is central to the research paradigm used and also informs the outcomes of the research. This account relates to my own growth as a practitioner researcher and the development of my own methodological inventiveness. This is linked to the concept of professional development and results in the thesis being written in the first person. The use of the first person reflects the point made by McNiff which states (2011: 47):

> "*What distinguishes a living theory form of action research is that it is grounded in the ontological "I" of the researcher.*"

I will set the aims of the thesis in section 1.1.1. The examination of my professional background will appear in section 1.2. The links between my own previous historical research and the current study will be considered in section 1.2.2. This section is relevant to this study as the field experiences of an historical researcher can be said to reflect the way in which an Action Research project is conducted and is part of my own lived experience. The rationale for the choice of topic will be examined in section 1.3 with the organisation of the thesis appearing in 1.4. The background to the methodology will be established in 1.5. The development of the methodological inventiveness which became part of this thesis will be introduced here. As part of the introductory chapter there will also be a consideration of the significant terminology, which will be used throughout the project in section 1.6. The relevance of the research will be looked at in section 1.7.

The summary of the Key Findings will be in 1.8 and as the original project focused on Assessment for Learning (AfL) I will include an examination of the key research which established the concept as devised by Black and Wiliam. I will also examine the introduction of AfL as part of Government Policy, based on the role of the Key Stage 3 Strategy and I will consider the nature of the pedagogy attached to this. Commensurate with this will be an examination of the findings relating to the role of the original researchers in the development of the Key Stage 3 Strategy and the implementation of the policy which will appear in Chapter 5. A key aspect which will be investigated will be the problems of putting national policy into practice in a local context. This will link to looking at educational establishment as unique cultures and developing from this my own notion of the concept of social justice one of the key findings from this work.

1.1.1: The aims of the research:

This work originated as an examination of the imposition of the AfL aspect of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy in England & Wales by the government of the time. My original intention was to examine this aspect of the national strategy in a local context and this led to an Action Research enquiry, as a methodological choice. This was underpinned by my own understanding of AfL which was seen by practitioners as a way of raising achievement and therefore enhancing opportunities for students. As an emergent researcher I originally intended to simply examine the current practice relating to AfL in secondary schools; however, other aspects, notably the growth in importance of the understanding of professional development and the examination of this have become increasingly central to this study. The implications of the political significance of AfL, and my own growth as a professional emerged as a theme over the period the research was undertaken, a process which can be linked to the cyclical nature of the Action Research framework.

The aims of the research can be summarised by the following questions:

1. How have the original ideas of AfL been adopted
2. Have the intentions of the original researchers been fulfilled?
3. How was AfL viewed by staff, students and other stakeholders?
4. How was AfL used within and across Faculties in schools?
5. How did AfL impact on teacher's professional practice?

6. Could an original toolkit for AfL be created in order to develop its implementation in the curriculum?

7. How has AfL been used in high stakes assessment?

8. What were the issues relating to AfL in practice?

9. How could new strategies for educational change can be adapted and applied to a variety of situations?

Linked to these ideas was the fact that I intended to critically analyse my own practice and that of Schools A and B in relation to the implementation of AfL.

Another original aim of the research was to place these ideas within an institutional, local and national context (particularly relating to the political context of UK government policy) and link this to relevant theoretical frameworks.

These aims were reviewed in line with an Action Research approach and the importance of the link between the implementation of the National Strategy and the concept of CPD was examined. This modification to the original research aims as a result of changing emphasis will be reconsidered in Chapter 4.2. The original set of research questions focussed on Assessment for Learning but can be subdivided into questions relevant to my emerging understanding of the importance of Continued Professional Development (CPD) and how this research was used in an Action Research framework. In summary my aims changed over time linked to my own development as a practitioner researcher and the two sets of research questions will be clarified in Chapter 4.3.

1.2: Background to the research and previous research undertaken:

1.2.1: Background:

This research project is grounded in my personal and professional background; this included aspects of historical research combined with wide experience in schools as well as educational management roles. My own experiences as a school student have been included in the reflections on this research, as I was educated within a selective grammar school framework, which was also part of the Catholic education system in Liverpool. This experience as a student was very different to my teaching experience owing to the fact that, as a student, I experienced a very traditional education with the methods of the day being rooted in the old framework of 'O' levels with terminal assessment, relying mostly on memory, as summative feedback. This form of

assessment had very little reliance on formative feedback and could be described (Richardson, 1997: 3) as based on the:

> *"traditional approach to teaching the transmission model … is not usually well integrated with other knowledge held by the students. Thus, new knowledge is often only brought forth for school-like activities, such as exams, and ignored at all other times."*

This quote accurately summarises my own formative educational experience which impacted on my understanding of pedagogy at the start of my career, however, my own educational experiences informed my subsequent notions of social justice.

My teaching experience has been in contrast to this starting point, as I have held a variety of roles within schools from purely classroom practitioner to Assistant Principal all of which have developed my understanding of pedagogy. I have taught across a number of different education authorities and have teaching experience from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 5. As a consequence I have been examined and utilised up-to-date research and new teaching methods to inform my practice. I have developed as a reflective practitioner as a result of engaging with Continued Professional Development (CPD), an issue which will be examined in depth throughout this thesis. It is this engagement which has led me to a greater understanding of social justice and has informed my final conclusions.

My original motivation to undertake this research was triggered by my attendance at the initial training on Assessment for Learning from the UK government's Educational Policy for England; the Key Stage 3 Strategy, (The Assessment for Learning Strategy DCSF-00341-2008). This led to me doing some preliminary work on my own understanding of AfL. From this point onwards I began to examine the concept of assessment and completed four units of the Masters programme at Bath Spa University in order to proceed.

The original work was grounded in my role at the time as I examined the strategies suggested by Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam in a real context. In the first instance I was struck by the comment that (2003: 2):

> *"an assessment activity can help learning if it provides information to be used as feedback by teachers and their students in assessing themselves and each other, to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. Such*

assessment becomes formative assessment when the evidence is used to adapt the teaching work to meet the learning needs."

When I began to unpick this statement with a number of colleagues the concepts contained within it stuck a particular chord as it described quite closely the processes my team and I were trying to achieve in the faculty I was managing at that particular time. The faculty was also working on developing the role of self-assessment by students; these ideas represent a higher order learning activity (2003: 14):

"the core of the activity of formative assessment lies in the sequence of two actions. The first is the perception of the learner of a gap between the desired goal and his or her present state (of knowledge and /or understanding and/or skill). The second is the action taken by the learner to close that gap to attain the desired goal. The learner first has to understand the evidence about this gap and then take action on the basis of that evidence. Although the teacher can stimulate and guide this process the learning has to be done by the student."

As a result of this particular statement I was inspired to begin a small-scale research project with one teaching group. From this beginning as a small-scale project within one classroom I was able to move on to work across one Faculty of the school linked to my role as the Head of Faculty; which enabled me to establish the role of AfL in the five different subject areas covered by my post of responsibility. This dual role will be reflected on for the potential conflict of interest. With the support of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of the school these ideas were then taken and disseminated across the whole school in a variety of different ways, the findings from which will be examined in more detail in Chapter 5. I was also able to work with the Local Authority Consultant/ Advisor responsible for delivering the training on Assessment for Learning for the work across the school, which gave the work added credibility, with the support of the SLT of the school. Since the research commenced I have moved into a senior management role at a school in a different area, which has allowed the research to be comparative across the two schools and has also broadened the scope of the research.

1.2.2: Previous research undertaken:

Although the findings from this thesis are grounded in education and the research undertaken in an educational setting it is important to reflect on the fact that

my previous research experience had been based on the use of historical methodology. This research is based on my own lived experiences and builds on the fact that I graduated from the University of Leicester with a history degree. I have crossed fields and professional boundaries, in order to gain a greater insight into the educational research methodology adopted in this study I took the ideas from this background as a historical researcher. I am still actively interested in the development of historical research methodology. This has allowed me to move on to consider the topic of the current research in the light of my own experiences.

Throughout my career I have been a reflective practitioner and my previous research is significant as there are a number of similarities between the basic methodological approaches of historical study and that of Action Research. Previously I have adopted a case study type of approach and case study can be seen as part of the methodology of the current research. The historian gathers evidence from both primary and secondary sources, evaluates it for a range of bias; usefulness and reliability, synthesizes the information and then extrapolates from the particular to the general and vice versa, as each case is different. This historical methodology can be seen as a personal research narrative similar to that of Action Research. This study is an Action Research project and embodies my living educational theory, a concept expressed by Whitehead and McNiff (2006). This use of combined methodology reflects most closely my own personal research tradition which is integral to this current study and has led to the development of my own methodology, linked to the concept of methodological inventiveness. The concept of methodological inventiveness is expressed in Dadds and Hart when they state that (2001: 166):

"creating their own unique way through their research may be as important as their self-chosen research focus." and this idea grew in importance as this study progressed.

The work of the historian can therefore be compared to the idea highlighted by Hopkins et al. (1989: 64):

"In the first stage the researcher begins by collecting "broad spectrum" data relevant to the research question. By doing this the researcher can be said to be immersing him or herself in the data."

This particular quote is particularly relevant as it links together the approach of historical methodology with the start of this research project into AfL.

The concept of historiography can be defined as the writing of history, this clearly links to the concept of living Action Research theory as this uses authentic biographical evidence which is created by the researcher. This type of historical research makes researchers call into question the validity of such evidence, validity being a key component of the current study, and so historical research has underpinned my current methodology. This utilisation of historical methodology was not examined at a simplistic level as I have taken into consideration the ideas relating to the study of history (Mortimer 2010: 12). In "Medieval Intrigue; Decoding Royal Conspiracies" he states that:

> *"Historians simply cannot escape their own cultural values, education, prejudices, language and temperament in order to view and express something with complete impartiality or total objectivity."*

It is important to take account of the fact that the current study is grounded in the Action Research model; as a result I have had to ensure that I place both the research and myself clearly in context and do not simply reflect my own cultural values, education and most particularly prejudices, without being critically reflective. This requires me to examine in depth my own experiences both as a student, teacher and researcher in order to ensure that the findings are as robust as possible.

Another aspect of historical research, which I needed to constantly bear in mind and re-iterate throughout the current project, relates to the nature of the evidence, which is again summed up by Mortimer (2010: 12):

> *"it is essential to understand that it is not the evidence we need to verify- all evidence is "true" in the sense it proceeds from the past- it is the veracity of the information contained within that evidence."*

It is clear from this statement that the nature of evidence relating to educational research can therefore be categorised in a similar way to that of historical research, as any researcher will be able to prove that their data and findings are "true" but that it is the veracity of the interpretation of the information contained within the data which is crucial.

1.3: Rationale for this study:

The study was undertaken as a result of my developing interest in the concepts expressed by Black and Wiliam on the subject of AfL and grew out of my developing understanding of the concept of Action Research. Linked to this was my desire to improve not only my own practice but also that of others. It was originally bounded by the timeframe related to the implementation of the National Strategies and began as a study based in one classroom but developed to encompass the wider concepts described later in this thesis.

The examination of the findings have developed my understanding further and I have been able to consider not only the impact of the National Strategies and the importance of Continued Professional Development but also my own methodological inventiveness as described by Dadds and Hart, where they state (2001:196):

"we had understood far less well that how practitioners chose to research, and their sense of control over this, could be equally important to their motivation, their sense of identity within the research and their research outcomes."

1.4: Organisation of the thesis:

This thesis will begin by looking at the context of the research on Assessment for Learning conducted by Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (1999) and how this has been adapted by schools as individual institutions, through the medium of the National Strategies. This is reflected by the inclusion of this work in detail in the Literature Review. Consideration will be given to the context I found myself in over the period of the research and how this has altered over time.

The subsequent chapters will begin by examining the literature available on the subject and its related fields of inquiry and the literature review will be found in Chapters 2 and 3. The literature review will consider the seminal texts and then examine the literature on the subject of assessment for learning, in order to establish the defined position of assessment in academic terms and provide the research framework assumptions. Moving on from the literature review Chapter 4 will establish the background to the research and look at the methodological paradigms employed and the issues which led from this. It will also attempt to establish how I utilised my own methodological inventiveness to develop my understanding of the data. Chapter 5

demonstrates the methods used to collect the data and Chapter 6 will examine the findings from Schools A and B. This will incorporate the data collected and how this can be interpreted within the framework of the Action Research model. Chapter 6.4 will examine the findings relating to Continuing Professional Development and will aim to answer the original research questions. It will also examine the findings linked to the Action Research questions set out in Chapter 4.3.   Developing from this data will be a detailed examination of the concept of the AfL toolkit and whether or not the current fairly simplistic format of the toolkit is usable and transferable. This development will be examined in the context of the institution I developed it in from which conclusions will be drawn. The final part of this study will be a discussion of the findings and will examine the contributions from this thesis to the academy of "educational assessment", the impact of the study in terms of my own professional practice and how this links to the concept of social justice, as well as how my own methodological inventiveness led to the final conclusions presented in this study.

1.5: Background to the methodology:

Once I began with the idea for the research and the theory behind it being postulated, I had to then consider the question of how best to approach the project. The detailed methodology undertaken for this study will be examined in Chapter 4. The Action Research methodology that I utilised builds on the work of McNiff (1988), but at the start of the project I was also keen on employing aspects of the case study approach postulated by Nisbet and Watt (1984: 72) as it:

> *"is particularly appropriate for an individual researcher, because it gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in depth within a limited timescale."*

As a result of researching a number of research methodologies and following consultation with my original supervisor I decided that the preferred research framework related best to the Action Research model, as it is cyclical, can be applied to real life on going contexts and allows the researcher to critique and amend their practice on a regular basis. This is reflected in the statement from Whitehead and McNiff (2006: 30):

"Living educational action researchers believe that their theories constantly need revisiting and reforming as the circumstances of their lives change, so their theories are always in a state of live modification"

This model emerged as a result of discussions which also resulted in my linking the topic to the "improve" paradigm of applied educational research examined in Coombs and Smith (2003) who underlined the social learning benefits of participatory Action Research by teachers' operating within their own classrooms and is also supported as a professional development process of change by Whitehead's Living Educational theory.

This moved on from my initial design to simply use the case study methodology, which Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 447) explains as being:

"used to illustrate a point, a condition, a category, something important for instruction"

As the research developed and I utilised the more detailed research questions it became apparent that this simpler type of research methodology would not necessarily allow an outcome to enable me to examine my findings and extrapolate from them so it needed to be developed into a more sophisticated form of methodology; case study proved to be rather too simplistic. The more complex type of methodology enables the research to impact upon school improvement, so can also be described as being centred on the "improve" rather than the "prove" paradigm of research.

From the beginning the research could best be described as being based in the interpretivist tradition as it was always based on studying the qualitative analysis of socially derived data, an approach which builds upon the "grounded theory" approach of Glaser and Strauss (1967) which will be examined in more detail in the chapter on methodology. The grounded theory approach was examined because the main research question intended to examine the impact of AfL at a variety of educational levels across a wide curriculum as well as attempting to develop the reconceptualisation of practice from the data collected although it proved not to be appropriate for this type of practitioner research. The way Glaser and Strauss develop grounded theory is through using a series of steps. As I looked at building up the data set, I was attempting to utilise this theory as I also wanted to ensure I was using the underpinning educational theory upon which AfL is based to move forward. There was also the consideration of the

validity of this as an academic study, a factor which impacted on the outcomes and resulted in me hesitating to make use of my own methodological inventiveness and as an emergent researcher being constrained by the types of methodologies which could be deemed appropriate, an issue which will be examined in more detail in Chapter 4.

1.6: Background to the terminology:

One of the important findings from this study is that related to terminology. Terminology as a theme recurs throughout, as the theory of AfL is based on the ideas related to formative assessment. These concepts will be discussed in the Literature Review, in examining the seminal text one of the important points to consider is the terminology, as "Assessment for Learning" was the term used by the originators of the theory to describe the work they were doing on what had previously been described as "formative assessment". The examination of the concept of formative assessment by Black and Wiliam will be referred to in this study but it is not the purpose of this thesis to re-examine the studies in detail which were used as the basis for Black and Wiliam's work.

The actual usage of terminology is a key component in this research as the word "assessment" is particularly significant and is problematic across both the education profession and in wider society. As a result of the confusion apparently generated by the terminology there will be detailed consideration given to the alternative and contested paradigms of assessment. These contested paradigms are linked to the terminology, as on first glance it appears as if the idea of summative assessment based within the behaviourist theory of learning is for most educationalists acting as the "default" setting. It can be argued that the issues behind this default setting are quite complex. This is examined in more depth in Chapter 6.7 as in most cases the behaviourist theory is generally applied to first order educational learning theories, for example, rote learning which favours summative measures of assessment. It is of crucial importance to realise at this point that formative assessment is very different to summative assessment.

Summative assessment is usually a technique used by teachers at various points in a scheme of work as well as by examination boards in high stakes terminal

examinations. This is reflected in the original design of the Key Stage 3 tasks where Black (1998: 60) states:

> *"In 1991 Kenneth Clarke … required 'written terminal examinations' and 'short written tests'; the emphasis was on manageability and the priority was clearly summative."*

The work which led on from this ultimately resulted in the Key Stage 3 Strategy documents, however, the use of the word "assessment" as part of the terminology has led to confusion, which will be examined in much more detail throughout as it has implications for both the research and for myself.

Although the use of the terminology is crucial to understanding the impact of Assessment for Learning I have discovered in the course of the research that there are significant misconceptions held by a wide variety of individuals in the education profession, these include teachers, senior leaders in schools and assessment 'experts' and the importance of these misconceptions cannot be underestimated; consequently these emergent discoveries will be examined in much more depth in Chapter 6.7.

The word assessment is defined at the most basic level by Encarta online dictionary as *"a method of evaluating student performance and attainment*." This use of terminology will be examined in detail and the findings on this subject will be a contribution of new knowledge produced by this thesis. These terms will be defined at the start of the Literature Review to ensure clarity.

It is important to note that throughout this study I will be using the terminology and acronym most associated with the theory of Assessment for Learning, by teachers and researchers; this is usually written as AfL.

1.7: The relevance of the research:

Although this study began as a small-scale action research project it has developed in scope and context. Originally the work on AfL was developed by the UK's DfES (as it then was) (0443-2004) as part of the Key Stage 3 Strategy in an attempt to lever up standards in secondary schools across England. The context of the research was grounded in the original research article produced by Black and Wiliam in 1998; this article could be described as the seminal text on Assessment for Learning; it then generated a whole range of other publications and research. The seminal text for

practitioners rather than for researchers was *Inside the Black Box: Raising standards through classroom assessment* by Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam was published by NferNelson of London in 1998; the importance of this work will be fully reviewed in the subsequent chapter, as it is so significant.

It is important however to note for the context of this study that the research in the original article was initiated by the Assessment Group of the British Educational Research Association in 1998 and was funded by a grant from the Nuffield Foundation. The research was taking place at a time when the UK government policy on education was seen as a national priority; following the speech by Tony Blair:

> *"Ask me my three main priorities for government, and I tell you: education, education, education."*

This quote was part of his **s**peech to the Labour Party conference in October 1996. This speech expressed the soon to be Prime Minister's interest in education as it was delivered before Labour came to power in the May election of 1997. There were therefore obvious political implications for any form of educational research being conducted at this time and the work of Black and Wiliam was no exception. It must be stressed that the research has relevance in a broader sense, in terms of changes in the political landscape over the period of time under study. This moves from the early implementation of the National Strategies to the arrival in 2010 of the UK's coalition government and their re-alignment of the political and educational landscape. The findings in relation to the implications for the implementation of future initiatives will also comprise a significant contribution to knowledge produced by this thesis most notably in relation to the concept of CPD and how this is impacted by the notion that each institution is culturally unique.

1.8: Summary of Key Findings:

This project began as an Action Research project, which attempted to identify the cultural changes within the teaching establishments through introducing AfL. The Action Research process has authenticated my own beliefs and understanding and has served the purpose of exploring the idea of embeddedness. My contribution to knowledge comes from my unique standpoint which is an outcome of my use of Action Research, and my own methodological inventiveness. The use of Action Research

methodology generated my findings which although in many cases can be seen as similar to others; they are in fact different because of the unique perspective I have brought to this study. My key purpose was to articulate the thinking and the epistemology of AfL, and the extrapolation of the results in order to develop improved practice, this means examining the results from individual student to classroom level and then beyond into the wider learning community.

As it is centred in the "improve" paradigm this study develops a fuller understanding of the links between improving professional practice utilising CPD and the impact of National Strategies on secondary school teachers. This provides insights for future policy developments for both individual schools and the National Government. As a result of this study came the realisation that the problem was greater than the implementation of one strategy. One of the key points is the overall lack of consistency of implementation of the National Strategy across a number of schools and Local Authority areas and the implications this has for future practice. This was due to the unique cultural nature of each establishment, a concept which has developed in significance over the course of this study. What has occurred is that the organisational and cultural change, which has been attempted, has been imposed. In order to embed these systems they need to be sustainable but the actions taken by the National Strategies were not a serious attempt to change the culture. As a result of my developing understanding of the nature of change I have impacted on my own practice and this can be used to impact on the wider professional environment.

There will also be an attempt made to examine the concepts involved in the dissemination of the training and the longer term implications for the CPD of teachers. The underpinning pedagogical assumptions for CPD will be examined, as well as the design of coherent CPD programmes and why the impact of these sessions was not necessarily consistent across departments and institutions. Intrinsic to these findings is that the methodology of CPD did not reflect the ideas implemented in classrooms. This can be construed as highly significant because not only was the original CPD approach to the dissemination of the AfL Strategy inappropriate, it utilised an approach which was at variance with the whole concept of AfL. A key postulate might be; that for every educational policy reform in real-life situations there needs to be planned a sympathetic, systematic and commensurate programme of CPD that seeks both ownership as well as

leverage of the educational policy being proffered to the profession. Linked to these is an examination of the Quality Assurance (QA) processes available both for the CPD of teachers and the implementation of the National Strategies within schools. Section 7.5 will also examine the impact of linking teachers CPD to the Performance Management (PM), the appraisal system of teachers, and whether this would be an interesting point to consider for future research and development.

I will also examine the attitude of the original researchers towards these ideas and the involvement of the original researchers in the Strategy implementation. The original research aims offers the development of a curriculum development toolkit for AfL and examined whether it was possible to produce one, or if this was an oversimplification of the problem. Linked to this is an examination as to whether it is possible to develop toolkits for different purposes; for example, the toolkit I designed for developing oral feedback. The findings from this development make a contribution to the deeper understanding of what is meant by the term AfL and also how effective these implementation attempts can be.

The research offers a new insight into the understanding of the terminology of AfL and the impact this has had on the study of stakeholder understanding. One of the key findings of this thesis which will be reviewed in the conclusions section are the concepts linked to common usage terminology; most particularly the concept invoked by the term "assessment", an epistemological assumption which is central to the findings of this project and the contribution to knowledge demonstrated by this thesis. This thesis intends to attempt to clarify this point by providing a postulate to clarify what is really meant by 'assessment' and 'testing' and how they are best defined. This postulate will be linked to more appropriate forms of pedagogy more suited to the needs of the 21st Century, based on transferable skills and knowledge production and will be an addition to the academy.

It should be stated here that as a consequence of my involvement with a living Action Research project I am now able to extrapolate ideas with more clarity and have more confidence in my own voice in relation to these final conclusions. I have also developed the confidence to express my use of my own methodological inventiveness which has been applied to the available data. The process has allowed me to utilise the Action Research framework to bring together a critical and literature based Action

Research project, which is not only a discovery of ideas but incorporates a looping process of analysis and triangulates my thinking. The true intellectual epiphany of this project came with the development of my own understanding of the nature of education as an instrument for social change and linked to this the unique nature of each of the institutions involved. This idea is fundamental so the key recommendation for future practice is to carefully examine the starting points of the cultural background of both the researcher and the institution and use Action Research as the process to move the concept forward. If this methodology had not been adopted I would not have developed the understanding of research which is so significant to my own professional development, linked to the viewpoint I currently hold.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Academic Framework of Thesis (Part 1):

In this chapter I will examine the basic characteristics of Assessment and explain the concept of Assessment for Learning as this was the original foundation of this study. I will review the literature related to the research pamphlet "Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards through classroom assessment." by Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam (1998) disseminated to practitioners and the issues it raises. There will be conclusions drawn from these texts which critically examine the impact of the literature.

2.1: Introduction:

The concept of assessment was originally central to this thesis and consequently will be defined here. The commonly accepted definition of assessment is that the term is generally used to refer to all activities teachers use to help students learn and to gauge student progress. This has been broken down into the ideas of formative and summative assessment. In some contexts formative and summative assessment are often referred to as assessment for learning and assessment of learning respectively.

A simple description of formative assessment is that this type of assessment is carried out throughout teaching. Formative assessment is used to aid learning and provides feedback on the work and would not necessarily be used for providing summative grades. There are a variety of tasks involved and the aim is to see if the students understand the instruction before doing a summative assessment. Assessment for learning is generally formative in nature and is used by teachers to consider approaches to teaching and next steps for individual learners and the class.

In contrast summative assessment is generally carried out at the end of the teaching; the results are typically used to produce a grade. Summative assessments are evaluative and summarize what the students have learned, to examine if they have good understanding. This type of assessment can be in the form of tests, final exams, and summative projects. Assessment of learning generally occurs at the conclusion of a taught course; it is generally summative in nature and intended to measure and report learning outcomes.

2.2: Characteristics of Formative Assessment:

Assessment for Learning links to and makes sense of formative assessment; the work of Natriello and Crooks formed the basis for the work on formative assessment which developed into Assessment for Learning. Black and Wiliam used the previous research available, including that of Natriello and Dornbusch to develop their work although there was therefore no formally agreed definition of the term "Assessment for Learning" before it was used by Black and Wiliam in their 1998 pamphlet. In the pamphlet there was no clear definition of the term provided nor were the pedagogical theories underpinning it clearly articulated.

The work from Block & Burns (1976) is the earliest in terms of chronology in the studies examined relating to formative assessment. This was based on the concept of the mastery of learning and the examination of this strategy was seen as significant as:

"They found an average effect size of 0.82, which is equivalent to raising the achievement of an 'average' student to that of the top 20%, and one of the largest average effects ever reported for a teaching strategy."

This claim is very similar to that made later by Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam in their book *Assessment for Learning: Putting it into Practice*.

Ramaprasad (1983) looked at the idea of: *"the action taken by the learner to close that gap in order to attain the desired goal."* which is seen as a precursor to the concept of AfL. Fuchs et al (1991) took the idea of the linkage of feedback to assumptions about student learning further. Sadler (1989) proposed that feedback could be used diagnostically which was the meaning Black and Wiliam (1998) took from this study. This could be seen as the beginning of AfL or formative assessment but this was not clearly referenced in the pamphlet.

In examining the motivational aspect of formative assessment Perrenoud states (1991: 92):

"Every teacher who wants to practise formative assessment must reconstruct the teaching contracts so as to counteract the habits acquired by his pupils… some of the children and adolescents … are imprisoned in the identity of a bad pupil and an opponent."

This is a significant point in relation to the development of AfL as Wiliam is very clear about the changes teachers need to make in order to implement AfL. He suggests

that it requires a change of mind-set and the assumptions they have about learning and assessment. Baird et al (1991):

> *"reported on work…where teachers were helped to know more about their students and to learn more about how they might change the style of classroom work by a strategy based on meta-cognition and constructivism."*

This concept is supported by the work of Zessoules & Gardner (1991). Moving on from this was the work of Pressley et al., (1992) who examined the concept of questioning which appears in the work on AfL:

> *"A rather different use of questioning is to explore and develop students' prior knowledge…requiring learners to compose answers with explanations to explore their prior knowledge of new work does improve learning."*

The significance of questioning techniques resonates throughout the work of Black and Wiliam and proves to be one of the important components in the National Strategy training materials.

Tunstall & Gipps (1996) examined the typology of teacher feedback which harks back to the work by Sadler. Kluger & DeNisi, (1996) who call the `gap' between actual and reference levels of some attribute `feedback-standard discrepancy'. This does not appear in this format in the work on AfL but it can be noted that all of the above concepts are significant in what was to be adopted as AfL in the National Strategies.

The 200 studies reviewed by Black and Wiliam as part of their work for the academic article were not clearly referenced in the Black Box pamphlet, which was aimed at practitioners. The pamphlet however, proved to be inspirational as not only did it inspire the original iteration of this thesis but can be seen as the basis for the development of the National Strategy.

2.3: Understanding 'Inside the Black Box':

The reason for the choice of Black and Wiliam's short pamphlet at the start of this literature review is because it is the key foundation for all work on Assessment for Learning for practitioners and originally helped inspire me to develop my own practitioner research.

The aims and purpose of the original research by Black and Wiliam was not to support overtly the government's policy relating to the National Curriculum and the testing and league tables subsequently allied to it, but rather to examine (1998: 2):

"one aspect of teaching – formative assessment … this feature is at the heart of effective teaching."

However, in contrast to this the UK government policy of the time was to be built on the use of data from summative tests which informed league tables.

If the title of the pamphlet *"Inside the Black box"* is taken into account it signposts the theories about the background ideas of the researchers and the way in which they were approaching the research, including their aims. The Black box concept might be placed within the context of behaviourist psychology summarised by Oates where (1994: 25):

"The classical behaviourist perspective is sometimes referred to as "black box" psychology" because it ignores what goes on inside the mind. Its sole concern is the effect of the environment (input) on behaviour (output). Mental processes take place within the "black box""

This is one of the central concepts in developmental psychology. One idea, which was taken and developed by the cognitivist paradigm, essentially argues that the "Black box" of the mind should be opened and understood. The learner can be viewed as an information processor (like a computer). It can be argued that:

"The cognitivist revolution replaced behaviourism in 1960s as the dominant paradigm. Cognitivism focuses on the inner mental activities – opening the "black box" of the human mind is valuable and necessary for understanding how people learn… Learning is defined as change in a learner's schemata…people are rational beings that require active participation in order to learn, and whose actions are a consequence of thinking."

Cognitivism (2011) Cognitivist theories, paradigms and perspectives. (Online) Available at: http://www.learning-theories.com/cognitivism.html.

This links to the ideas postulated by Bandura (1971: 201) which state:

"the results indicated that social learning procedures were effective in leading children to discriminate the abstract categorizations displayed by the model, and to generalize those classifications to a new set of stimuli"

As Bandura was moving away from the behaviourist models of Skinner it is therefore possible to assume from the title of Black and Wiliam's pamphlet (1998: 2) that the researchers undertook their work with the behaviourist and cognitivist theories very much in mind. We should note that they begin their argument with the statement that:

"We start from the self-evident proposition that teaching and learning have to be interactive."

This could correlate to the black box concept, as the teaching can be described as the effect of the environment (input) and whatever the students' produce is the output, which is then examined by the researcher. Linking these ideas to the outcomes of the work of Black and Wiliam could be said to be the conclusions of Roblyer who wrote the following (2000: 49):

"constructivist learning environments exhibit more qualitative assessment strategies rather than quantitative ones"

This quote almost predicts the direction in which ideas linked to AfL were to progress. However, examining the effects of these psychological learning theories was not the purpose of the research as Black and Wiliam make clear. This discussion is however pertinent as they do not clearly exemplify where their research is grounded in the pamphlet. They state that they wanted to look at the processes involved with formative assessment and as a consequence of this they set themselves three clear research questions. These research questions link to Kelly's ideas from his work on Personal Construct theory in 1955. In subsequent articles Black and Wiliam suggest that the 'Black Box' in question is the classroom where these activities take place, rather than anything else, which clarifies their thinking.

2.4: Inside the Black Box:
2.4.1: The purpose of the original research for 'Inside the Black Box':

The stated purpose in the policy and practice section of the pamphlet summarises the results of the research and the ways it is looking to move teaching forward. It puts forward the proposition that (1998: 12):

> *"this can only happen relatively slowly, and through sustained programmes of professional development and support"*

This statement is central to this study as consideration needs to be given to the link between the implementation of educational policy change and practice in relation to CPD. This recommendation about moving teaching forward had obvious political implications when it was first written. If the recommendations of the study had been adopted this could have led the government into altering the focus of its policy, for both the professional development of teachers and the adaptation of teaching and learning. These recommendations included providing teachers with *"living examples of implementation"* (1998: 16) and with the: *"ear-marking of funding for relevant in-service programmes"* (1998: 17) and finally: *"further research was recommended."* (1998: 18).

There were examples provided via the KMOFAP project (The King's (i.e. King's College University of London) Medway Oxfordshire Formative Assessment Project) of living examples described above. However further research was not systematically implemented, although funding was provided for work via the National Strategy.

Inside the Black box was produced at this point in time in response to the political will that was driving reform. It was written by what became the Assessment Reform Group (ARG) and Paul Black. The ARG originated in 1989 as the Policy Task Group on Assessment set up by the British Educational Research Association (BERA). In 1996, when BERA ceased to support policy task groups, the Group adopted the name ARG and its meetings were funded via small grants from the Nuffield Foundation

Assessment Reform Group (2011) Assessment Reform Group (online) Available at: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110809101133/assessment-reformgroup.org/index.html .

The TGAT remit Paul Black held is significant in his background as a researcher but this study will postulate that one of the issues of the work on AfL was the confusion created by using ambiguous terminology.

This confusion is significant because there is a lack of articulation and clarity in reference to the underlying pedagogical models in the early works which disseminated the information to practitioners. This can be seen as potentially inhibiting further development of the research and it is only when close attention is paid to the

underpinning ontology of the work that clarity can be achieved. In order to clarify the postulates in this literature review it is crucial to examine the content of the text and show the links to other authors and critical theorists as well as the relevance to this study. The issues relating to the epistemological and ontological issues of assessment will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.7.

2.4.2: Research questions from Inside the Black Box text:

In order to clarify the postulates relating to the significance of the research published in the pamphlet the basis of the original research needs to be examined. This was looking specifically at the idea of formative assessment and Black and Wiliam set themselves three questions (1998: 2):

> *"First: Is there evidence that improving formative assessment raises standards?*
>
> *Second: Is there evidence that there is room for improvement?*
>
> *Third: Is there evidence about how to improve formative assessment?"*

These are clearly focused research questions and from the evidence the researchers themselves presented in the summary of the literature review there is an answer in the affirmative to these questions. However despite this they are still pursued as a research project. The literature review was summarised by the researchers and used as a validation for their ongoing research into the concept of AfL.

According to Black and Wiliam the research began by examining the work of other researchers including Fuchs and Fuchs (1986) who were using quantitative evidence of learning gains. Black and Wiliam reviewed this in their article in Assessment in Education: Principles Policy and Practice (1998: 3):

> *"Both experimental and control groups were given pre- and post- tests of mathematics achievement, and both spent the same times in class on mathematics. Both groups showed significant gains over the period"*

In the context of this work on AfL learning gains are measured as improvements in attainment at GCSE. These findings link to the question related to terminology of assessment and the apparent default setting of testing used for this term, a concept which is integral to this study. The first of my original research questions was originally to look at the concept of AfL and how it was implemented, linked to this was whether

this implementation met the intentions of the original researchers which is difficult to establish due to this confusion in terminology.

2.4.3: Research Paradigm:

Black and Wiliam's research paradigm is not clear from the literature; it does not fall within the case study remit; although it could be described as fitting somewhere within the Action Research framework as within the text they state that (1998: 4):

> "*All such work involves new ways to enhance feedback between those taught and the teacher, ways which require new modes of pedagogy.*"

This suggests a version of Action Research, because of the cyclical nature of the study which is then reflected upon and developed further. However, there is then no further mention at this point in the research of the "improve" paradigm. It is possible to suggest that this might be left to later publications in the same series.

In examining the second of the research questions proposed in the pamphlet the authors inform us that (1998: 6):

> "*these general conclusions have all been drawn by authors in several countries, including the UK, who have collected evidence by observation, interviews and questionnaires from many schools.*"

This type of conclusion appears to fit with the use of research principles of ethnography although it is not clear from the material available where the researchers fitted within the observer/participant spectrum. It is also not clear from the text whether the researchers in each case had a clear paradigm they operated within but simply have not enunciated it or whether they were using a mixed method approach and failed to clarify their design. This omission could be significant in any attempt to replicate the findings and would impact on the methodology used in subsequent research. At this point it could be asserted that the supposition is that the authors of this pamphlet had a clear paradigm but have not been clear in their elucidation of it.

The following statement by Hammersley and Atkinson is apposite at this point in that (1995: 16):

> "*Those arguing the fact that research is always affected by values, and always has political consequences, means that researchers ought to take responsibility*

for their value commitments and for the effects of their work. Post-structuralism has contributed to the politicization of social research."

Given the UK political and practical implications the research on AfL was to have over the following decade this statement is actually of considerable importance as there is no clarification on the political implications of the research. In relation to the second research question Black and Wiliam (1998: 17) include the way in which formative assessment was viewed by official bodies; it could be argued that these bodies paid lip service to the concept of improving standards whilst not giving it actual priority; indeed there were aspects of the educational system described by the authors that:

"actually obstruct the development of effective formative assessment."

These features include the external tests which Black and Wiliam see as dominating the classroom teachers' work. These tests were imposed on schools by the government of the day and although Black and Wiliam understand their importance they feel that the approach schools take as a result hinder the implementation of formative assessment; although the knowledge gained from the examination of these results are crucial in answering the second of the research questions.

The third research question posed by Black and Wiliam was (1998: 2):

"Is there evidence about how to improve formative assessment?"

The first set of findings the study appears to examine is related to the self-esteem of pupils; as it is difficult to measure the impact of self-esteem this finding is difficult to quantify. This is a clear example of where the researchers are using qualitative research methods and they have clearly reached a substantive conclusion from examining the available evidence and make a definitive statement about the outcomes of the study.

2.4.4: The conclusions drawn from "Inside the Black Box":

Black and Wiliam do not specify a typical methodology used to establish the results in this pamphlet, although they are basing their interpretations on the data collected from a variety of different sources; including experimental data from the schools and teachers involved in the project. As one of their conclusions they state that (1998: 9):

"Feedback to any pupil should be about the particular qualities of his or her work, with advice on what he or she can do to improve, and should avoid comparisons with other pupils."

Linked to this conclusion is the concept of formative assessment which is defined by Black and Wiliam as (1998: 2):

"the activities undertaken by teachers and by their students in assessing themselves. Which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they were engaged."

This had implications for the research as Black and Wiliam were not using the accepted norm of the meaning of the term assessment, this proved to be a key learning point; conclusions regarding this will be drawn in Chapter 6.

Throughout the pamphlet there is no clear description of the empirical nature of the data or indeed where the data has been collected from. Although Black and Wiliam in their explanation do mention that (1998: 11):

"there are clearly recorded examples of such discussions where teachers have, quite unconsciously, responded in ways that would inhibit the future learning of a pupil."

As a result it is possible that some basic assumptions can be made; these include the fact that the data has been collected from original sources. This is based on the language of the pamphlet which refers to *"recorded examples"*. However the pamphlet does not clearly demonstrate a triangulation of data collection, which would allow the research to be described as Constructivist Action Research. This demonstration of data collection might appear in the scholarly article written for the academic community but is not available to teachers who would have been the target audience for the 'Black box' pamphlets. The data sources could be seen to be useful even in this context as not all the target audience would have access to the scholarly article and as a result might question the origin or validity of the data being presented.

In the pamphlet the data collected is presented in a descriptive way; in a way which is perhaps seen as a simplification of the methodology for a general audience. There appears to have been no quantitative analysis of the majority of the data, although the first of the research questions produces results, which state that (1998: 4):

"the formative assessment experiments produced typical effect sizes of between 0.4 and 0.7… A gain effect size of 0.4 would improve performance of pupils in GCSE by between one and two grades."

This quantitative measure does not have any detailed supporting evidence within this particular paper, although it does appear in the more detailed academic study. (Black, P. and Wiliam, D. 1998. Assessment and Classroom Learning Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice 5 (1), pp.7-75.)
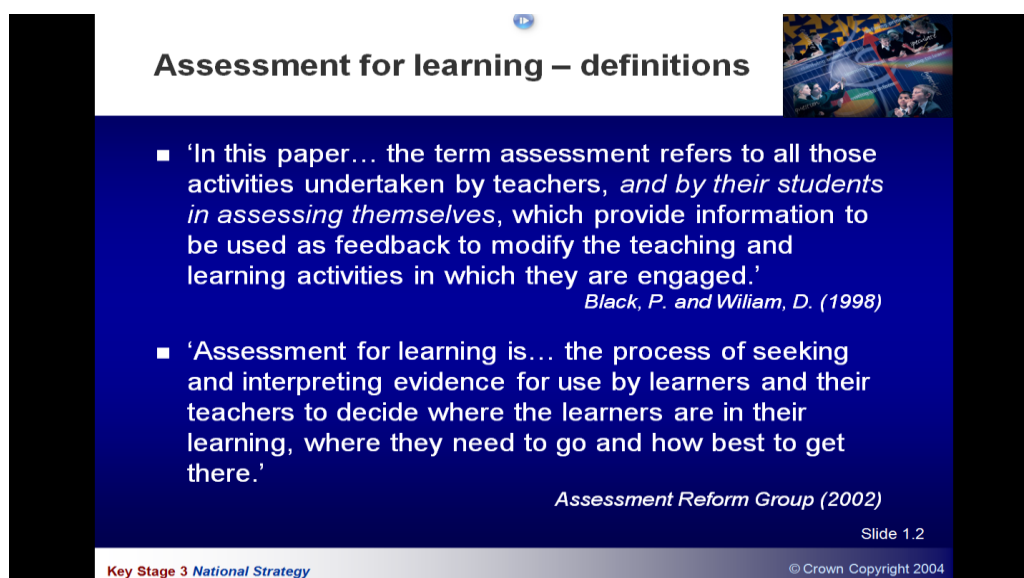
This measurement of the impact of AfL on learning gains was something which was later fixed on to promote the idea of AfL as a part of the National Strategy. Any research which could show a statistically significant improvement in measurable outcomes, for the achievement of students, would be of interest not just within the limited academic community, but in the wider political and educational sphere, which proved to be the case with AfL. The idea of using AfL to drive up standards fitted into the political situation at the time and were consequently adopted in a way which did not appear to reflect the original researchers' thinking. This statement relating to the effect size improvement, which suggests that results can be raised, has been seen as a reason for schools to utilise the techniques of AfL. It could be described as having been used almost as a 'blunt instrument' by schools without the deeper pedagogical reasoning behind it being examined before use. This use of statistical information can be seen as giving a "scientific" slant to the research, whereas in fact as Black himself states in an article in the Oxford Review of Education it was conducted as part of (1998: 63):

"a variety of rigorous and quantitative investigations have established that formative assessment produces learning gains larger than found in almost all other educational experiment."

This point could not be described as explaining quantitative gains scientifically; as the phrase "larger than" is not a quantitative measure. Quantitative research can be described as a data led approach using statistical and numerical points of view to come to a conclusion, whereas qualitative research has been described as primarily explorative and is seen as gaining an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivations.

2.5: AfL characteristics from National Strategy:

The following slide (Figure 1) gives the definitions of AfL taken from the work of the Assessment Reform Group and was presented as part of the training materials to school staff.

Figure 1: Definition of AfL

The key characteristics of Assessment for Learning were then defined, taken from the research paper by Black and Wiliam (1999: inside front cover), the strategy had the stated aim to *"follow up the work of Black and Wiliam and take it further"*.

The summary of the characteristics in the slide (figure 2) come from Page 7 of the research pamphlet with the only deviation being in the sixth bullet point, which in the research paper states *"is underpinned by confidence that every student can improve"*. It might bear investigating the putative reasons behind the subtle alteration of the wording. The ARG point out that these key characteristics are stated in order to make clear the differences between assessments that promotes learning as opposed to other current interpretations of classroom assessment. This again raises the issue of the assumptions linked to terminology, in this case the difference between formative and summative assessment.

Figure 2 Key characteristics of AfL

For the original researchers AfL was more than a tick list; it could best be described as something which would lead to improvement in all classrooms for all pupils at all times (ARG, 2002a: 2-3):

"Assessment for Learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there"

On the face of it this seems to be a very straightforward and simple definition, which would allow both teachers and pupils to work together to develop understanding and allow the pupils to progress. How this concept could be put into practice would appear to lie at the heart of the AfL strand of the National Strategy, the training materials for which were disseminated to schools. It must be made clear at this point that the training materials, which all Local Authorities had in common, were then disseminated to schools in different ways; in some cases the materials were used with the support of LA consultants. The schools themselves then took on the training materials and utilised them in a variety of ad hoc ways depending on the interest and enthusiasm of the member of staff who had responsibility for putting the policy into practice. This ad hoc nature of CPD will be examined in more detail in Chapter 6.4.

2.6: Conclusions:

There are a number of issues raised by the research pamphlet "Inside the Black Box" connected to the fact it is seen as a seminal text for practitioners on AfL, as well as how the original intentions of AfL have been changed by government policy.

2.6.1: Problems posed by the text:

The way in which the research was presented by Black and Wiliam posed a number of problems in relation to the academic nature of the study, including "Why did the researchers not develop the detailed examination of the data available for general readers/ researchers?" and "What types of quantitative and qualitative data has been used?" The fact that it is possible to produce a pamphlet which proved to be a seminal text for practitioners on a subject without providing the reader with empirical evidence could be seen as a weakness which is visible in this particular piece of research.

2.6.2: Problems posed by the issue of reforming policy:

For most casual observers the purpose of Black and Wiliam's research has been seen as reforming policy with the prime focus being the improvement of teaching and learning in all classrooms. This stated purpose in the policy and practice section of the pamphlet summarises the results of the research and the ways it is looking to move teaching forward. Black and Wiliam put forward the proposition that (1998: 15):

> "this can only happen relatively slowly, and through sustained programmes of professional development and support."

This recommendation has obvious political implications and it is very clear that this could lead the government into altering the focus of its policy if it was to be adopted in practice but the suggestion for a sustained programme of professional development and support was not developed any further by the original researchers. This subsuming of ideas by the national government created problems; had this concept been applied consistently it could impinge directly on the professional practice of all teachers. This was not the case and as a result of my own pursuit of knowledge and my utilisation of these ideas I have been examining ways to reconceptualise the ideas expressed by the original researchers.

It is quite difficult to decide, even with the benefit of hindsight, if the original researchers' intentions were clearly summarised in the policy section and whether the

government were simply reflecting this or if the government found this particular piece of research to be reflecting their thinking at the time. Swaffield in her article entitled "Misrepresentation of Assessment for Learning" suggests that (2009: 1):

> *"Three factors influenced the decision to make this investment in AfL. Firstly…the moral and political imperatives of "raising standards". Secondly the fact that approaches to raising standards … appear to have run their course, as witnessed by the plateauing of results. Thirdly, the widely accepted and much quoted research on formative assessment by Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam (1998a) which concluded "that formative assessment does improve learning " and "that significant learning gains lie within our grasp.""*

Swaffield has linked the reasons for the government's adoption of the ideas as being based on the need to improve measurable outcomes, which Black and Wiliam also refer to in the research paper. This links to the issues raised above as the original researchers did not have a clearly expressed vision for the adoption of their work.

Another problem which occurs as a result of the suggestion that further research is to be initiated and that it is to be carried out by a variety of different teachers and that schools are to be involved in this. If the statement is considered fully it is really suggesting a rolling programme of Action Research projects co-ordinated by the researchers: in order to develop the ideas they are postulating. There is the potential for further research, which is suggested by Black and Wiliam themselves and indeed they did comment on the fact that there are gaps in the research, which suggest further questions. These further questions are seen by Black and Wiliam as those which (1998: 19):

> *"could be a study of the ways in which teachers understand and deal with the relationship between their formative and summative roles, or a comparative study of the predictive validity of teachers' summative assessments compared to external test results…many problems should be tackled by basic research. At the same time, experienced researchers would also have a vital role to play in the evaluation of the development programmes proposed above."*

There are, however, still further problems to be encountered in the interpretations of these views as the subsequent researchers would have to examine concepts, which had not been tackled in the original text.

Chapter 3 Literature Review and Academic Framework of Thesis. (Part 2):

The previous chapter has examined in detail the research, assumptions and intentions for the seminal work 'Inside the Black Box' (Black and Wiliam, 1998). This chapter examines the impact of this work, placing it within a broader political and professional context.

3.1: The wider political setting:

It is not possible to undertake an authentic study in social and political isolation; education has been on the political agenda throughout the duration of this study. This reflects the concept in Whitehead and McNiff where they state that (2006: 18):

"Shifts in the epistemological base of professional education policy makers are assumed to make policy and arrange for its implementation by practitioners. These policies are based on the most important findings of educational research, which are created by identified educational researchers, usually in the higher education settings."

It also reflects the ideas quoted in Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 13) regarding the work of Rom Harre where they state that:

"Critical realists agree with the positivists that there is a world of events out there .... They hold that knowledge is personally constructed."

This concept of critical realism validates the ideas, which authenticate my own real life experiences of social research. I began the study in relation to the Key Stage 3 Strategy which in itself was brought in as a result of a political decision and as the study progressed the political landscape changed, which was also reflected in the changing nature of the study.

3.2: Political context of the research pamphlet: *Inside the Black Box: Raising standards through classroom assessment*:

It is crucial at this point to set the context of this research in the educational landscape in which it was produced; as this is part of the lived experience of the research. The original concept, which I had for the project, was based on this text, which I had accessed as an emerging researcher.

Suggestions have been made by Apple (2001: 302) (in Halsey A.H. et al, 2006), which, considers the political implications of education; he suggested that the *"movement at national and state levels throughout the country to raise standards"* in the United States was part of a Right wing agenda. This politicisation of education could be seen as being replicated in the UK, as the British educational system took the research from the US and applied it to the English system. The work of Black and Wiliam, therefore, which was to examine how standards could be raised within the classroom, would in time come to contribute to this political agenda, although this was not stated as an aim of the original research.

The Assessment Reform Group who published the follow-up to the research worked on policy issues in relation to assessment and have had a dialogue with policy makers. The website for AAIA which archives the ARG information including the following from 2010 states:

> *"The Assessment Reform Group (ARG) has been at the forefront of challenging thinking and practice in relation to all aspects of assessment, including assessment for learning. Its aim has been to ensure that assessment policy and practice at all levels takes account of relevant research evidence. In pursuit of this aim the main targets for the Group's activity have been policy-makers in government and its agencies."*
> Downloaded from http://www.aaia.org.uk/afl/assessment-reform-group/

This point could be considered to be significant as the ARG commissioned the research which ultimately led to AfL being a strand of the KS3 National Strategy.

The award of funding from the Nuffield Foundation however could be seen as minimising the political aspect with the claim to political independence; income comes from investments outside the sphere of government or other political bodies. The Nuffield Foundation state that:

> "*We aim to influence education policy and practice, ensuring all young people develop the understanding and skills required to play an informed role in society."*
> Downloaded from http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/education .

When the context is examined, however, Ball suggests in his work Education Policy and Social Class that (2006: 15):

"A quick skim through the papers presented at the British Educational Research Association conference indicates the extent to which education policy research is caught up in the agendas and purposes of the state and the governance of education."

This interpretation can be considered significant as it suggests that the research conducted by Black and Wiliam, which to the uninitiated might appear to be purely based on esoteric concerns, in effect had a political dimension and resulted in skewing the agenda and control of project funding.

3.3: Key Stage 3 Strategy:

3.3.1: The development of the original research by the Key Stage 3 Strategy:

From the apparently small beginnings, which originally seemed to be aimed at a limited range of educational researchers and teaching professionals the research was then taken on and apparently adopted by the UK government in the early years of the 21st century as part of their National Strategies. (The Assessment for Learning Strategy DCSF-00341-2008). This document from the DCSF introduced the strategy to a wider group of stakeholders. It should be noted at this point that the "apparent" adoption idea will be examined later in more depth.

The foreword to the training materials in setting the scene gave the purpose of the strategy as allowing:

"all schools to have access to high quality training and support so that assessment for learning can be embedded in all classrooms"

The National Curriculum itself had been described by Hughes as (1997: 188):

"the end product…whose structure and content had been generated by an essentially political process in which the views of education professionals were either marginalised or ignored."

This comment can be seen as particularly apposite in the context of this study as practitioners in the form of school teaching staff apparently had very little input into the National Curriculum which shaped the National Strategies. Significantly the next developments were the prompted by the Secretary of State Gillian Shepherd who was alarmed by the poor performance of pupils in the Key Stage tests. This concern led to the development of the National Strategies in Literacy and Numeracy, beginning as a

support project, which were then advanced by the next government. The National Strategies as a whole were introduced in 2000, with the research on AfL being introduced as part of the 2003 cross-curricular approach. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy booklet *Key messages: Pedagogy and practice* (Ref: DfES 1025/2003) provides guidance on the relationship between pedagogic approaches (teaching models), teaching strategies, techniques and methods of creating the conditions for learning in order to inform lesson design.

It could be extrapolated from the training materials that the government was suggesting that schools follow an implicit Action Research type framework in order to implement AfL. The ideas relating to the Action Research type of CPD delivery can be clearly exemplified by the following slide from the training materials (figure 3). If the suggested methodology exemplified by the slide were to be followed, the developments could easily be used in a cyclical manner in order to ensure that the strategies impacted on the standards within the school by assessing their impact before moving on to the next cycle. This, however, was not explicitly stated. This slide could possibly reflect the ideas postulated in the original work by Black and Wiliam where they suggest that further research is conducted, if it was to be applied consistently by a range of schools.
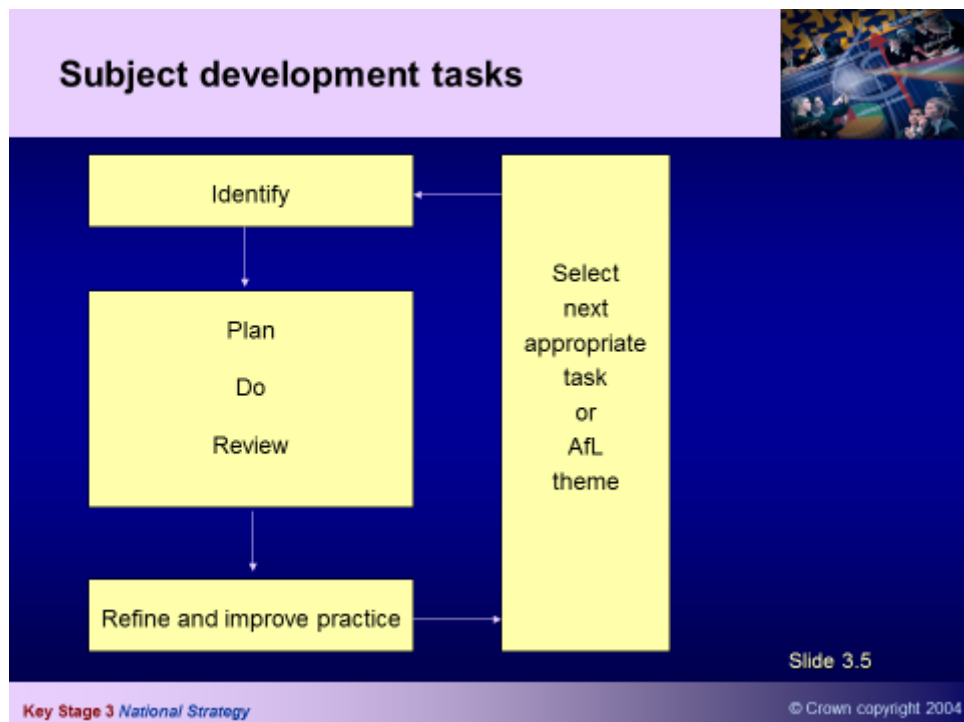
Figure 3: Action Research type CPD Slide from Training materials on AfL.
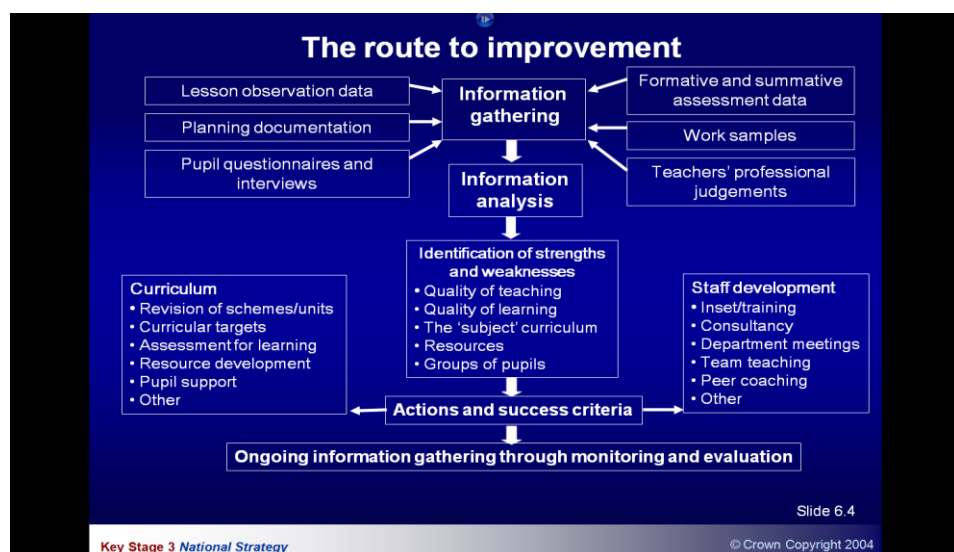
Figure 4: Route for improvement from KS3 National Strategy Training Materials.

All of the PowerPoint slides utilised here were directly inserted into this study from the CD-ROM of "Assessment for Learning Whole School Training Materials", issued 01-2004 by the then DfES. This was part of the original training materials disseminated to all maintained schools in England and Wales. This was followed up in 2005 with a 2nd edition. In comparing the two editions it is possible to see that the 2nd edition contains

the same materials as previously, but also includes a new section, which includes the results of further research.

These results in the training materials refer to different aspects of AfL, demonstrated in Figure 5. It is important to note here that two of the authors who are credited with this particular piece of research were part of the group working with Dylan Wiliam.
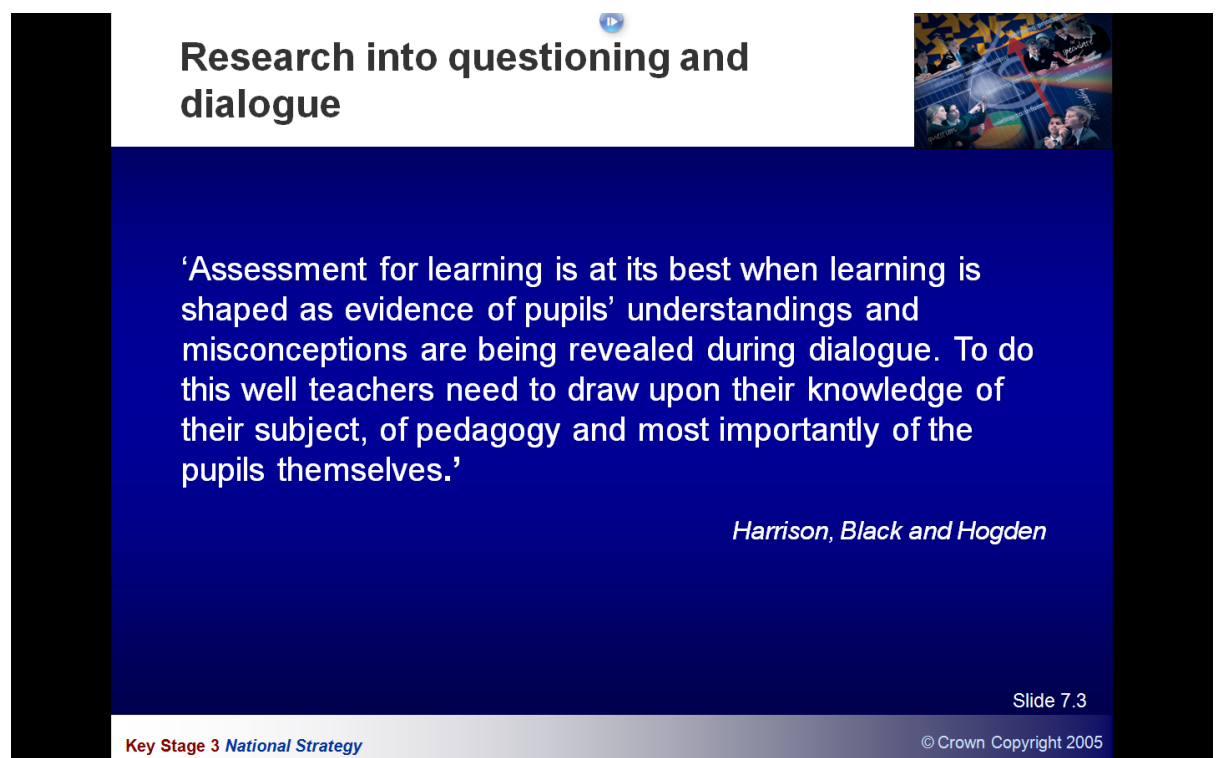
Figure 5: Research into questioning and dialogue Key Stage 3 Training Materials.

Black and Wiliam developed the original research into AfL; their work was then followed up working with Christine Harrison, Clare Lee and Bethan Marshall. Interestingly some but not all of this group were involved in the dissemination of materials approved by the government of the day. At least some of the original researchers were not antipathetic to the use of their material in a political context, although Dylan Wiliam is not mentioned on the slide. Given that he was involved in the original research, and that he co-authored the seminal texts on this subject it is significant to note that he was not explicitly named in the official research relating to the implementation of the National Strategies. He has subsequently been highly critical of the National Strategies; his views will be examined in the conclusions section and will identify a key finding from this study.

It is also significant to note that the report in 2008 for the House of Commons Select Committee comments that (ev47: paragraph 6):

"Despite the Department's claims that steps have been taken to streamline the National Strategies guidance, the amount of that guidance remains considerable, all of it, according to the Department, crucial to empowering teachers and raising standards."

The implications of this statement are that the Department for Education was out of step with teachers who saw the guidance as more of a requirement; the members of the committee felt differently to the civil servants. The same report mentions the perception of the de-skilling of teachers who follow the National Strategies and so are becoming *deliverers* rather than curriculum developers. It also points out that (ev47: paragraph 6):

"We regret that the National Curriculum and related accountability arrangements have inhibited some schools from taking forward curriculum and pedagogical innovation."

The point emphasises that the politicians, in this case, are apparently more aware of the problems caused by the National Strategies than the Department for Education, a point which should be considered highly significant in relation to the findings of this study. However, throughout the whole of the report, there is no mention of the concepts relating to assessment be it formative or summative despite the fact that this was central to the development of the National Curriculum and the National Strategies. There is a dichotomy between the ontological and epistemological assumptions relating to assessment in the political sphere. Kidd sums it up by saying (2009: 1):

"Nowhere is this uneasy partnership between the epistemological and the ontological more apparent than in the assessment system and in the competing rhetoric between attainment and development. A standards driven agenda requires an empirical collation of data and yet the ethos underpinning the new assessment models lend itself to a more multi modal approach...there is a lack of professional confidence in implementing new assessment guidance because the signs emitted from government are inconsistent."

This is in comparison to the following statement which gives the context of the original Key Stage 3 National Strategy, which was described in the leaflet to parents as (DFES 0072, 2004):

"The Key Stage 3 Strategy is a government-funded strategy to make the most of this time between primary school and GCSEs. It provides training for teachers, materials for pupils and advice for everyone involved in making the classroom experience the best it can be"

This is making the point that AfL is part of the Strategy to improve the experiences of the students not just to improve the outcomes of summative assessment. In comparison to the concepts of assessment in place in the political sphere the alternative assumptions underpinning formative assessment should be examined.

3.3.2: DFES guidance: Assessment for Learning Whole School training materials:

The whole school materials from the DfES (0443-2004: 6) make it explicit that they are focused on levering up standards:

"Guided by these principles the AfL training materials provide practical strategies to help teachers develop their planning and teaching skills."

The research evidence to support the definition of AfL is given in the Appendix for Unit 1 of the training materials. The authors summarise this as (DfES, 0443-2004: 21):

*"The key message is that Assessment for Learning is about **using** the information gained to improve learning."*

The Department then goes on to very briefly summarise the research which they are basing their work on and this is *'Inside the Black Box', 'Assessment for Learning: beyond the black box'* and *'Working inside the back box'* as well as a brief reference to Sadler. The influence of Sadler is clear as his article shows the definition of AfL is (Sadler, 1989: 119):

"...about teacher and student having:

1) A clear understanding of the desired standard that the student is seeking to reach

2) A recognition of the gap between the students' current performance and the desired standard

3) A readiness of either or both of them to adjust what they do to help the student to close the gap between current performance and the desired standard"

Having given a brief rationale using the research evidence the materials go on to explain the structure of the training materials as shown in Figure 6 below. The DfES guidance states that:

"As the units are designed to be used by schools selectively, according to need and context, the following notes are intended to help senior leaders map their way through long-term training and development programmes. The links between units are also identified within the training units themselves."

There is however no rationale provided at this point by the DFES for the method of adoption of the training or indeed what type of pedagogical paradigm is underpinning this.

There is also no further discussion of the implications for CPD of this type of
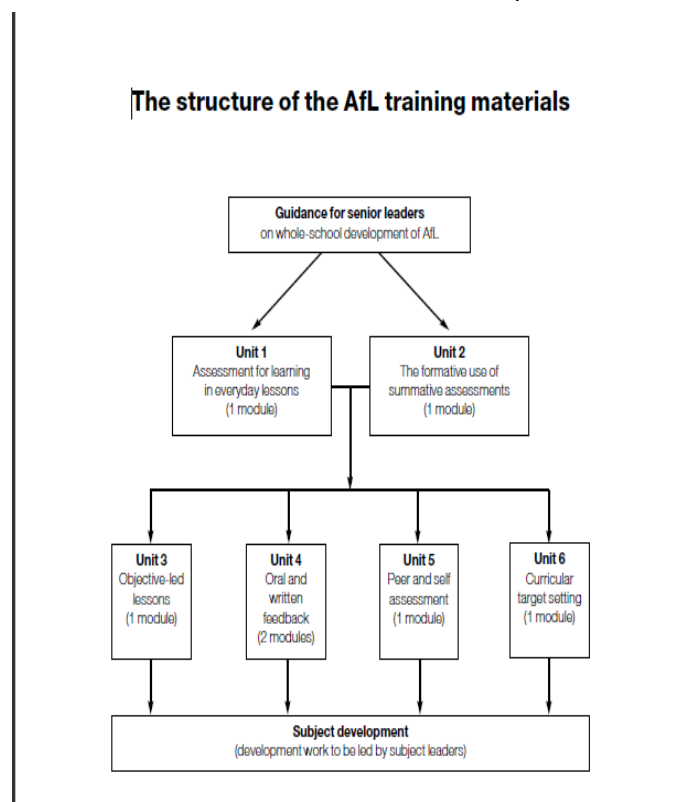
Figure 6: The structure of the AfL training materials.

approach. (DfES, 0443-2004: 15):

"Developing AfL is about improving critical areas of pedagogy such as questioning, explaining and feedback. Whoever leads on the development of AfL will need to ensure that this informs other initiatives focused on improving teaching and learning."

This comment reveals that there is an implication here regarding CPD, as the assumption made in this statement is that AfL wasn't going to be implemented in isolation. If AfL was to be implemented in its entirety there would be a significant impact on the raising of standards. In comparison to these assumptions the PowerPoint
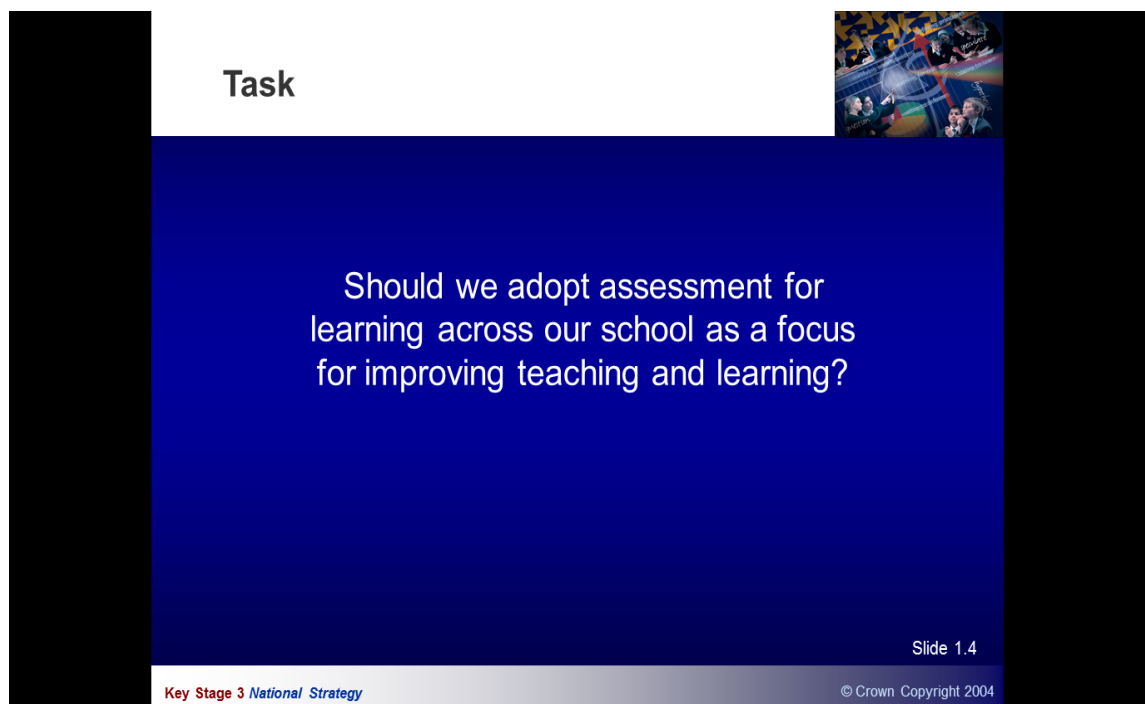
provided by the DfES as part of the training materials poses the following question (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Slide posing question regarding adoption of AfL strategy.

This question is posed despite the fact that AfL is part of the National Strategy, where the assumption would be that all schools were required to implement this. It seems to suggest that schools were to be given options about the implementation of the Strategy, not only about the nature of the implementation, but about whether to implement it at all. This is a highly significant point, if this was truly to be a National Strategy why were options apparently being given to individual schools?

The second edition of the guidance published in the same format a year later (April 2005) comprised of a number of additions with minor changes for senior leaders, including a self-review tool, which appeared as a set of prompts. Also a number of units were added; Unit 6 comprising of 2 modules and Unit 7 on Questioning and Dialogue. Both are described as being designed to support advanced AfL practice. This suggests that the DfES believed that in a sufficient number of schools AfL had been implemented and they would therefore require this support. Again there is no empirical research evidence made available in the training materials to support this notion. There are also two further additions 'Working together Coaching and AfL' and 'TAs and AfL' which are described as study guides.

The first of these Units from the DfES (0565-2003 G) on coaching is described as helping:

> "*you learn to be a coach for Assessment for learning (AfL). It draws on academic research, training materials within the 'Sustaining improvement' folder…and the experiences of teachers and schools that have successfully used coaching to develop AfL.*" (DfES, 1100-2005)

The caveats are those which have been used throughout this section, that although research is referred to there is no explicit detail stating where this research has been taken from and there is a lack of cross referencing with the underpinning pedagogy. The references relating to research on coaching appear as an Appendix referencing one set of works; those of Joyce and Showers. This refers back to "*Creating the conditions for teaching and learning*" by David Hopkins and Alma Harris (et al), David Fulton Publishers, 2000; a handbook for staff development activities where the aspect of coaching was drawn from, but no further details regarding the methodology or the outcomes of the research are available in this case. The materials on the second edition make similar assumptions to the first and there is no clear delineation of the types of pedagogical reasoning behind the implementation of these strategies.

3.3.3: Assessment for Learning; Subject development materials:

This CD-ROM followed on from the second edition of the training materials and was sent to schools in 2005. It contained material specifically tailored to each subject, ranging from Art and Design to Science, taking in twelve subjects in all. The development

materials are all slightly different but were based on the units 3 to 7, which had specific reference to aspects of AfL and provided a self-evaluation tool for subject leaders to utilise, potentially make the training as relevant as possible. This tool was later used interactively on the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA) website. The CIEA was set up to improve standards in educational assessment. In private communication with Graham Herbert it has been established that:

> *"The original quality standards tool had been developed by the NS as part of their remit to roll out the quality standards tool nationally. I suggested that an interactive version would be more useful for the end user."*

There again is no way of verifying what research the self-evaluation tool was based on or ascertaining how the pedagogy underpinning these standards was arrived at.

The units in this training material follow a similar format to the previous ones; with the introduction followed by the self-evaluation tool. Once decisions have been made about where the department feels its practice already is, there is then a suggestion of the type of activity to engage in in order to develop further. These suggestions are given as a series of tasks, which the department chooses from in order to improve. The suggestion is then that the department takes part in a limited action, which is planned, implemented and evaluated.

[image removed from this digitised version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 8: Self-evaluation tool.

This could be said to reflect the ideas of the original researchers when they suggested that further research should be undertaken. If this had been consistently applied and this format followed in every department in every secondary school, this could be said to be an Action Research framework and the outcomes of this might have had a significant impact on practice across the country. Even where schools had someone involved who had a detailed interest in AfL they still did not fully adopt these training materials in the way they were designed.

Significantly the DfES make the statement that (1110-2005):

"Practice across a department will need to be consolidated before focusing on a new area of assessment for learning."

This statement is important as unless each aspect is embedded then the value of AfL as a whole is in jeopardy, however, in the majority of cases this did not happen.

There are no pointers for a department if they believe they have achieved enhanced status in all aspects of AfL as there are no other materials on the CD-ROM. However, anecdotally most schools appear to have only used these materials in a superficial way so there is no demonstrable evidence that anyone achieved enhanced status. Having said this, however, the interest in AfL continued and there have been a number of further publications relating to Assessment for Learning since 2005.

3.4: Wider reading on Assessment for Learning:

Following on from the earlier work there were a number of subsequent publications, this section will examine these in broadly chronological order, which will mean examining a number of the pamphlets in the series interspersed with various books.

3.4.1: Assessment for Learning: Beyond the black box:

Assessment for Learning: Beyond the black box followed up the original work and was published in 1999 by the ARG. It was made available through the University of Cambridge: School of Education rather than through a commercial publisher; for some Internet search engines it appears under the heading of reports from the ARG rather than as a book or research pamphlet, the reasons for which are unclear. The aims of the work are set out as describing (1999: front cover):

> *"the key factors needed to put assessment for learning into practice…critiques elements of current national policy and concludes with proposals for future action."*

The work in this research pamphlet looked at evidence relating to the problem faced by the educational community in England and Wales concerning the implementation of initiatives aimed at helping teachers to improve standards by using assessment. It is through using these original hypotheses that I was able to critique and then reconceptualise the ideas and apply them to the situation in which my research was conducted. This does however raises the issue of terminology and the apparent default setting in regard to the word "assessment". One of the points made by the ARG is that (1995: 5):

> *"the reforms have encouraged teachers to develop their understanding of, and skills in, assessment. However, the very high stakes attached to test result… are*

now encouraging teachers to focus on practicing test-taking rather than on using assessment to support learning."

This is a salient point as it refers to the concept of "test" being the default mode for "assessment" an idea which permeates through the studies. *Beyond the Black Box* is clear in its aim to distinguish AfL from other forms of assessment, which can be considered highly significant in this context.

This work (ARG, 1999: 9) offers some *"pragmatic suggestions for changes in emphasis in national policies on assessment."* The recommendations postulated involved the inclusion of AfL in Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and also as part of teachers CPD. This point is important given what happened subsequently with the AfL Strategy; the group suggested that (ARG, 1999: 10):

> *"future Standards fund circulars should specifically encourage LEAs to bid for funds to support assessment for learning as a powerful lever to raise achievement in schools."*

Instead of this AfL was adopted by the government as a National Strategy.

This research pamphlet built on the previous work and again with the benefit of hindsight had an impact on the implementation of government policies on AfL. It could be said that the recommendations in the final section had been adopted by the Labour government who implemented the AfL strand of the National Strategies in 2004.

3.4.2: Working inside the black box; Assessment for learning in the classroom:

The next pamphlet in the series was published in 2002, again before the implementation of the National Strategies AfL Strand. It was also published by nferNelson and was written by Black and Wiliam with other contributors; Christine Harrison, Clare Lee and Bethan Marshall. The detailed information was produced as part of a project in conjunction with Stanford University in the USA where Paul Black was a visiting professor at the time. This suggests that the interest in AfL was not solely limited to the UK but was still dependent on the input of the original researchers to disseminate practice.

It is described as the successor to "*Inside the black box"* and as such it summarises the research questions from the original text. It then goes on to look at the new findings and explains that these findings come from working with teachers,

although the KMOFAP project was supported by the DfES, QCA and Teacher Training Agency; TTA was the training body for schools at the time. It explains the political situation at the time but does not clarify at any point the pedagogical paradigms behind the research. The authors state that (2002: 3):

"these links have ensured that Assessment for Learning is one of the central themes of the Government's Key Stage 3 initiative."

However, there is no in-depth explanation of why this particular initiative was chosen to be implemented as part of the Strategies; this remains obscure as the Strategy itself is not clear on its pedagogical motivation. In the work there are certain assumptions made; following immediately on from the section on National Policies it launches straight into examining the concept of learning gains thus giving an implied motivation. This could almost be looked on as conveying a subliminal message linking the two ideas. Unlike in the first research pamphlet there is no adverse data presented in this section with the conclusion reading as follows (2002: 4):

"far from having to choose between teaching well and getting good national curriculum test and examination results, teachers can actually improve their pupils' results by working with the ideas we present here."

Once again the issue relating to terminology is apparent with assumptions being made in regard to the concepts of assessment and tests. The section, which makes up the majority of the research pamphlet contains the main findings and looks in turn at the different aspects, which make up what is now seen, with the benefit of hindsight, as traditional AfL strategies. There is a section which considers the underlying issues relating to teaching and learning. There was consideration given to learning theory which given the amount of space available meant it was by necessity brief, but did suggest the truism that (2002: 15):

"learning cannot be done for the pupil; it has to be done by the pupil."

Importantly given the fact that the research was utilised as part of the Key Stage 3 Strategy and implemented across schools, the researchers came to the conclusion that:

"although the general principles of formative assessment apply across all subjects, the ways in which they manifest themselves in different subjects may

differ. We have encountered such differences in making comparisons between teachers of mathematics, science and English."

This should be considered highly significant as the research has been used as something of a blunt instrument in the attempts to lever up standards across all subjects in schools. It can be argued that all subjects in the secondary phase were given the same treatment and that the nuances of these findings have not been recognised, least of all applied consistently. The changes the researchers found tended to come slowly and steadily, yet the government in implementing the Strategy appeared to want to see quick results and as Dylan Wiliam later pointed out in a training session, held in Essex and which I attended:

"changing teaching and learning was like turning a super tanker, not achieved in an instant!"

The final section was an important one as it gave advice regarding the next steps and what could be done as individuals, in collaboration with others and across the whole school. The key point made here is one which is significant to my own position as it says (2002: 24):

"to realise the promise of formative assessment by leaving a few keen individuals to get on with would be unfair to them, whilst to do it by a policy requiring all staff to change their personal roles and styles in their classrooms would be absurd. What is needed is a plan, extending over at least three years."

As a commentary about what actually happened in schools, the researchers were in fact reasonably accurate, with the above description, for what could be seen as all the wrong reasons. The implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy occurred over a number of years but indeed it was more or less left to a few keen individuals, like myself. There was no overarching monitoring of the implementation apart from the work completed by the LA Consultant/Advisors, who had a view of the schools in the local authority. This meant that it was reliant on an unstructured QA system and there was also no incentive given to schools to develop the Action Research concept. The Strategy also expected staff to change the habits of a lifetime without in many cases providing the rationale or structure in the form of coherent CPD to aid them. This is in direct comparison to the ideas from Cordingley Bell and Rundell's BERA paper where they comment on the fact that (2003: 6):

"participation in the collaborative CPD programmes was linked to enhanced teacher confidence."

The key here is 'collaborative', as the Strategy needed teachers to 'buy in' in order to be successful. These ideas are considered in more depth in the conclusions chapter (7.5).

3.4.3: Assessment for Learning: Putting it into Practice:

This book forms part of the literature review although there are distinct similarities between it and the previous research pamphlet. It is coming under consideration at this point as in the broadly chronological review it is the correct place for it. There is however a caveat to this, as along with the original research pamphlet it was in fact the content of this book which inspired me to undertake this study. I began reading it shortly after the training session on the National Strategies I attended and the limited experiment which followed as a result of the guidance available led to this study.

It is also significant to note that in the introduction to the book the writers consider, and then summarily dismiss, the different types of assessment which they state is (2003: 1) *"not a simple or innocent term."* This statement is central to informing the findings discussed in Chapter 6.7 but at this point I wish to examine the nature of the book which was crucial to the development of my thinking on the subject of AfL and was also crucial to the implementation of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy.

The book is divided into 3 sections with the overarching concepts of "overview, implementation and practice" similar to the research pamphlet but developing the detail further. It is aimed at a number of different audiences, those concerned with practical application, those who wish to disseminate the practice and those who wish to examine the fundamental and theoretical perspectives. For a number of the readers, including myself, all of these aspects coalesced and the book needs to be viewed in its entirety with all the chapters being relevant to the current study.

The book contains a brief history of the research but then moves on to expand on the development of the KMOFAP project. The examination of the data collection and analysis is significant as there is a brief synopsis of the qualitative data. It then moves on to the significance of the quantitative data (2003: 26):

"Although the collection and analysis of quantitative data is not the most important outcome of our project, it is nevertheless an important component. This is because the positive evidence of learning gains that it has produced can serve to reassure those who might be reluctant to take on new methods. In particular, they show that, far from putting at risk the test performances of their students and of their schools, they can improve these performances by better teaching."

The significance of these statements is self-evident as a justification for the implementation of AfL by the original researchers, as it suggests key indicators for school league tables will be positively affected by its implementation. However, even though this is apparently powerful evidence the full details of the data and the analysis was not published in this text, the reader was referred to another publication which at the time was in press. This was the article by Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam which appeared in Assessment in Education: Principles, Policies and Practice. The claim for the impact of this intervention was that (2003: 29):

"It is likely that improvements equivalent to between one-quarter and one-half of a GCSE grade per student per subject are achievable."

This claim will be discussed in more detail when considering the statistical analysis in the following section. The impact of this claim was that school leaders took this at face value; as a result they were eager to incorporate a limited version of AfL into schools. This was almost counterproductive as rather than implement the detail of AfL and use the suggested Action Research framework to embed the culture most schools superficially implemented the concept in an attempt to rapidly lever up standards.

The book then moves on to examine putting the ideas into practice, this section was instrumental in developing my interest in the ideas relating to AfL which resulted in this thesis. The section builds on the ideas first described in *Inside the black box* as is made clear in the introduction, but the authors were also developing the research further with the addition of the idea that (2003: 31) *"the formative use of summative tests had an important part to play."* They were persuaded to incorporate these ideas as part of the collaboration with the teachers who were part of the project. This is significant for two reasons, in that it shows that the researchers were not working in a purely "academic" framework; they were prepared to amend their experimental

approach in light of the input from practitioners. Secondly I designed my original limited experiment using summative assessment in a formative way, which when reviewed proved beneficial to the students who were part of the small-scale trial.

The authors examined ideas relating to teaching and learning more deeply at this point. This is important as the National Strategies promoted AfL as a whole, which could be seen as a complete solution to teaching and learning; although there were other initiatives at the same time which teachers were also expected to adopt. Their conclusions included the statement (2003: 79):

"What is new is that formative assessment provides ways for teachers to create classrooms that are more consistent with the research on learning."

A second comment (2003: 80) *"assessment for learning is 'a way of thinking, almost a philosophy."* is the one which most strongly inspired me and links to the development of my own understanding over the period of time I have been involved in this project.

In the two further key points the authors state that (2003: 113):

"'One size fits all' cannot apply at this level – each teacher has to fashion their own way of implementing these changes – no bureaucratic imposition can secure their implementation."

"Sustainability has in the past been the Achilles heel of many innovations, not least because, after (say) a year, another idea comes along and the temptation to adopt it seems too strong to resist."

Both of these statements have huge significance as the National Strategy had the force of the DfES bureaucracy behind it, and when we consider the responses of Dylan Wiliam there will be an important commentary on its implementation where teachers were given what appeared to be initiative after initiative to follow.

This book when taken with the original research pamphlet can be said to have influenced the direction in which AfL progressed and as such can, in itself, be seen as a seminal text in the context of this study.

3.4.4: Teachers developing assessment for learning: impact on student achievement:

This article published in Assessment in Education in 2004 summarises the results of the KMOFAP project and gives some of the statistical analysis, which does not appear

in the above book. It begins in the same way as the other literature so far reviewed, however, there is a significant addition to the information given as the authors: Black, Harrison, Lee and Wiliam (who in this case did not include Bethan Marshall) stated (2004: 51):

> *"In order to draw clear policy implications regarding the utility of formative assessment, we therefore decided that it was necessary to undertake a more direct experiment, in which the confounding of variable, whilst not being entirely removed, was reduced, by asking teachers to incorporate formative assessment (or assessment for learning as it is sometimes called) into their classroom practice and comparing the performance of their students with those of other classes at the same school."*

This is the first point in time that this claim has been made, in that the intention of the experiment was to draw policy implications. The article appeared in March 2004, and the National Strategy followed in September of the same year, so it could be speculated that the pedagogic justification for the strategy was being put in this particular article, for a specific purpose. This rationale is described in the introduction to the article in Assessment in Education (2004: 49):

> *"While it is generally acknowledged that increased use of formative assessment (or assessment for learning) leads to higher quality learning, it is often claimed that the pressure in schools to improve the results achieved by students in externally-set tests and examinations precludes its use. This paper reports on the achievement of secondary school students who worked in classrooms where teachers made time to develop formative assessment strategies."*

There was also the justification of the research strategy as the previous accounts did not mention the fact that (2003: 2):

> *"Because our understanding of the theoretical principles underlying successful classroom action is weak, research can never tell teachers what to do. Indeed, given the complexity of classrooms, it seems likely that the positivist dream of an effective theory of teacher action – which would spell out the 'best' course of action given certain conditions – is not just difficult and a long way off, but impossible in principle."*

This statement supports the conclusions drawn from this study where each school is regarded as a culturally unique institution. This article with its analysis of statistics seems to tend to a more positivist model than an Action Research one. However the researchers themselves point out that (2004: 57):

"Drawing more on interpretivist than positivist paradigms, we sought to make use of whatever assessment instruments would have been administered by the school in the normal course of events"

There is again a lack of clarity here over the use of the term "assessment" as there is no clear definition of how it is being used. This also shows that there was apparently a confusion of the research paradigm and different rules are imposed on the notion of "experiment". It would seem that this article clarifies some more of the rationale behind the experimental approach adopted as it states that (2004: 3):

"In our original proposal to the Nuffield Foundation, we had proposed to work only with mathematics and science teachers, partly because of our greater expertise in these subjects, but also because we believed that the implications for Assessment for Learning were clearer in these areas."

Although this sentence is not highlighted in the actual article it is highly significant when reflected on. There are certain assumptions made here which do not appear to have been taken into account when the research was adopted as part of the National Strategies. The first assumption is that the researchers were focussed on specific curriculum subjects in secondary schools. The nature of these subjects are very different and as a result changes to the pedagogy required needed to be tailored to each individual subject. Both Mathematics and Science teachers reflect on their practice in a way that, at this point in time, was seen as fundamentally different to English and Humanities subjects, for example. In relation to Mathematics there had been previous reflections on practice and the types of learning tasks undertaken, for example Pepin stated that (1998: 5):

"The recommendations of the Cockcroft report (1982) are, arguably, backed by constructivist ideas of Piaget and Vygotsky, for example, with their emphasis on problem solving and investigational activities which are expected to be integrated into the teaching and learning experiences."

The work on AfL was applied without differentiation to all subjects in secondary schools. If consideration had been given to the paradigms examined above then the implementation could have proceeded along different lines which might have been more appropriate.

The next issue is central to the thinking which influenced the National Strategies, is that of the research design and reporting of results, including the use of data, and the consequences of the conclusions drawn from these. It is at this point that the research provided a more detailed discussion of the research design, which does begin to aid the understanding of the results section, which follows. It is this results section, which requires the closest examination as it poses a number of problems. Most people accepted without question the summary of the results where the researchers stated that (2004: 55):

> *"Improvements equivalent to approximately one-half a GCSE grade per student per subject are achievable. While these improvements might sound small, if replicated across a whole school, they would raise the performance of a school at the 25th percentile of achievement nationally into the upper half."*

These claims have been seen before in this study and it proved to be an attractive proposition to senior leaders in school, however what has not been closely examined is the data from which these results have been extrapolated. This point is critical as the results are contained in a summary which appears to include tables of data. The data presented in Table 1 on page 58 of the text could at best be described as obscure and lacking clarity. In order to clarify the points made in the table the reader needs to use the table in conjunction with information to be found in *Assessment for Learning putting it into practice* page 27 and *Working inside the black box* page 4 plus information on statistical analysis from the internet, for example:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Effect_size

As a non-mathematician I also required some peer discussion to explain the terminology as the key provided was not complete or detailed enough for understanding.

The basic data sets from which the table has been extrapolated are no longer available as they do not appear either as an appendix in any of the literature or indeed as a link to an electronic version. The use of statistics can be used to support the

conclusions but in this case there needs to be greater explanation of the table and its relevance in the research. Linked to this point is the fact that the results are then further refined into a stem-and leaf-diagram, which appears to simplify the way in which the effect size is presented. However during peer discussions with a number of mathematicians the suggestion was made that in fact there should be two diagrams, one showing positive effects and the other showing negative effects; as combining the two effect sizes led to confusion. Statistically the mean effect size which is summarised in this paper as being 0.3 can be described a small but, for the purposes of this research and for the impact educationally it is seen as highly significant. It could be argued that the types of statistical analysis appearing in this paper, although highly technical, are not appropriate for the purpose for which they had been used. For the majority of researchers using this paper the use of higher level statistical methodology tends to obscure rather than clarify the point being made. Castellan points out that (2010: 2):

> *"It is unfair to judge qualitative research by a quantitative research paradigm, just as it is unfair to judge quantitative research from the qualitative research paradigm. Each approach should be judged by its own standards."*

This clearly can be used to critique the work carried out here as there is a lack of clarity of articulation in the approach the researchers have used, which can affect the understanding of the practitioners, at whom the research pamphlet was targeted.

The final conclusions in this paper are again significant in light of further events with the authors stating (2004: 63) *"more research needs to be done"* and *"it remains to be seen to what extent this work can be scaled up to an LEA or a country."* This sentence proved to be prophetic as the 'scaling up' occurred as the National Strategy although more research was indeed required.

3.4.5: …inside the black box:

A number of the research pamphlets relating to the subject guidance on AfL were produced, on Science, Mathematics, English, Geography as well as Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Design Technology (DT) and another on Modern Foreign Languages. The authors of the research pamphlets reviewed here were Black and Harrison on Science, Hodgson and Wiliam on Mathematics, Marshall and Wiliam on English, Weedon and Lambert on Geography and Webb and Cox on ICT (although the

editorship of Black, Harrison. Marshall and Wiliam appear on the covers of both the latter two). The pamphlets follow a familiar pattern with an introduction looking at what the research pamphlet offers and a brief history. This is because they each have a different target audience of specialist teachers in secondary schools. The teachers were unlikely to teach a number of other subjects, they tended to specialise in one or possibly, at most, two subjects so would only refer to one or two of the pamphlets. It would be rare for a secondary teacher to teach across the spectrum of subjects reviewed here. The major differences between them is in the subject specific context which is examined separately in each of the research pamphlets; these ideas were utilised as part of the training materials linked to the AfL subject development materials from the DFE.

The conclusions section of the research pamphlets are all markedly similar although it is interesting to note that the one which demonstrates the most difference is the research pamphlet on English. It is acknowledged here that the ideas are not new to English teachers but Marshall and Wiliam state (2006: 21):

> *"What is new is the evidence that attention to these processes, for so long at the heart of shared definitions of what constitutes good practice in the teaching of English, is one of the ways, possibly the most powerful way of raising student achievement."*

The difference to other subjects is apparent and is made obvious that this is due to the nature of the subject. This concept is not however replicated in the original Strategy materials and proved to be a later development, a fact which can be considered significant in the attempts at implementation.

These research pamphlets provided a useful resource for individual subjects, which was their intended purpose but do not add greatly to the body of knowledge regarding the theoretical framework of AfL.

3.4.6: The role of teachers in Assessment for Learning:

This research pamphlet was produced by the ARG, published in 2006 and puts others into context. Its purpose is to summarise the results of a study on summative rather than formative assessment. This is very different to the previous works studied here. The authors point out that there are similar qualities between summative assessment and other forms including the (2006: 4):

"Impact it should not only measure performance but have desirable consequences for teaching, learning and motivation for learning. Assessment generally has a strong impact on the curriculum and on pedagogy, so it is vital that any adverse effects are minimised."

There is again the issue of terminology being raised here, a point which informs the conclusions of this study.

The researchers explain they have used available evidence to reach their conclusions, including information from a study commissioned by the DfES (which is now unavailable due to the archiving of materials) but once more there is no empirical evidence to support these statements included either in the text or as an appendix, although there are pointers to the ARG website (http://www.aaia.org.uk/afl/assessment-reform-group/) where some of the findings are available. In their discussion of AfL in this paper the researchers' state (2006: 9):

"Many schools give the impression of having implemented AfL, when in reality the change in pedagogy that it requires has not taken place… teachers feel constrained by external tests over which they have no control…they are unlikely to give pupils a greater role in directing their learning, as is required in AfL, in order to develop the capacity to continue learning throughout life. The nature of classroom assessment is dictated by the test."

The quote points out that the constraints of external tests are significant and my lived experience as Head of Faculty and a member of the Senior Leadership team supports this, linked to this are the limiting factors of the misconceptions relating to the terminology of assessment. It can be suggested that the testing systems, implemented in secondary schools, have been designed without a thorough understanding or examination of the underpinning pedagogy. For most teachers these deficiencies have not been clearly articulated but have created frustrations. It is my understanding that the articulation of these implications would create a significant contribution to academic understanding to address the previous deficiencies.

A contribution to the academy is made here as it is significant to point out that, for many teachers, what seemed to be the reality of the situation being described here is not a summary of AfL, but rather the pedagogical problems of summative assessment as the dominant force in educational delivery systems. This could be seen as a major

issue in educational systems around the world, as there are assumptions made about what the words 'test' and 'assessment' actually mean.

This confusion between summative and formative assessment learning approaches can be construed as a major epistemological deficit and a blind spot of policy makers. The authors challenged these ideas as the conclusions for this work again move into a section of implications for a variety of stakeholders, from government to teachers and professional development course providers. Some of these implications were quite radical such as the suggestion made to government to (2006: 13):

> *"Allow at least two years for the trial and evaluation of any new summative assessment system based on teachers' judgement and a further similar period for dissemination to users and training of teachers."*

The recommendations to school management could be looked on as equally controversial as the authors suggest (2006: 13):

> *"Establish a school policy for assessment that supports Assessment for Learning at all times and requires summative assessment only when necessary for checking and reporting progress."*

Given the political climate; despite the efforts of the ARG and other advisory groups these recommendations were not implemented in detail as they aimed towards an ideal. These ideas could have been developed into a 'new' concept, which enabled and evaluated higher order thinking. This would have been a paradigm shift from the assumptions rooted in the *'summative testing'* approach towards something which redefines assessment systems in a new type of *'formative testing'* system. This could link to the ideas of adaptive testing tools, which Pearson assessments describe as (2010: 4):

> *"this targeting is essential to provide accurate diagnostic information on individual students."*

These ideas are supported by ideas from Sitthisak, Gilbert and Davis where they state (2007: 1):

> *"In the context of an adaptive assessment system, assessment is part of the process of diagnosing the learner's proficiency. The learner's estimated proficiency can then be used to guide the adaptation of the system."*

This could have been developed as a rationale for linking the philosophy of a new type of system which could be described as **'Adaptive Assessment for Learning or AAfL.'** The conclusions which can be drawn from this are that despite the intentions of the original researchers there are a number of missed opportunities to develop the concepts.

3.4.7: Assessment for learning: why what and how?:

The final research pamphlet in this chronological review was published by the University of London's Institute of Education in 2009 and was an inaugural professorial lecture by Dylan Wiliam. Consequently, it was different to other pamphlets and was introduced as taking (2009: 1) *"the form of an argument".* There are statements which reflect previous work, given the subject matter and the occasion this is not surprising; one of the early points made re-iterates the ideas of the learning gains made by students who find themselves taught in the "most effective classrooms", a term which was not clearly defined in the literature.

Another point made early in the lecture partially answers the previous criticism of the use of statistics which states that (2009: 5):

> *"For too long education research has been dominated by a paradigm where if the results of a study were statistically significant they would be published … in the United States, that effect sizes, rather than statistical significance, should be reported."*

This could be said to tackle the problem posed by the data analysis previously examined but the issue is not resolved. He then goes on to examine the terminology used by the researchers (2009: 8):

> "*many authors use the terms 'assessment for learning' and 'formative assessment' interchangeably, Paul Black and I believe there are distinctions to be drawn… in other words, the term 'assessment for learning' speaks about the purpose of the assessment, while the term 'formative assessment' speaks about the function it actually serves."*

This clarification of thinking is useful, but at this point there is no clear articulation of the underpinning epistemology for this distinction. It should be noted

that Dylan Wiliam only raises this very pertinent point about terminology in 2009, more than ten years after the original research was published.

He also reflects on another salient point; why this particular piece of educational research (2009: 14) *"has so little impact on the classroom practice of teachers."* This statement has obvious implications for CPD and the problems are summed up slightly later in the lecture when Wiliam says (2009: 17):

"Telling teachers what to do does not work. Teaching is just too complex."

This statement appears very much to contradict the notion of the National Strategies as a training exercise: one of which was to develop the use of AfL. Once again Wiliam does not develop the explanation of exactly what research underpins this particular statement. This issue could however explain why he did not contribute to the second edition of the National Strategies in the way that some of his colleagues did, unfortunately this is supposition as once again, there is no empirical evidence to support this view.

The lecture then moves on to consider the issue of CPD and how teachers are supported in their application of the results of the research. The rest of the pamphlet is used to describe rather than analyse the teacher learning communities established to assist in the dissemination of best practice consequently the section on conclusions and future direction is quite limited and focusses on the development of teacher learning communities. He does however give a positive outlook and suggests that (2009: 34):

"the focus on AfL does provide a kind of 'Trojan Horse' into wider issues of pedagogy, psychology and the curriculum."

This point can be directly related to my own perceptions and experience; as at the beginning of this study where the thinking behind my original limited experiment was somewhat simplistic in its outlook. Over the period of this study there has been a development in my own understanding of the pedagogy behind AfL and ideas relating to assessment in general. The critical thinking developments have been significant in examining both my own current practice and those of colleagues, by producing a more analytical approach which could be said to reflect this concept of a "Trojan horse".

3.4.8: Embedded formative assessment:

This book was published in 2011 in Bloomington Indiana, after the election of 2010 and change of UK government; which could be seen as significant. It re-iterates ideas relating to the importance of education in general terms, as well as the fact that (2011: 13):

"the greatest impact on learning is the daily lived experiences of students in classrooms, and that is determined much more by how teachers teach than by what they teach"

This statement is not new and indeed Wiliam has already made this point in previous works. He also goes over ground, which has been previously examined relating to the case for formative assessment. He does however make a point, which will strike a chord with secondary school teachers in England and Wales (2011: 29):

"One year it's language across the curriculum, the next year, its differentiated instruction. Because teachers are bombarded with innovations, none of these innovations has time to take root, so nothing really changes. And worse, not only is there little or no real improvement in what happens in classrooms, but teachers get justifiably cynical about the constant barrage of innovations to which they are subjected,"

The reason for the emphasis is that this conclusion is comparable to one of the observations made from the Action Research cycles I have completed and relates to my own real world experiences.

In Chapter 2 a variety of definitions for the term 'formative assessment' are provided. In comparison the conclusion made by Bennett is significant as he points out that (2009: 8):

"just replacing the term formative assessment with the term Assessment for Learning merely clouds the definitional issue."

Bennett makes counter claims about the impact of the research on AfL when he states (2009: 7):

"the research does not appear to be as unequivocally supportive of formative assessment practice as it is sometimes made to sound."

This point is not challenged by Wiliam and the book then moves on to the practical strategies relating to the implementation of AfL. There is no detailed section

on conclusions surprisingly given the nature and title of the book and it merely concludes with an epilogue. The concluding statements reflect on the fact that (2011: 162):

> *"If all teachers accept the need to improve practice, not because they are not good enough, but because they can be even better, and focus on the things that make the biggest difference to their students, according to the research, we will be able to prepare our students to thrive in the impossibly complex, unpredictable world of the 21st century."*

This conclusion draws together the facts that formative assessment is an important component of teachers practice and that everyone is living in a changing world. It is, however, not necessarily the conclusion which could have been predicted from the introduction, which states the purposes of the book is to provide practical ideas for developing practice and provide evidence for improved learner outcomes.

3.5: Perfect Assessment for Learning; Claire Gadsby edited by Jackie Beere:

The significance of this book is linked to the illustration below as it reveals an important fact, that the author of the book or possibly the editors had made a decision about the position of Assessment for Learning as a concept. The position is made clear from the outset with the point being it is Perfect Assessment; the 'for learning' being an addition. This already raises a question as to where the author stands in relation to the original concepts postulated by Black and Wiliam. The book opens with a truism in that (2012: 1):

> *"many teachers are grazing at the buffet of AfL, without necessarily perceiving how the various morsels come together to form a well-balanced and satisfying educational philosophy."*

There is then an expression of intent which states that the purpose of the book is to (2012: 14):

> *"offer a range of practical strategies to help schools develop their existing practice and to ensure that assessment is really contributing to learning."*

The problematic use of the term 'assessment' is raised here. The implication this is formative assessment in the form of AfL but this is not explicit and indeed the statement could equally be read to mean summative assessment.

**Figure 9: Perfect Assessment for Learning;
book by Claire Gadsby.**

From this ambiguous opening the book then moves onto the practical strategies; these include re-iterations of those seen originally in the National Strategy training with the addition of work from Dylan Wiliam on activating learners as resources for each other and as owners of their own learning. This section written by Gadsby begins with a reference from Vygotsky (2012: 65):

"What the child can do in collaboration today, he can do alone tomorrow."

This is almost a spurious reference as there is no triangulation of the ideas expressed here and once again the reader has to make the connections for themselves, it would have been more useful if examples such as Seely Brown, Collins and Duguid were referenced as they point out that Vygotsky's ideas are (1989: 34),:

"the foundation of all work on the understanding of learning and cognition being based on this work".

The next two chapters refer to the Ofsted framework and working with parents and again refer back to the training materials. It is significant to note that this book is focussed on ensuring the compliance with external forms of validation rather than purely on improving the outcomes for students.

Finally, there is a chapter on the key messages and how to move forward in these; there appears to be no new thinking. This book appears to offer a summary of thinking current in 2010 but if schools have embedded AfL they will not learn anything new from this. If AfL is not embedded then being offered the same methods cannot be the best way to progress. It is difficult to see where this book sits, as a handbook of strategies it is a good summary, however, it is not is an academic examination of the nature, purpose and theories of AfL. The target audience for this book is teachers who had an interest in AfL but it does not appear to have an academic audience. It is again significant to note that this book was published following the election of the coalition government in the UK and the subsequent closing (post 2010) of the National Strategies website.

3.6: Formative assessment models and their impact on Initial Teacher Training by Debra Kidd:

This article appeared in Learning and Teaching in Action from the Centre for Learning and Teaching at Manchester Metropolitan University. In this paper Kidd raises the important point that (2009: 21):

> *"our systems of measuring progress, both for pupils and for professionals, remain within a positivist model which focuses on auditing technical capacities and which assumes that the qualities required for phenomenological reflection – i.e. the capacity for teachers to see the child anew in their observations - are measurable."*

The paper goes on to state that (2009: 22):

> *"nowhere is this uneasy partnership between the epistemological and ontological more apparent than in the assessment system and in the competing rhetoric between attainment and development."*

These ideas summarise the thinking exhibited by the original researchers on AfL when they were questioned about its impact. It is significant that this thinking does not appear in the publications available to all users of AfL as these responses are from private correspondence and will be examined in more detail in the conclusions to this thesis.

Having positioned herself regarding the theories of assessment and the requirements of the authorities Kidd then moves on to explore the ideas of different assessment models relating to assessing creativity such as the Creativity Wheel and Collegiate Learning Assessment but there is no further attempt to broaden out any conclusions or to examine the implications of any aspects of AfL for ITT in general.

3.7: The Assessment for Learning in International Contexts (ALIC) Research Project; Shaw, Johnson and Warwick:

This brief article appears in Research Intelligence news from BERA issue 119 Autumn/ Winter 2012. It begins with an introduction conceptualising AfL and echoes the findings of this thesis when it states that (2012: 14-15):

> *"the seemingly ubiquitous nature of the language of formative assessment within international educational discourse masks a poor shared understanding of the underlying meanings around such phraseology. It is already clear that AfL practices vary across the Western educational contexts…differing policies, politics and cultures impacting on classroom practices."*

There is a summary of the research and the underpinning pedagogy behind it with a survey constructed and a critical review of the literature undertaken. As this is a very brief article unfortunately it is not possible for the authors to develop any of their points in any great detail. This would be a useful addition to the work on AfL had it appeared in a research journal in a more detailed format.

The conclusions drawn provides information, which cannot be said to deviate from what is to be expected (2012: 15):

> *"given the global prominence given to AfL…it is perhaps unsurprising to find that…teachers appear to value practices linked positively to formative assessment principles and strategies… the survey data reflect the views of professional who are engaged reflective and responsible."*

This could be said to conclude this section of the literature review in a most appropriate way, reflecting on the position both in the concept of AfL in England revealing, despite the fact that there has been a focus on embedding the ideas, that it has only been adopted by a minority of professionals who have an interest in the subject.

3.8: Conclusions relating to the literature review:

There are a number of findings from the review of the literature. The work on Assessment for Learning apparently clearly shows that Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam, as the original researchers of *"…the black box"*, were involved in the development of the National Strategies. This has proved to be at best an exaggeration of the situation.

Another issue is the terminology related to the subject and the difficulties this created is related to the key assumptions and the use to which the word 'assessment' is put in the phrase Assessment for Learning. The original researchers have used the term 'formative assessment' at certain points but even this does not clarify their thinking.

Another key finding is the political adoption of the theory of AfL resulted in the original concept being utilised in an ad hoc manner, which clearly was not the intention of the original researchers. Linked to this is the point established from the material provided by the DFES, that there was no detailed pedagogical framework underlying the adoption of the original research. These findings will form the basis of the conclusions concerning the implementation of future strategies in Chapter 7.11.

The work AfL was built on the work on formative assessment. This was reviewed in detail by Black and Wiliam in their academic paper but only briefly referred to in the texts which were aimed at education professionals i.e. the "black box" series. This understanding was implied rather than clearly articulated. There was also a similar issue with the development of the use of CPD in relation to the implementation of the National Strategy. As previously explained the most effective type of CPD would be those which professionals engaged in as agents of change. This can be seen as requiring the use of an Action Research framework and links to the ideas postulated by Michael Fullan's work as he states (2007: 25):

> *"there are few intensive ongoing learning opportunities for teachers individually or in concert to deeply acquire new learning concepts or skills."*

Fullan also points out teachers (2007: 26):

> *"do not struggle directly with existing cultures within which new values and practices may be required…restructuring (which can be done by fiat) occurs time and time again, whereas reculturing (how teachers come to question and change their beliefs and habits) is what is needed."*

In a comment made before the implementation of the National Strategies, but could be seen as relevant Peter Senge (in conversation with John O'Neill) states that (1995):

"Most teachers feel oppressed trying to conform to all kinds of rules, goals and objectives, many of which they don't believe in. Teachers don't work together; there's very little sense of collective learning going on in most schools."

Linked to the Literature Review I wished to examine the original research questions. The following table describes the key concepts and the findings from this study of the literature.

Table 1: Summary of literature review findings.

Key concepts	Findings
Understanding of previous work of formative assessment	This impacted on the original researchers and they made some pedagogical assumptions which were never clarified in the literature.
Involvement of the original researchers in the development of the National Strategies	It is clear to see that there was some involvement of the original researchers in formative assessment in the materials produced. Dylan Wiliam was however not cited directly but was only involved owing to his authorship of the work *Inside the Black Box.* The other researchers including Paul Black, Christine Harrison, Clare Lee and Bethan Marshall were involved in the design of the National Strategy materials despite later reservations.
Issues of terminology	This finding is highly significant as it is the understanding of the term ***assessment*** which has had the most effect on the implementation of the National Strategies and the understanding of everyone involved.
Use of Action Research framework	My own understanding of the Action Research framework has developed throughout this work. If the original researchers had been able to develop the National Strategies using an Action Research framework this could have produced more significant and enduring results.

This review also examined if the theoretical framework originally proposed was in fact what was being applied in practice. Their aims were considered in relation to the literature already available on Assessment for Learning and the underlying pedagogical framework articulated by the original researchers summarised.

Another original aim of the research was to place these ideas within an institutional, local and national context (particularly relating to the political context of UK government policy) and to link it to relevant theoretical frameworks. It is crucial to note that the Action Research cycles are central to the design of this research approach.

The issue of how Assessment for Learning was viewed by staff, students and other stakeholders and other aims are examined in the methodology and findings section of this thesis. Another aspect which will be examined in the findings section was the creation an original toolkit for the dissemination of Assessment for Learning, and the evaluation of its effectiveness. These aims were all placed within a school situation and this was linked to reviewing current pedagogy, policy and practice in relation to Assessment for Learning. The key postulate which arises from this literature review includes the new way of reconceptualising the terminology relating to *assessment* and *test*. This could be described as a rethinking of terminology in which *assessment* should be described instead as a new learning methodology for practitioners.

Chapter 4: Methodology:

This chapter provides a justification for the research design and describes the methodological background to the study including the reasons for taking this approach. The methods used to gather and analyse the data are explained and the ethical issues involved in undertaking this research are outlined. Finally there are claims for the quality of the research and the proposed theoretical outcomes with suggestions regarding the potential contribution to knowledge.

4.1: Philosophical position and assumptions:

The premise behind this thesis is informed by my philosophical position and assumptions. This, in turn, informs the methodology chosen as it clearly links to the research questions established at the start of this study and reviewed throughout.

Underpinning my philosophical position are a number of points. I began the study by researching an area which was of professional interest to me. The knowledge which was then generated would be used to impact on my professional judgement and would inform my professional practice. Although I was originally undertaking the work to change my own practice and that of others the study was also positioned within a context of local and national change. The issue I was studying had a political dimension as it was intended to impact on practice in classrooms and therefore improve pupil outcomes. As the study developed so did my own understanding of the concept of social justice.

The original second aim was clearly linked to the use of the methodology as this was to use an Action Research framework in a school situation. I was intending to improve my own and others' practice by reviewing current pedagogy, policy and practice in relation to the AfL strand of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Action Research was also used to develop my own understanding of the significance of the findings and enhance my understanding as a reflective practitioner. I was an active participant in relation to the real world experience but at various points I had to step outside this role and view the outcomes as a researcher. This aim was clarified after peer discussions, with other educational researchers and my supervisor.

My position as a researcher is that schools should be viewed as unique cultures and there is therefore a difference to be noted between my philosophical position and

that of the government who viewed the AfL Strategy from the position of universal implementation. This can be seen as an attempt to construct my own reality by understanding what we do. This is as a result of using the Action Research framework as a method of social constructionism as Young points out (2008: 63):

> *"Knowledge is socially and historically constructed, but it cannot be subsumed into the processes of historical and social construction; in other words, we make knowledge out of knowledge."*

This process was part of establishing my philosophical position. The knowledge generated by this study included the importance I placed on the idea of social justice.

This concept can be in part be addressed by Robson in that (3rd ed. 2001: 225):

> *"research is founded upon presuppositions reflecting the values of the researcher, which may derive, for example, from their gender or ethnicity."*

This research fits within the interpretivist paradigm which as Cohen, Manion and Morrison point out is (2000: 23):

> *"characterised by a concern for the individual"… "Interpretivist researchers begin with individuals and set out to understand their interpretations from the world around them. Theory is emergent and must arise from particular situations; it should be 'grounded' on data generated by the research act (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Theory should not precede research but follow it."*

The ideas of Grounded Theory linked to the methodology will also be examined in Chapter 4.7. The research design was adapted as my work was grounded in the political situation at the time. The methodology could also be said to reflect this idea as the theory developed over a period of time and reflected a growth in my own understanding of the concept that knowledge exists as part of the reality generation. The original methodology was utilising an Action Research framework, however as my understanding developed further I was able to utilise more methodological inventiveness which is most clearly expressed by Dadds and Hart (2001: 169):

> *"Practitioner research methodologies are with us to serve professional practices. So what genuinely matters are the purposes of practice which the research seeks to serve, and the integrity with which the practitioner researcher makes methodological choices about ways of achieving those purposes. No methodology is, or should be, cast in stone, if we accept that professional*

intention should be informing research processes, not pre-set ideas about methods or techniques."

In order to delineate the development of my methodological inventiveness I will establish the original framework of the research by looking at the original aims of the study and the research questions associated with it.

4.2: Aims of the study:

There were a number of aims at the start of this research project. The original overarching aim was to examine how the principles of AfL were being applied in school and whether this differed from the original intentions of Black and Wiliam. A significant aim of the study was to examine the pedagogical implications of AfL for teachers and a key decision was to design an appropriate methodology in order to examine this.

The study also aimed to establish whether the use of the AfL strategies impacted on student outcomes, as improving these was one of my key concerns. The data which will be presented later in the study falls into the qualitative rather than the quantitative category of research, although as Jones and Tanner point out the outcomes of (2006: 101) *"high stakes summative assessment (the measure by which schools are judged)"* can be seen to be influenced by AfL techniques and the results of these high stakes assessments can be quantified. The methodology chosen was not one which solely involved quantitative methods, this was a conscious choice as this study was originally designed as an Action Research project, as it was concerned with improving my own practice.

Another aim was to examine in detail how AfL strategies were being utilised by different faculties within and across schools and to distinguish their varied approaches, and how other stakeholders viewed AfL. These conclusions would then be cross-referenced with the aims of the original researchers wherever possible, in order to triangulate the evidence. This could be seen as an empirical enquiry, an idea which was established at the start of the process. As a consequence of this type of research methodology the findings will not necessarily result in an outcome which supports generalisations but will provide specific contextualised examples that could have an impact on individual teachers, student outcomes and school improvement. The Action

Research nature of the study has meant that the initial findings led to the examination of the nature and application of CPD.

4.3: Original Research questions:

The questions which drove this research can be seen in section 1.1.1 and generated the need for utilising certain types of methodologies and methods which impacted on the nature of this study. The questions which are most closely concerned with the impact of the AfL Strategy in relation to CPD are questions 1 to 5 and most crucially Questions 8 and 9, these questions examined the issues in the implementation of the AfL Strategy and the impact this had on professional practice. My intention to critically analyse my own practice and that of others relates to the central strand in the study which involves examining the nature of Action Research, both as a methodological choice and how it impacts on the progress of this study. The use of this and other methodologies were reviewed and resulted in the claims for originality and methodological inventiveness which developed as a result of reviewing the outcomes of this study. BERA has recently established close to practice research as a priority (2017):

"there has been relatively little explicit discussion within the literature on the dimensions of quality in close-to-practice research"

It could be argued that this thesis could contribute to the understanding of educational researchers on how to clarify and communicate dimensions of quality in close to practice educational research.

In the next sections I will examine the methodologies which are either central to the development of this thesis or which provided influences in my emerging understanding as a researcher. These various methodologies are considered in roughly chronological order, starting with Case Study.

4.4: Case study methodology:

The original intention was to design a Case Study to examine the implications of the implementation of AfL as part of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. This demonstrates my conceptual naivety at this point but provides a valid starting point for the examination of the methodologies which were ultimately synthesised and led to me utilising my own methodological inventiveness.

4.4.1: Case Study methodology: An introduction:

The use of the Case Study is described by Nisbet and Watt as being (1980: 72):

> *"particularly appropriate for an individual researcher, because it gives the opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in depth within a limited timescale."*

This description can be related to the selection of the methodology for this study as it was examining AfL, which can be seen as one 'problem' to be studied. The political changes from the inception of the National Strategy to the change in government in 2010 really solved the issue raised by Denzin and Lincoln where (1994: 306):

> *"The case study researcher faces a strategic choice in deciding how much and how long the complexities of the case study should be studied."*

This was done by setting a timeframe for the study, with the study beginning with the implementation of the National Strategy and concluding with their removal as a result of changes made by the coalition government, although the review of the impact took place after these later events. This was to be an empirical enquiry where the use of Case Study can be said to summarise the original intent of this piece of work.

4.4.2: A consideration of Case Study methodology:

There are a number of considerations to be examined when looking at the Case Study methodology as Bell points out (1984: 97):

> *"because case studies are often 'close up' accounts, it may be necessary to readjust the balance of power between the research community and those studies."*

This concept of adjustment in the balance of power is reflected in relation to the roles of researcher and manager which I undertook throughout the project.

Case Study methodology was seen as appropriate in the early stages as Nisbet and Watt note (1980: 74):

> *"in case study, evidence is gathered by a variety of techniques. These include observation, interviews, examining documents or records or pupils work."*

I was intending to use all of these methods as well as others, which initially made the Case Study seem appropriate. Bell points out that (1984: 94):

"the techniques for collecting information for a case study are held in common with a wider tradition of sociological and anthropological fieldwork."

Another aspect of this is that, as Cohen, Manion and Morrison state (2000: 115):

"Triangulation can be a very useful technique when a researcher is engaged in a case study."

This too is an aspect of the methods used, which will be described and examined in greater depth in the methods section.

It is also important to note the criticisms of this particular methodology as Nisbet and Watt state (1980: 76): *"results are not easily generalizable".* This factor would have created greater issues in another type of study. However, for the original small sale project on AfL the results would be unique to this particular study although the impact could be potentially be generalizable. This fact is not problematical as Denzin and Lincoln point out (1996: 306):

"The purpose of the case study is not to represent the world but to represent the case."

The possibility of taking the results and comparing them to other studies and to the political changes over time is still available to the researcher, even though there might have been restrictions on the study had it only used the Case Study methodology; however because of the fact the Action Research framework and the improve paradigm were subsequently used to underpin the methodology this was not as significant. Creswell states (2007:73):

*" Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a **case**) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving **multiple sources of information** (e.g., observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case **description** and case-based themes."*

This study began as an attempt to reconceptualise AfL and there is a contribution to make as Bell describes it (1984: 101):

"The best case studies are capable of offering some support to alternative interpretations. Case studies considered as problems, may form an archive of descriptive material sufficiently rich to admit subsequent re-interpretation."

In support of the utilisation of these forms of methodology McNiff states (1988: 17):

"Case study appeals to the 'grounded theory' of Glaser and Strauss (1967) in that the knowledge and interpretation of educational phenomenon must be grounded in the reality of class practice."

The concept of Grounded Theory is one which will be examined in more detail, as it has been described as an *"inductive methodology."* this means it is more open ended and exploratory and is another foundation underpinning the methodology of this study.

One criticism of the Case Study methodology has been described by McNiff as (1988: 17): *"being woolly with little scientific rigour".* However, owing to the nature of this study the idea of a 'scientific' or 'positivist' methodology was not considered to be appropriate. I developed an awareness of the methodology and an understanding that there were a number of issues relating to the Case Study methodology as Bell points out (1994: 99):

"Having begun to collect information, the case study worker will find that the data raises further problems familiar to experimental research as questions of reliability and threats to internal and external validity."

This study can best be described as being part of the tradition described by Denzin and Lincoln and is used to (1994: 32):

"illustrate a point, a condition, a category, something important for instruction".

My developing understanding is however best summed up by Whitehead where he states that (2009):

"The main difference between a case study and a living theory is that ...Living-theories articulate explanatory principles in terms of flows of life-affirming energy, values and understandings that are transformatory and not contained within a bounded system."

Potentially the study could have been postulated purely as an exercise in Action Research as I was looking at changing practice but this understanding links to the concepts of Action Research which will be discussed in the next section.

4.5: Action Research: An introduction:

In examining Action Research theories it has to be acknowledged here that the works of Jack Whitehead and Jean McNiff (2011) have been integral to developing both the theory and the practice evidenced in this study as well as the methodology. I have examined a number of different methodologies, the result has been a synthesised methodology incorporating aspects of each in order to generate the current outcomes. Fundamental to these ideas was the developing understanding of Action Research.

4.5.1: An examination of Action Research Theory:

The ontological and epistemological assumptions of Action Research relates to the fact that the research is value laden, morally committed and places oneself in relation to others. These concepts are an integral part of this study and as such Action Research is central to this thesis. Ledwith, in The Palgrave international handbook of Action Research points out that (2017: 55):

"in order to practice social justice, any occupation that claims a social justice imperative must bridge the divide between theory and practice."

On a simplistic level at the start of this project Action Research was appropriate to the nature of the research inquiry required by the research objectives, as I was looking to improve my own practice as well as that of others. It was only as my understanding developed did this point become highly significant to me. This study is based on the concepts expressed by Jack Whitehead and Jean McNiff where they state that (2006: 12):

"Research however is purposeful investigation, which involves gathering data and generating evidence in relation to articulated standards of judgment, in order to test an emergent theory"

At the start of this project I saw an Action Research theory as being generated from real life and emergent data, which was the position I was in and this then influenced my work and generated further questions which were then tested and influenced practice. The influence of Action Research on the methodology of actions for data collection and analysis from the research was highly significant, consequently the theory of Action Research is absolutely fundamental to the ontology and epistemology expressed in this thesis. This development in understanding is part of the critical

reflexivity undertaken in this study, as knowledge produced through social research can be described as being imbued with aspects of a researcher's previous experience. What is also important is the notion pointed out by Ledwith where she reflects on Kemmis' position and states that (2017: 52):

> *"we might say that Action Research should aim not just at achieving knowledge of the world, but achieving a better world."*

4.5.2: Action Research implementation and implications:

At the start of the study I acknowledged the fact that McNiff cites the work of Laurence Stenhouse as a key influence (1988: 24):

> *"His central message for teachers was that they should regard themselves as researchers, as the best judges of their own practice, and then the natural corollary would be an improvement in education."*

This statement was particularly significant in the context of this study which is designed to examine the impact AfL had. The idea of 'improvement of education' was the original aim of the government in developing AfL as part of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. The examination of this impact on my own and others' practice was to be an integral part of this study.

The cyclical nature of Action Research articulated by McNiff is based on the seminal work of Kurt Lewin (1946), who McNiff points out (1988: 22):

> *"described action research as a spiral of steps. Each step has four stages, planning, acting, observing, and reflecting."*

This study was originally only intended as one cycle but developed over time to look at number of Action Research cycles in a variety of situations. The original research design simply began as an examination of the strategies suggested by Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam in a real context (2003: 2). As described in 1.2.1 I was struck by the comment describing AfL which described the situation I was in at that particular time. There are clear links where I began with an idea, applied it and examined a key feature in Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2003: 14) and began a small-scale research project with one teaching group; thus beginning the Action Research cycles. From this beginning as a small-scale project within one classroom the Action Research

Phase 1: School A

```
┌─────────────┐      ┌─────────────┐      ┌─────────────┐
│ Literature  │      │ Findings    │      │ Applying to │
│ review      │ ───► │ Analysis    │ ───► │ self        │
│ Research    │      │             │      │             │
└─────────────┘      └─────────────┘      └─────────────┘
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                 ┌─────────────┐      ┌─────────────┐
                 │ Moved       │ ◄─── │ Sharing  with│
                 │ Schools     │      │ other teachers│
                 └─────────────┘      └─────────────┘
```

Phase 2: School B

```
┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐      ┌─────────────┐
│ Action Research  │      │ Implementation   │      │ Findings    │
│ Implementation   │ ───► │ of ideas: Whole  │ ───► │ Analysis    │
│ of     National  │      │ school           │      │             │
│ Strategies       │      │                  │      │             │
└──────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘      └─────────────┘
                                                           │
                                                           ▼
                                                     ┌─────────────┐
                                                     │ Review      │
                                                     └─────────────┘
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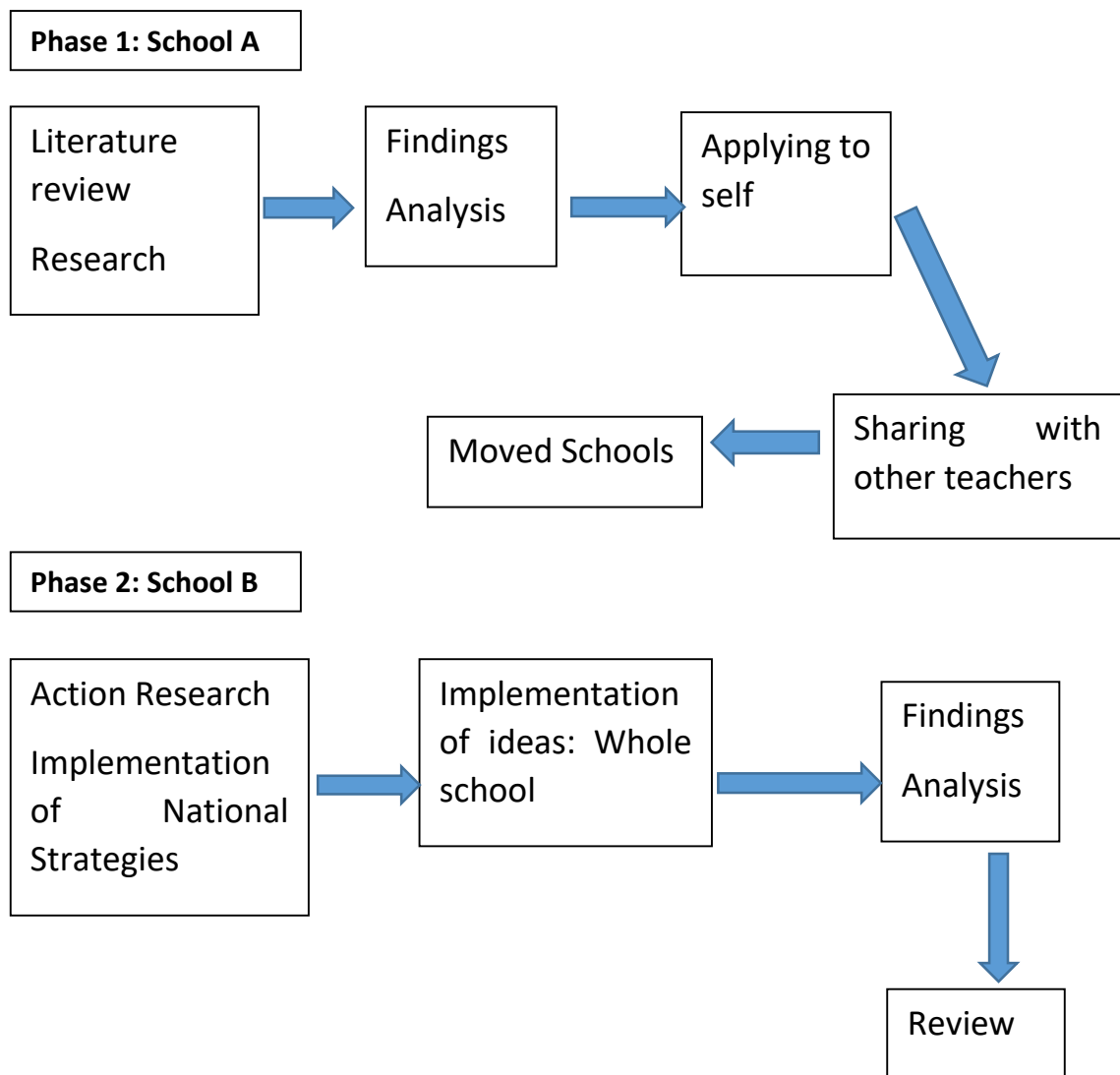
Figure 10: Drawing showing the links between phases of this project

cycles have developed over a period of time exemplified in the drawing below which shows the links between various stages of this study.

The changes which took place in relation to my developing conceptualisation of Action Research are also important to this study. McNiff states (1988: 34-36):

> *"The systems of Kemmis, Elliott and Ebbutt simply do not accommodate spontaneous creative episodes... Their use does not encourage teachers to account for their own personal development, that is, to offer explanations of how and why they have been prompted to change their practices and to demonstrate publically that this change has led to an improvement"*

This was a significant development in my understanding as the systems of Kemmis, Elliott and Ebbutt were asking for application, whereas I wished to move further along the Action Research route. The purpose of this research was to position

myself as a teacher researcher at the centre of the enquiry into AfL drawing on Whitehead's notion of a living educational theory (McNiff 1988: 36):

(Whitehead) is keen to keep the teacher-practitioner at the centre of the enquiry. Unless we keep the living 'I' in our educational discussions, he maintains, action research loses touch with reality and becomes an academic exercise."

If I examine the philosophy of my own work, which at the beginning of the study I struggled to articulate, it chimes more with the nature of educational research expressed in the above quote by McNiff. My thinking is now more clearly aligned with the articulated thinking of McNiff than the interpretivist tradition although I originally struggled with this concept as I did not see that I was situated clearly within this academic framework.

The statement from Whitehead & McNiff provides a good summary as (2011: 241):

"the overall significance of Action Research as methodology is in relation to the capacity to generate and test living theory to improve learning in order to improve practice. In other words, it is possible through Action Research to offer explanation for processes of improving learning."

The development of my understanding of the use of an Action Research model has been significant, indeed it could even be described as central to this research, as it also validates the nature of the desired "improve" paradigm (Gardner & Coombs, 2009), relating to the process of the improvement of learning. As my understanding developed I was able to utilise the concept to clarify in my own mind the ideas McNiff explains, in that (1988: 45):

"Generative action research enables a teacher-researcher to address many different problems at one time without losing sight of the main issues."

The main issue for this study being the implementation of AfL but linked to this were aspects of CPD and the political reality at the time, although the idea of generating my own methodological inventiveness came later in the process. It is important also to note that (McNiff, 1988: 45):

"the inquiry can deviate from its original path as these aspects are explored."

This methodology underpinned my own thinking but was used in conjunction with others; in order to produce my own synthesised methodology. Whitehead reminds

us about the messiness of Action Research, showing a process that becomes spirals on spirals, as exemplified in Figure 11; this concept of the messiness of research was significant in the methodology choices made as an integral part of this study:
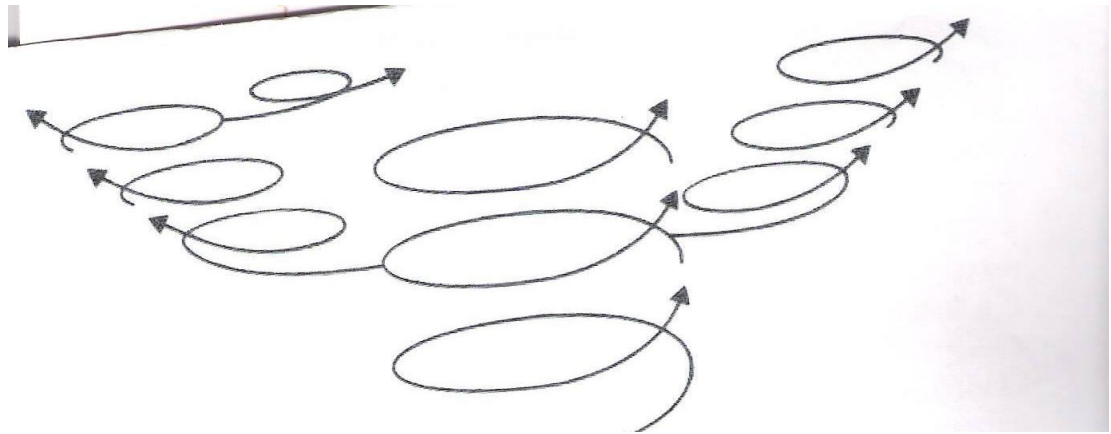
Figure 11: A diagram showing the 'messiness' of action research.

This study however was not simply a classic spiral upon spiral but also included linear developmental elements. McNiff and Whitehead also state that (2011: 1):

"As a practitioner-researcher, you are aiming to generate theories about learning and practice, your own and other peoples.

Most of the action research literature talks about improving practice, but talks less about improving learning as the basis for improved practice and even less about how this should be seen as new theory and an important contribution to the world of ideas. The literature tends to reinforce the portrayal of practitioners as doers, those who are competent to be involved in debates about knowledge, or who have good ideas about what is important in life and how we should live. Consequently, in wider debates, including policy debates practitioners tend to be excluded, on the assumption that they are good at practice, but perhaps they should leave it to official theorists to explain, what, why and how people should learn and how they should use their knowledge."

Although this is quite a substantial quote it is highly significant in the choice of methodology utilised, because it accurately reflects my own experiences in conducting this study and it mirrors my own understanding. It is not just the literature that reflects this thinking, as the experiences I have had in schools is that practitioners themselves

continue to maintain a similar outlook. There is also a degree of significance in the statement about policy, which can be seen as accurate as the implementation of the National Strategies bore out. Significantly there is no link made in UK scholarly articles between research methodology and curriculum design. The scholarly articles, available for the area of Action Research and curriculum design are mostly focussed on international development; such as those Canada and New Zealand, notably from Lambert (2002).

As my understanding developed it was vital I synthesised the use of Action Research as a methodology with the ideas relating to reflective practice which appeared to mirror the thinking in Nehring et al. (2010: 401):

"Drawing on Schon's (1983) notion of reflective practice and Lewin (1946), Argyris et al. (1985) systemised the thinking and behaviour of reflective practice with the notion of 'action science'. Action Science together with Lewin's earlier term 'action research' has subsequently blossomed as a leading methodology linking the professions and the academy."

Strauss points out that (1987):

"It is not only a question of the researcher designing a methodical, logical and structured methodology capable of handling the data and generating conclusions; it is also a matter of attention by the researcher to his or her internal dialogue."

This quote is significant as my methodological inventiveness developed I became more confident in my own ideas but at the start of the process the Action Research methodology appeared to be the most apposite for this study. It became, however, part of a synthesised methodology over time as the research has emerged from my day to day activities and the reflections on my own and my teams' practice. Related to this are the ideas expressed by Whitehead where he states (2017: 391):

"I am thinking of ontological values that distinguish an individuals' way of being and making sense of the world. These are the values that an individual uses in judgments about what constitutes an improvement in practice. They also form the living standards of judgement an individual uses to evaluate their claims to be contributing to educational knowledge."

This clearly supports my own development through my Action Research journey and as a result of using a synthesised methodology I am able to articulate my own values and contributions more clearly. My thinking was also influenced by other methodologies including ethnography.

4.6: Ethnography: An introduction:

Reflecting on the use of Case Study and Action Research as part of the process when developing this study it can also be postulated that it can also fit within the ideas relating to ethnography, which I considered and influenced my developing understanding. As Hammersley and Atkinson point out (1995: 2):

"All social research is founded on the human capacity for participant observation."

As this study was looking at my own and others practice in action and was attempting to examine whether AfL made a difference in ordinary classrooms, this could be described as reflecting on the world of education in order to make sense of the events.

4.6.1: Ethnography as a methodology:

My use of synthesised methodologies and the development of my methodological inventiveness can be seen as being part of the tradition linked to ethnographical research as Hammersley and Atkinson describe (1992: 2):

"Ethnography bears a close resemblance to the routine ways in which people make sense of the world in everyday life."

This quote is significant because it epitomises the fact I was attempting to develop my understanding through my engagement with the Action Research framework of the study. This link between the Action Research cycle and ethnographical research is demonstrated in the following quotation from Woods which accurately reflects the methodology originally underpinning the experiments in this study (1986: 110):

"Analysis in ethnography goes on simultaneously with data collection. As one observes interviews, makes up field notes and the research diary, one does not simple 'record'. There is also reflection, which in turn informs subsequent data collection."

This quote accurately reflects the methodological approach taken at the start of the study. It was the conclusion drawn from the initial small-scale experiment which informed my subsequent ideas. I developed my reflexivity and my understanding in line

with my developing understanding of the data. The aspect of reflection was the most powerful tool in informing the design of subsequent data collection strategies, with the Action Research cycles moving on at each point of reflection. Cohen Manion and Morrison define this process as (2000: 30):

"As ideology is not mere theory but impacts directly on practice… Action Research as its name suggests, is about research that impacts on and focusses on practice."

As McNiff states this demonstrates a clear (1988: 15) *"debt in this tradition to anthropology and ethnography."* The way in which the project developed over the period of time of the study meant I needed to continually reconsider the methods I was using in the study and re-assess them in relation to the proposed methodologies, as a consequence I took into account the statement made in Denzin and Lincoln where they saw the (1994: 537) *"mix of qualitative and quantitative methods at the methodological level"* They also pointed out (1994: 537):

"Guba and Lincoln strongly contest the mixing of inquiry approaches at the paradigm level. They argue for example, that one cannot simultaneously adhere to the objectivist detachment of conventional science and the subjectivist involvement of intepretivism."

As a result of these points I began re-examining the type of research paradigm and hence the methodologies I could use and became aware that as qualitative research would be used there was no legitimate reason to use a purely quantitative paradigm. It was stimulating to note according to Hitchcock and Hughes that the (1994: 10):

"qualitative research tradition…provide an important alternative to the quantitative statistical experimental paradigm which has been the major influence in informing UK educational policy."

The qualitative research paradigm had already been postulated in relation to the education sector, although it did not seem to inform the implementation of the National Strategy nor in relation to the development of a coherent CPD programme.

It could be argued that the concept of critical ethnography is relevant here as Soltis reflects on the idea (1989):

"identifies descriptive qualitative research, qualitative educational evaluation research, and intervention qualitative research and finally critique (critical ethnography)."

These points could all be described as being relevant to the current study as it fits with the area of qualitative educational evaluation. It could be argued, however, that this research more accurately fits into the participant researcher style of ethnographic methodology. Participant research has been described by Woods that (1986: 33):

> *"in practice tends to be a combination of methods, or rather a style of research."*

This quote somewhat contradicts the idea that the participant observer is part of the ethnographical research tradition; however, the links between ethnographical research and this study are clear. There is a point made by Woods which again accurately reflects my experience as an emergent researcher in that (1986: 46):

> *"It is customary for ethnographers to 'flounder around' in the data for a while and there are frequent references to 'muddling through'."*

This statement is something I can clearly identify with, due to the amount and type of data which was generated by this study. The methodology chosen incorporated aspects of ethnographical research but these decisions were made as they were the most appropriate for the study, not simply because they were part of the ethnographical tradition.

The links between Action Research and Ethnography are clear with the interpretative tradition being described by McNiff as (1988: 15):

> *"essentially sociological…The interpretivist tradition focuses on comparing and attempting to resolve the discrepancies between the etic and the emic, the observers and the actors."*

This can be seen as clearly reflecting the ideas from the Action Research framework and links these ideas very closely together in respect of this study. Whitehead and McNiff state (2011: 47):

> *"Some researchers, however, still like to locate action research within a broad framework of critical theory, emphasizing its participatory nature to combat relations of power."*

This was not a consideration I felt was appropriate for this study, as I began with the small scale project, as although my role meant it might appears as if I was in a position of power. In relation to the implementation of the National Strategy this was not a consideration. It can be argued as Cohen Manion and Morrison do that (2000: 28):

"critical theory seeks to uncover the interests at work in particular situations and to interrogate the legitimacy of those intents...Its intention is transformative; to transform society and individuals to social democracy."

This study was not intentionally seeking transformation of society at the beginning of the research but could be said to be examining the ***transformation of practice*** both of myself and of my immediate colleagues, which could in time lead to a transformation of an aspect of society. These suggestions are supported in Hammersley and Atkinson's book where they state (3rd edition, 2007: 21):

"It is emphasised that the production of knowledge by researchers has consequences. At the very least, the publication of research findings can shape the climate in which political and practical decisions are made, and it may even directly stimulate particular sorts of action. In fact, it may change the character of the situations that were studied."

This in fact reflects one of the aims of this study; as I was looking to stimulate particular types of actions within the schools where I conducted the research. I was interested in attempting to influence the implementation of political ideas of the time and also to examine whether the political changes had significant impact on the practice of teachers. All of these considerations were part of the synthesised methodological framework I developed as part of this study. It could be argued that this thesis fits within the auto-ethnographic framework and Thayer-Bacon describes a situation which on reflection can be seen to have parallels to that which I found myself in (2003: 7):

"My project is one of analysis and critique, as well as redescription. What I offer is one pragmatist social feminist view, a relational perspective of knowing, embedded within a discussion of many other relational views. In Relational "(e)pistemologies," I seek to offer a feminist (e)pistemological theory that insists that knowers/subjects are fallible, that our criteria are corrigible (capable of being corrected), and that our standards are socially constructed, and thus continually in need of critique and reconstruction."

The considerations of Action Research, Case study and the grounding in ethnography all related to me developing my understanding as a researcher and were linked to the fact that I was a female researcher working within the constraints, as I saw them, of the academy.

4.7: Grounded Theory:

4.7.1: Grounded theory and research design:

Grounded theory as a significant concept provided a number of aspects which need to be considered in relation to the methodology adopted in this study as it too influenced my developing conceptual understanding.

The table below by Creswell (2005) in Ellis and Levy (2009) accurately summarises the ideas I had previously reviewed in relation to this study:

Table 2: My considerations from Creswell and Ellis and Levy.

Type of grounded theory design	Definition
Systematic design	"emphasises the use of data analysis steps of open, axial and selective coding, and the development of a logic paradigm or visual picture of the theory generated" (Creswell, 2005: 397)
Emerging design	"letting the theory emerge from the data rather than using specific pre-set categories (Creswell, 2005: .401)
Constructivist design	"focus on the meanings ascribed by participants in a study…more interested in the views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions and ideologies of individuals than in gathering facts and describing acts" (Creswell, 2005: 402)

If a 'best fit' type of design methodology were to be articulated by myself, it could be described as a cross between emerging design and constructivist design. I began by intending to produce my own notion of Grounded Theory but the results are more a synthesised methodology which developed over time. This is due to the fact that as the time taken for this study progressed; the theories about the concept of AfL and

its impact on the schools studied emerged. These various methodological theories were triangulated in a number of ways and on one level this links to constructivist design, as this study can be seen as examining the views of a variety of individuals, but there was an element of reconceptualization emerging from the findings. It could be argued that, at the start of the study there were no pre-formulated ideas about how the concept of AfL would be viewed. This is true both of myself and the different stakeholders and the understanding of the concepts only developed as the study progressed. The theories about the change and development in understanding of these ideas are based in my own experiences and it can be said, to quote directly from Glaser and Strauss that (1976: 6 (2009 printing)):

> *"Generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research."*

This quote is highly significant as it can be said to accurately describe the process I went through over the period of this study. The generation of my own methodological inventiveness was not originally a conscious decision but developed as a result of discussion and detailed reflection on the data as time progressed. As an emergent researcher, I was utilising these ideas in a more conscious way during the later stages of this research. This study can be seen as being grounded in various constructs including the wider context of the political situation, of which class in all its many forms plays an important part. Another aspect which proved to be significant was the notions of Feminist Research methodology.

4.8: Feminist Research methodology:

This concept was introduced late into this study and at the time I saw it as an imposition by the academy, which was not integral to the original research design. It did however force me to question whether the knowledge I created was self-generated but could be seen as part of the feminist theory. It can be argued that ideas generated by women are different and important so my philosophical position is informed by the issue of gender. As a woman I see the world in a different way and this was the reason supporting the inclusion of feminist theories.

In my view the question raised by this research in response to my own developing thinking is "Am I a feminist researcher or a researcher who happens to be female?"

My original opinion was that the latter case predominates. This question can be in part answered by looking at Robson (3rd ed. 2001: 225):

"research is founded upon presuppositions reflecting the values of the researcher, which may derive, for example, from their gender or ethnicity."

Significantly for this thesis there is a quote from Reinharz which points out that (1992: 7):

"a person does not have to identify her research methods as "feminist research methods" but rather had to identify herself as a feminist doing research. This latter criterion is more appropriate since researchers defining their methods as feminist are likely to do so only when the method is unusual."

Linked to these points in relation to this study is the fact that Clarke, Flewitt, Hammersley and Robb make the point that (2014: 3):

"feminist approaches insisted that research cannot but be political: that it is unavoidably implicated in the operation of the wider society".

This can be said to be true of this study and is also linked to the point made by Ramazanoglu and Holland who state (1999: 382):

"feminisms' contested knowledge of the diverse social lives has pushed feminists into developing a language of power that did not exist before, and has brought about political change as people make sense of their experience through naming and challenging power relations."

This can be linked to the methodology of this thesis as I have taken a political issue in the implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy linked to the implementation of CPD and made sense of it using my own experiences.

All of these points link to the concept of feminist ethics. Ramazanoglu and Holland point out that (1999: 106):

"feminist researchers have consistently highlighted the need to recognise that researchers and their subjects invariably stand in some type of social relationships that are never balanced or understood in the same way for all concerned."

As a consequence of my developing methodological inventiveness I have been able to articulate these concepts more clearly as time progresses.

Chapter 5: Methods

This chapter provides a description of the methods used in the study to gather and analyse the data. These are explained in broadly chronological order starting with the reflective journal which allowed me to explore my findings, develop my research design and to incorporate other methods into the generation of data. This was reflected in my use of observations and the work sampling undertaken in both School A and School B; from the semi structured interviews conducted in School A a further plan was designed which incorporated the same methods to establish the data and allow conclusions to be drawn. This was then implemented in School B.

5.1: Methods used to collect the data

The original small scale study used a combination of methods including the use of a reflective journal and observations. Other methods which were then developed included the use of observations, interviews both structured and semi-structured, surveys and peer questioning. The method used to analyse this data was grounded in the qualitative rather than a quantitative framework. Each of these methods will be reviewed in order to justify their use and to explain how they addressed the research questions and consequently led to the findings in this thesis.

5.2: Reflective journal

The journal was the basis on which I built my development as a researcher with the original small scale project being recorded as a naive attempt to summarise my findings as a starting point. Robson (2011: 270) suggests that the reflective journal can be *"viewed as an unstructured variant of a diary."* I would contend that this is an over simplification as the journal was used more systematically in order to support observations and in an attempt to triangulate material. This was then coded to find the common themes and link these to the original and subsequent research questions. This method proved to be useful throughout the duration of the research and allowed me to reflect on the data collected in a meaningful way.

5.3: Observations

Working together, the L.A. Consultant/Adviser and I began the initial review of implementation in School A by doing some observations and work sampling on objective

led lessons. As part of this cycle of Action Research I was looking to impact on the practice of others; as a result I wished to conduct an audit of the position School A was in. The document used to capture the data can be found in the appendices as Appendix 1: Audit of provision in School A. This audit focussed on the written information to be found in Schemes of Work produced by the different faculties. As can be seen from the information above I was using a mixed methods approach in order to identify the issues within the school and also to generate data as part of this study. Linked to this audit there were a number of lesson observations undertaken. These lesson observations were focussed on the AfL concepts I launched with the staff. From this review of the baseline for School A the results were shared with staff, as part of a training day.

In the second round of Action Research cycles there was a CPD package delivered to all the teaching staff in School B. The methods used to examine the impact of the work included lesson observations as well as the work scrutinies and student voice questionnaires.

The information was shared with the governors of the school via the Curriculum and Students Committee which comprised of teacher governors, lay governors and Local Authority appointed governors along with representatives of the student body. In this forum I presented a PowerPoint explaining the basic ideas relating to AfL; I also explained where the school was in relation to the implementation of the AfL strategy. The information available for this had been established by the use of learning walks around the school. These learning walks were designed as observations of parts of lessons and focussed on AfL strategies. The Learning Walk observation analysis gives a sample of this information and in this particular research cycle this activity took place on 3 occasions.

These learning walks were based again on a very simple proforma which can be filled in relatively quickly and can be used to establish a baseline; the findings can then be used to revisit the teacher again later. An example of the proforma, which can be described as a simple data collection tool can be in Appendix 9. This proforma developed out of the work from the reflective journal where I coded the original lesson observations and is an attempt to examine key aspects of the AfL strategy. It was created to allow both myself and others to quickly record whether the basic concepts of AfL were visible within a lesson and to make any additional comments if necessary. This

proforma was then amended after the first occasion of its use by removing the NO column as it was superfluous to requirements and a final refinement was the addition of a line at the bottom of the form which examined the use of additional adults.

Observations were a key method of data collection as they informed my understanding of how the research questions were being addressed but they could only work in conjunction with other methods which included work sampling,

5.4: Work sampling

The request in Appendix 2 was generated in conjunction with the Deputy Head teacher responsible for curriculum in School A as a result of reviewing the first Action Research cycle as a next step in this Action Research project. Using the evidence gathered from the previous cycle and the information in the reflective journal I selected the identified students in order to ensure an accurate sample of abilities found within the school was represented. The students' work also came from as many different teaching groups as possible; this was a conscious decision I made in order to sample the feedback generated by as many of the teaching staff across the school in as efficient a way as possible. It was not possible to collect samples from each individual member of staff due to the timing of the samples. By sampling the same students across the school I received a view of what they were experiencing in reality. This was an attempt on my part to develop my sampling techniques as my research experience developed and involved sampling approximately 4% of the Key Stage 3 students in the school. The sample represented each tutor group in Key Stage 3 and all areas of the curriculum.

Linked to this sampling of student work was the fact that the "milestone assessment" task had previously been requested from the faculties. These assessments had been examined by me to see if they met any of the formative criteria previously discussed. This time the work focused on students from Key Stage 3, although the requirements for "milestone assessments" were also present in the school at Key Stage 4. This method of work sampling generated useful data and in reflecting on this I was able to further refine the process in School B.

Within the school environment at School B a work scrutiny proforma was applied to a random sample of students across the school. This work sample proforma collected data in a very simplistic way in order to establish another baseline. The students selected

were from Key Stage 3 (Year 7 to 9) in order to get an overview of the position the school was in at the start of the cycle. From this exercise I then took the results and these were then summarised for use with the subject leaders in order to establish what the practice was across the school.

In School B there were similar processes undertaken in relation to the implementation of AfL as all members of the teaching staff included at least one aspect of AfL in their teaching on a regular basis. The school leadership decided to include an AfL target for all in the Performance Management (PM) process. During the PM process staff were asked to complete a simple audit evidenced in Appendix 11.

These audits and work samples allowed me to collect a wide variety of data in order to compare it to the information gathered from observations.

5.5: Semi structured interviews

The results of the work summarised in Chapter 6.2.3 include the semi-structured interviews conducted with students by the LA Consultant/Adviser. The results gathered as a result of this process, could be seen initially as part of the Case Study nature of this study, using ideas generated by Nisbet and Watt (1984:28):

"they catch unique features that might hold the key to understanding the situation and they provide insights into other, similar situations and cases, thereby assisting interpretation of other similar cases"

The semi-structured interviews moved on to examine the way in which students knew how well they were doing.

The use of the Local Authority Consultant/Adviser was a conscious choice in School A as I believed if I was asking the questions I would elicit a different response. The use of the LA Consultant/Adviser also validated the work in the eyes of members of staff.

This method proved useful in quality assuring the work I had completed in School A and allowed me to review the methods I had used. It also provided a useful starting point for the next set of actions in School B which utilised some of the same methods but also revealed the need for a method which would allow larger amounts of data to be captured effectively.

5.6: Questionnaires

As a result of reflecting on the methods chosen for data capture in School A a number of questionnaires were developed in School B as a method of capturing larger amounts of data in a relatively short space of time. One example of this was that ideas concerning oral feedback were reviewed at the end of the term; combined with ideas related to written feedback by means of a questionnaire applied to all year 7 teaching groups. In order to minimise the effect of different interpretations of the questionnaire I ensured that I was the only person involved in their distribution. The students were asked to fill in a series of questions based on the basic ideas to be found in the work of Black and Wiliam. Each student was asked the same questions relating to each subject they studied and the results tabulated by myself. The results of the questionnaire can be seen in Appendix 17.

The same questionnaire was applied to another year group this time Year 12 in Key Stage 5. The information to Curriculum and Students Committee utilised the results of the questionnaires in order to build up a picture of how well the AfL strategy was being implemented.

This method allowed for a large amount of data to be captured and collated easily. It also meant that there was less likelihood of external influences being brought to bear as I devised, applied and analysed all of the data. The results from this proved to be useful in deciding on the next steps for the development of the CPD programme within the context of School B.

5.7: Methods, a conclusion

The methods selected were utilised to ensure the data was triangulated using observations, work samples and semi structured interviews involving the same students wherever possible in order that the impact could be examined in School A. These methods were utilised and refined further in School B as my own understanding as a researcher developed. This was due to the fact that this was a project which was designed to improve my own and others' practice. The use of each method of data collection was examined to assess its impact in the first cycle of Action Research and then reviewed throughout the cycles with only the most appropriate being retained. The methods of data collection were refined in order to move from the original small scale

study to a wider understanding of the whole school position. The information produced by these methods were then analysed and can be seen in the findings from both School A and School B

Chapter 6: Examination and Explanation of Findings.

In this chapter I will examine the Action Research cycles in Schools A and B in order to establish the outcomes from the data. I will explain the significant findings from each stage of the Action Research journey and the implications this had for the next phase.

6.1: Introduction:

This chapter aims to examine and explain my findings as my key purpose is to articulate the thinking and the epistemology of AfL, and the extrapolation of the results in order to develop improved practice, this means examining the results from individual student to classroom level and then beyond into the wider learning community. There will be an explanation how the detailed examination of AfL developed from a small scale experiment in one classroom into this thesis and will examine the impact I had over the course of this research on my own and others professional practice.

One of the key points, which will be examined is the overall lack of consistency of implementation of the National Strategy across a number of schools and Local Authority areas and the implications this has for future practice.

I will also examine the attitude of the original researchers towards these bodies and the involvement of the original researchers in the Strategy implementation. One of the key aspects here is the examination of the concept of an AfL "toolkit" and whether it was possible to produce one or whether this was an oversimplification of the problem. Linked to this is an examination as to whether it is possible to develop toolkits for different purposes; for example, the toolkit I designed for developing oral feedback.

There will also be an assertion made regarding the concepts involved in the dissemination of the training and the longer term implications for the CPD of teachers. There will be an examination of the underpinning pedagogical assumptions for CPD, as well as the design of coherent CPD programmes and why the impact of these sessions was not necessarily consistent. Linked to these is an examination of the QA processes available both for the CPD of teachers and the implementation of the National Strategies within schools. Using findings from School B section 6.4 will also examine the impact of linking teachers' CPD to the Performance Management (PM), the appraisal system of

teachers. All of these issues are significant findings and will inform the suggestions for future research to be found in Chapter 7.11.

Throughout the work for this thesis I have developed my understanding of the nature of research and the way in which Action Research has impacted on my own practice and that of others. The subsequent sections, from Chapter 6.2 onwards, will examine my findings from the Action Research cycles and will also position this research in the local and national context.

6.2: Findings from School A:

6.2.1: Significant findings:

The major finding from the application of the first research cycle in School A was that there was no consistency in the application of the training on AfL across the Faculties within the school. I had become involved with the development of this work and as a teacher and Head of Faculty had made certain assumptions at the start of the process, which came from my own professional practice. This demonstrated my initial naivety as a researcher and educationalist and it was only on reflection and as part of the Action Research framework that my understanding developed during the cycles. The development of my understanding of the improve paradigm was key to the processes involved in this project.

The original research began as a result of the work which I undertook as a consequence of my expressed interest in assessment at School A. It is significant that the reason this work started was because of the understanding of the term 'assessment' by the senior managers at School A. Their understanding at the start of this process could almost be seen as the default setting of the behaviourist idea of teaching, learning and assessment. This can be described by the statement from Black and Wiliam where the idea of assessment is (1998):

"*stressing measurement against objectives.*"

Tam in Educational Technology and Society summarised the ideas relating to the constructivist approach, which links to the ideas inherent in AfL (2000: 1):

"*Resonant with the idea that the teacher is a guide instead of an expert, constructivism instruction has always been likened to an apprenticeship (e.g. Collins et al., 1991; Rogoff, 1990"*

This was clearly underpinning the theories of AfL; as the idea of a teacher as a guide who shared the learning journey with the student is fundamental to the concept. At the commencement of the work on this thesis I was sent as a representative of School A to the Local Authority training in order to develop the ideas linked to assessment; at that point the work on the National Strategies assumed the idea of assessment was that of testing, this could be seen as making an unwitting assumption that testing was a summative model. This paradigm of assessment has been reviewed throughout this thesis and the conclusions clarified in Chapter 7.7. There was originally no link made at this point in either my mind or that of the member of SLT who sent me on the original training to the concept of 'formative assessment' which was to provide the basis for the development of this thesis. It should be pointed out that this idea of a behaviourist 'default' towards teaching and learning systems and approaches will be examined in more detail Chapter 6.7.

6.2.2: Finding from School A: Initial experiment:

At the beginning of this process there was an attempt made to put in place a small-scale experiment which resulted in the students taking responsibility for their own development in other learning. This reflects the ideas expressed by Nehring, Laboy and Catarius (2010: 401):

> "*Reflective dialogue, which traces its origin to educational philosopher John Dewey, has re-emerged within the field of education.*"

The development of reflective dialogue with students was a significant local development and it was as a result of these conversations that my interest, in developing this examination of practice further, was piqued

I had believed in the idea of championing the work on AfL by Black and Wiliam in School A as described by Shirley Clarke (2005: 157). This idea of championing suggests that if the idea is taken on by one or more person or persons in the school it has a positive impact on others, which can be disseminated. I made the assumption that this modelling of good practice would have a major impact on the work across the school, which in turn would improve the outcomes for the students, consequently this would result in this being an instrument for social change. As part of this original Action

Research cycle this idea was reflected on after the work had been shared in a variety of ways and forums across the school.

6.2.3: Findings from School A: developing a structured approach:

Following this initial review I then put together a more structured approach to the work in School A. My findings showed that if I continued with a broad approach which could be looked at as "scatter gun" in nature then I would continue to see similar inconsistent results. At this point I had begun to reflect on my own naivety and consequently amended the process I undertook for the next phase of research. This development in my approach led to an attempt at identifying training needs within subjects and departments. A more structured approach was put in place and responses were required in a limited timeframe, which ensured that I could have feedback relatively quickly in order to measure the impact and move the work on again. This was more consistent with my developing understanding of research methodology. Robson points out that if a researcher (2011: 41):

> *"better understands the theoretical and disciplinary bases for her methodology, she is likely to use it in a more nuanced and flexible way and to feel personally confident in her practice rather than blindly following a recipe…to become reflexive and creative practitioner, capable of reinvention and evolution".*

This development of understanding allowed me to work in a more confident way as I was beginning to underpin the actions whilst developing a theoretical justification. As a consequence of reviewing the scope of the project with senior managers and the LA Consultant/ Adviser it was decided to focus on milestone assessment pieces during this phase. This was due to the fact that this gave concrete results drawn over a relatively short timeframe, it also allowed faculties to develop at their own rate. Although this approach linked well to the concept enshrined in AfL and could be seen as AfL for departments the results it generated had similar problems to previously. The use of milestone assessment pieces linked the concepts of formative and summative assessment together. The use of the same students as a sample was one of the results of my developing understanding; in the previous research cycle there had been a broad range of classes and students examined. This reflects the experience of Ritchie who states that (1995: 317):

"I began, with the help of colleagues, to clarify my existing understanding of my practice"

The findings, which I came to at this point, in conjunction with the schools SLT and the LA Consultant/Adviser, were shared in a variety of ways, initially the Head of Subject or Head of Faculty, was provided with the information relevant to their area of responsibility. I, the senior leadership of the school and the LA Consultant/Adviser had the overview of the whole school.

6.2.4: Findings from School A: Data:

The data, which was gathered in this cycle, did not show significant changes from previously although there was a conscious decision made at this point to include semi-structured interviews as a technique, in order to ensure that the observational data was triangulated. Denzin distinguished four types of triangulation and in this case I was most concerned with the first type (1988b):

"Data triangulation. The use of more than one method of data collection"

The semi structured interviews were used to establish the opinions of the students in order to ascertain their experiences following the implementation of the original work on AfL. This is reflected in the approach recommended by Cohen Manion and Morrison where they state (2000: 269):

"The research interview …for the specific purpose of obtaining researcher relevant information".

Linked to this is the description of the interviews as they point out that (2000: 270):

"Lincoln and Guba (1985: 269) suggest that the structured interview is useful when the researcher is aware of what she does not know and therefore is in a position to frame questions that will supply the knowledge required."

It was as a result of considered reflection on these points that the semi-structured interviews conducted by the LA Consultant/Adviser was decided upon as the research tool in this particular instance. I had consciously decided not to conduct the interviews myself as I believed that given my status in the school and the fact that I had taught all the students it could influence what they had to say. This could be seen to be in direct conflict with the work of Hammersley and Atkinson who state (1995: 18):

"Rather than engaging in futile attempts to eliminate the effects of the researcher completely, we should set about understanding them"

The choice of the LA Consultant/ Adviser was, however, also a conscious one as she had experience of conducting these types of interviews across a variety of schools and was able to use a standardised set of questions which we devised in advance to elicit the information we required. As part of the interviews there were also enough open-ended questions to elicit the information we didn't know that we needed to know, which again reflected the academic framework as Lincoln and Guba again point out in Cohen Manion and Morrison (2000: 270):

"the unstructured interview is useful when the researcher is not aware of what she does not know and therefore relies on the respondents tell her."

We made the decision that we knew some of the information we wished to elicit and that there might be information which emerged as a result of these interviews so we continued with the semi-structured approach. The conclusions from these interviews supported the view that there was still a varied range of experiences for students within the school and there was even a range of experiences within subjects in relation to the implementation of the AfL Strategy.

To re-iterate; the findings were described by the LA Consultant/ Adviser in her feedback as follows:

"The evidence gathered shows that a number of teachers are using a range of AfL strategies effectively to support learning and progression and to raise standards. The gap between the best and weakest practice is wide and strategies must be put in place to support and monitor AfL in these identified weak areas."

One aspect of developing the use of AfL techniques was focussed on quality feedback to students which also saw an impact on students; they had a better idea of learning targets at the end of the cycle. There was also a noticeable increase in the number of lessons where teachers shared learning objectives; this was reviewed by myself and the subject leaders. This was significant as the understanding of the reasons for learning also links to the concept of social justice and provides evidence of the type of impact on teaching and learning I was looking to achieve as part of this work.

This notion of focussing the learning was complemented because the learning objectives were skills rather than content based. The notion of formative assessment

was beginning to be built into schemes of work as a result of the work I undertook. This work was fundamental to the development of the notion of a learning journey for students in School A.

Students were not the only stakeholders and although there were key messages leaflets provided with the Key Stage 3 Strategy there was also an attempt at dissemination of these ideas to parents. The information provided to parents by me had clarified the experiences of the students, although the parents were unfamiliar with the terminology. In School A the Governors were also far better informed in relation to the ideas related to teaching and learning as a result of the work on AfL, They are an important group to work with as they had capacity to develop the concept of social change.

The work on AfL had an impact at Key Stage 4 although it had taken longer to embed than at Key Stage 3. The work was considered to be less developed at Key Stage 5, as can be seen in the review in Appendix 6, although there were a variety of other issues relating to teaching and learning in Key Stage 5, which affected the implementation of AfL. This review of the impact of my first phases of Action Research was collected via a video of a semi-structured interview conducted by myself with the deputy head responsible for the Key Stage 3 curriculum at the end of the Action Research cycles in School A. He summarised the impact that I had had and stated that I was responsible for establishing the work on self and peer assessment and moving students on within the Faculty I was leading at the time. This work was viewed by the SLT as developing an area of good practice, which was then transferred to other Faculties.

6.3: Findings from School B:

6.3.1: Findings from audit data:

Before I joined School B members of the SLT had already implemented some of the ideas I had developed as part of the AfL Strategy in School A, so it could be suggested that in this sense the National Strategy was being implemented in similar ways across a number of schools. This did not initially surprise me as the UK government had disseminated training materials in the same format to all schools. I made the assumption

that this would be the case although there had been no coherent development of the CPD strategy for implementing these ideas.

My first action in this cycle was to audit the departments and subjects in School B by using the grids produced by the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA) on behalf of the government. The grids were developed as an assessment tool by Graham Herbert and the CIEA who when I questioned him as part of this thesis responded as follows:

"As Deputy Head of the CIEA I sit on the development board of the AfL programme alongside representatives from DfE, the National Strategies (NS), and QCDA. The original quality standards tool had been developed by the NS as part of their remit to roll out the quality standards tool nationally." (Private Communication)

These grids were used as a tool to differentiate what was required in terms of CPD training for Faculties in School B. This significant decision had been reached as a result of reflecting on the work in School A.

Following on from this original audit as a part of this Action Research cycle, a number of different ideas were also developed and implemented; these included the employment of various publications in School B, which were given a corporate badged identity. These ideas were adopted with the use of a visual logo in order to link the concept of AfL in the minds of both teachers and students. This idea of sharing the vision is something, which has been adopted very successfully before my arrival by School B. The publications included a series of posters, which contained various key terms from the AfL repertoire. These key terms can be found in a variety of places including from Leahy, Lyon, Thompson and Wiliam in Educational Leadership where they include the ideas below (2005: 8):

"Learning Intentions

• Share Rubrics

• WALT and WILF

• Thirty Second Share And many more."

The mnemonics are a useful tool and the research by Higbee (1977: 1) on memory and how it works shows that the use of mnemonics raised student awareness,

although again its importance is difficult to assess in isolation. These can be seen as Appendix 26.

I took a conscious decision in School B to utilise as many different people from as many different faculties as possible in order to disseminate the key messages about AfL. This reflects the point made by Senge in that (1990: 9):

"it's the capacity to hold a shared picture of the future we seek to create"

6.3.2: Initial findings:

The findings from the initial sampling of students at School B showed a similar pattern to those of School A as I left; there was a lack of consistency within and across subjects and faculties in relation to the implementation of AfL. At this point there had been discussion around the fact that teachers were inundated with initiatives nationally, locally and school based.

6.3.3: Findings from schools geographically close to School B:

I also gathered evidence to support the fact that there was a lack of consistency across a number of schools from the network meetings held on the subject of AfL facilitated by the Local Authority. The following quote made by the representative of School C again shows the willingness of some staff to engage with the process, but the lack of consistency was apparent:

"Measures indicate the quality of teaching and learning is improving but there is a raft of Teaching and Learning initiatives that inhibit progress. The new system had caused people to talk informally about things with peers."

Throughout the period of this research concurrent to the developmental work on AfL other initiatives were being undertaken as part of the CPD process; with faculties taking ownership of the ideas generated; this was a deliberate policy supported by Cordingley, Bell and Rundell referred to previously who maintained that (2003: 6):

"Evidence from observations, interviews, questionnaires or teacher diaries indicated that participation in the collaborative CPD programmes was linked to enhanced teacher confidence."

6.3.4: Findings from the Action Research cycle in School B:

As a reflective practitioner one of the findings I can draw from this second cycle is that the role I play has had an impact not only on my own individual practice but that of others. In School B I was a member of the Senior Leadership Team, as such I was able to implement the ideas relating to AfL in a way which was not possible in School A. In School A my role was as a Head of Faculty and as such I was able to implement the ideas relating to AfL most effectively across the subjects within my own faculty in the way previously described by the Deputy Head in School A.

Each of the stages in this Action Research journey proved to be one of a series of reflections which then allowed the project to progress.

In contrast to this, however, is the fact that this research did not take place in a vacuum and consequently the impact of the changing political situation and the implementation of the National Strategies needs to be considered, as it was highly significant.

6.4: Findings relating to Continued Professional Development; its implementation and impact:

One of the most significant finding in this thesis can be drawn from the various Action Research cycles and is the importance of the link between high quality CPD and the development of the implementation of AfL. As has been seen previously the original research developed by Black and Wiliam was based on the premise that there needed to be (1998: 15) *"sustained programmes of professional development and support"*. This premise could be seen as what the National Strategy was developed for, but on reflection this did not happen owing to the poor design and implementation of the training and dissemination of the CPD provided. The reflections from Paul Black on this subject can be seen as Appendix 27 as he had a very clear view on the issue of the one-day training and the use of the ring binder/CD-ROM.

The original researchers wanted to develop (1999: 12):

"Classroom assessments and their role in teaching and learning (which) should be given greater prominence in initial teacher training and continued professional development"

They saw that to follow on from their original research *Inside the black box* there should be training which was applied (1998: 15-16):

"relatively slowly, and through sustained programmes of professional development and support" "the programme development cannot start with an extensive programme of training for all."

These recommendations were not taken into account when the National Strategies were developed, as in practice what happened was that the roll out was via the Local Authority Advisers who were provided with training materials and who then provided the information to each school under the Local Authority control. The development did not take into account the original researchers' point of view; the idea of moving slowly and through the sustained programme, as the Local Authority moved at the same speed for all schools despite the position the school was in relative to the National Strategy implementation.

One point on which it is interesting to speculate is whether the outcome would have been different if the CPD in this case had been contracted to the university sector as part of a sustained and accredited programme. This idea of utilising the Higher Education Sector would have possibly increased the status of the training but in fact might still have had a similar result due to resistance to change amongst teaching staff.

The AfL training materials provided by the DfES quoted the work of Black and Wiliam and indeed suggested the idea of a type of Action Research projects to develop the implementation. These ideas postulated in the training materials need to be compared to the Teacher Development Agency (TDA)'s Postgraduate Professional Development (PPD) programme. The report on this provision in from CUREE stated in 2007:

"By aligning course content and delivery to school and teacher priorities, and by tailoring assessment around these priorities, PPD can become less of an "add on" and more relevant to practitioners' everyday needs."

In contrast to the ideal described above the suggested Action Research projects relating to AfL were only really undertaken by interested parties (for example, this thesis) and there was no official provision made across the range of schools suggested in the original literature. There were reviews of the impact, notably the eight Schools Project, which did review the provision and the KMOFA Project. This was the

engagement project led by Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam, which worked with 48 teachers and resulted in the literature reviewed elsewhere. There is a plea made in the final lines of the original research which requested that (1998: 19):

> "national policy will grasp this opportunity and give a lead in this direction."

The plea was realised, but not in the way the original researchers intended.

6.5: Findings related to Quality Assurance procedures:

6.5.1: Findings about QA processes in School B:

This section will look at the QA procedures and the use of CPD in developing the work of AfL in School B.   As I stated previously the accepted paradigm, at the start of this research, of CPD in schools can be described as more of a passive one, in that CPD tended to be "done" to teachers. In this context teachers had various ideas delivered to them either on external courses or as part of Professional Development (PD) days; for most teachers the idea of teachers as Action Researchers would not have been considered. As far as I am concerned the idea of Action Research has deep underlying significance as I have taken this concept and developed my own research as part of my own CPD linked to the concept of social justice. This reflects the ideas described in Coombs and Smith where they state that (2003):

> "this pedagogical concept of personal inquiry represents the philosophical assumption and processes of how meaningful Action Research professional development projects can lead to valid professional learning impact in the workplace.., i.e. a social manifesto"

The use of a coherent CPD policy was seen by the original researchers as crucial for the development of AfL and Dylan Wiliam was clear on this point in the private correspondence (see Appendix 27). The book 'Assessment for Learning: Putting it into Practice' explained that the need for coherent differentiated CPD; this was crucial as 'One size fits all' was not acceptable and there needed to be a sustainable strategy. This concept of sustainability can be linked to the Jack Whitehead and Jean McNiff's living educational theory as they state (2006: 33):

> "Many professional development programmes including programmes in education, aim to provide access to increased participation or influence in work concerns, so they focus on knowledge of what works and how to make it work."

These improvements can be achieved through individual teacher led Action Research projects such as this one. This project can be seen to be part of curriculum development and change, which takes place as a result of on the job training. This point can be considered in light of the work in Gardner and Coombs who point out that (2010: 132):

"Action researchers benefit from critical thinking scaffolds…the use of critical thinking scaffolds applied to meaningful work based CPD is the future approach for work-based research"

In respect to this we need to examine School B, as a clear link was made between CPD, PM and the training on AfL as I was able to scaffold the ideas for staff. This contrasted to the methodology suggested by the DfES in the National Strategies where it states that (0443-2004):

"As the units are designed to be used by schools selectively…the following notes are intended to help senior leaders map their way."

This method of dissemination was more proscriptive than the opportunities I was given using the critical thinking scaffolds. In School B the developments in CPD practice began with the work I did on the PM paperwork. Leading on from this, members of the leadership team developed the so-called 'Learning Hubs' model. In this model the teachers were required to undertake a number of training sessions, most of which were based on ideas relating to AfL, for example, questioning to invoke feedback. The whole teaching staff, no matter their status, were required to choose four sessions which were delivered by other members of staff. One example of this training is the slide below (Figure 12) which was created for one of these sessions.
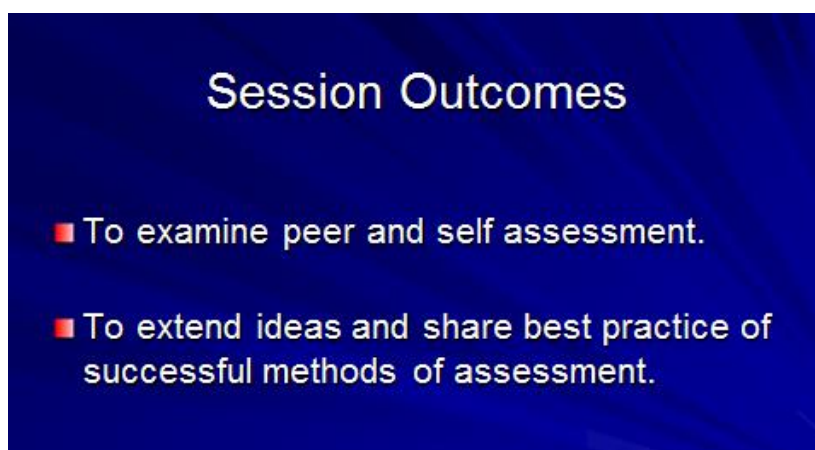
Figure 12: Example of slide from "learning hub" at School B.

This training session can be seen as the outcome of my work, but this is an example of where other staff have taken on the ideas and applied them to their own practice. This was then disseminated to a number of other staff who volunteered to take this particular session. The suggestions in Figure 13 below were made by the members of staff delivering this learning hub, which was a testament to my work on AfL.
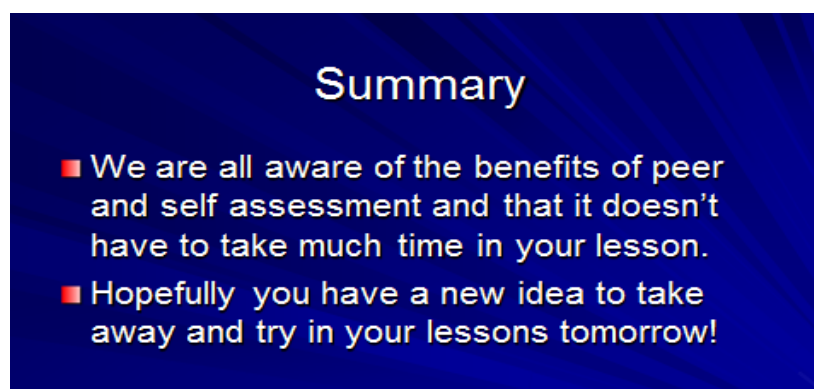
Figure 13: Second example of slide from "learning hub" at School B.

There is, however, a caveat to this model of learning hubs in that although teachers were opting in to these sessions, they were in some senses volunteering for the training. However, as everyone had to take part in a minimum number of sessions it could be questioned as to whether the sessions were genuinely changing 'hearts and minds'. At the outset of this model there was no systematic examination of the impact of each individual session and although generalisations within the school situation are possible, care needs to be taken as the impact over time appeared to be significant, although the use of learning hubs was only one development of many. Linked to the development of the learning hubs and the requirements of PM was an overall examination of teaching and learning across the school.

The learning hubs were also linked to a programme where teachers working at the satisfactory grade in the Ofsted framework at the time were identified and given extra support and training in order to move them to good. During the period of this study, for most teachers being graded satisfactory, as the category was described, was felt to be unacceptable. Consequently the attempts of School B to develop the teaching, of all staff, from satisfactory to good was a priority in the School Improvement and

Development Plan (SIDP). In this case the work I was doing as part of these Action Research cycles showed the local situation mirroring what was happening nationally.

6.5.2: Findings about research on quality assurance in education:

Although good practice has been shared across School B, this is not reviewed by outside researchers and experts in the field of education. This is only rarely done by teacher researchers and although there is no empirical evidence to support this, anecdotally, my experience is not reflected across many schools. It is quite difficult to establish what QA there is in educational research as most of the writing currently available relating to QA refers to Higher Education (HE). This writing can be considered to be on a different subject to secondary education as HE is post compulsory and funded in a different way. The references from HE usually originate in universities such as Manchester who have developed their own QA policies for their courses, but this methodology has not been adopted by schools or LAs. These key constraints will mean that even if there are comparable ideas relating to QA between HE and secondary schools then it must be considered with care.

6.6: Reflection on Action Research in School B:

I believe that this project has had a valid learning impact on my own professional practice, as at the start of this project I did not fully understand the rationale behind Action Research. The "I" had to be placed at the centre of this project and it was due to this that my practice has been informed and I have enhanced my understanding of my own motivation. As a consequence of this enhanced understanding my knowledge of the impact my work has had on those around me also grew.

6.7: Findings relating to the concepts linked to terminology:

This section must be considered as a key one in terms of findings as the confusion over the terminology is critical to the misunderstandings, which related to both the National Strategy and some of the problems relating to its implementation.

The term that is most in question and can be considered to be most contentious is the one developed by the original researchers, who described the idea as "Assessment for Learning". This term has developed widespread currency amongst the educational

establishment but bears detailed examination, as well as consideration of what was intended by the original researchers.

The word 'assessment' can be defined in a variety of ways so in order to examine the conclusions reached as a result of this study it is imperative that I begin by looking at 'assessment'. It could be postulated that, for most people, the ideas linked to the concept of assessment have what could be described as a default setting. The majority of people when they hear the word "assessment" automatically link it to the idea of testing and for practitioners engaged in the field of education the concept of assessment is usually equated with high stakes summative testing, the outcomes of which can be used to judge schools and their performance.

There is a school of thought which equates these ideas to behaviourist thinking, which could suggest that at the start of the process linked to the National Strategies educationalists have a behaviourist default setting, an idea suggested by Swaffield who said that (2009: 5):

> *"James (2008) adapts Chris Watkins' (2003) three views of learning and discusses the implications for assessment of a behaviourist view, a cognitive constructivist view, and a socio-cultural view of learning"*

If we consider this idea of the term 'assessment' having a behaviourist type default setting for the majority of the educational establishment it leads on to the question as to why the original researchers used the term "Assessment for Learning" to describe this concept. Following this thinking through it could be argued that the original researchers were working from a behaviourist perspective, as the terminology they used for their original publications refer to the 'black box', which again has behaviourist connotations; as described previously.

There are processes in schools which appear to reflect the concept of AfL but as Gadsby explains (2012: 1):

> *"If we were to question 100 randomly selected teachers, all of them would at least have heard of Assessment for Learning or AfL. Furthermore I would bet that the vast majority would be happily using several to the more common AfL strategies such as traffic lighting or peer assessment…many well intentioned teachers are engaging with the letter of AfL rather than the spirit of it."*

6.8: Findings about the epistemology of AfL:

The teaching profession has utilised certain epistemological perspectives for over a century and the concept of teacher quality could be said to reflect a distorted reality, as the use of summative systems is embedded at the highest level. As a consequence of this change to the concept of 'assessment' requires a major cultural shift in any society, let alone the teaching profession. This change would also have to be included in the summaries of Student Achievement used by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in their Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which is reported by the media and utilised by each government in turn to track the effectiveness of the education system.

It can be argued that this concept is clearly linked to the discussions which have taken place in regard to terminology. This is due to the fact there has been initially a paradigm shift from the epistemological assumptions rooted in what is effectively 'summative testing' approaches to something new that redefines assessment systems; in my own practice this has been a move towards new types of measurement that underpins 'formative testing' systems.

6.9: Findings relating to the 'improve' paradigm:

This research was based upon an Action Research model and as such can be said to also incorporate the 'improve' rather than the 'prove' paradigm. At the start of this research, although I had previously produced work using historical methodology I did not clearly articulate my own research paradigms and it was not until the research was underway that I clearly set out my aims. This was due to my understanding as an emergent researcher, linked to my own social evolution as also understood by Whitehead's Living Educational theory, which led to my synthesised research methodology and hence the development of my own epistemology. These concepts were linked to personal and professional change as evidenced in Whitehead and McNiff (2006) and the fact that my aims were clarified in my own mind by utilising peer discussion.

6.10: Findings about the development and impact of the AfL toolkit:

If the term 'AfL toolkit' is typed into a search engine there are a number of results which occur, most of which give the description of AfL and some activities linked to each

aspect. This does not give the support or necessarily deepen the understanding of the person using the toolkit, which I believe is the most important aspect of the 'toolkit' concept. It is this finding which again makes a significant contribution to the development of understanding relating both to my own practice and to the wider academic community.

There are a number of models relating to toolkits but for teachers the most common design are a series of prompts. This can be seen in PowerPoint presentations available to share on forums like those of the TES resources which were available from 2009 onwards. This can be found at: https://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/Assessment-For-Learning-Toolkit-6020165/

There is also a publication called the Assessment for Learning toolkit by Chris Quigley which was created in 2004 and accessed by me in 2008. Although the strategies in Chris Quigley's work are the same as those of the original researchers he appears to directly relate these to AfL in primary schools; which does not directly relate to the KS3 Strategy.

One aim of this research was to attempt to develop an AfL toolkit and so there is an example of the proforma I developed in School B (Appendix 21: AfL lesson observation proforma/ toolkit School B). This observation proforma was not developed in isolation but came about in response to the fact that SLT and other members of staff who did lesson observations needed a quick check to establish the extent of the use of AfL in lessons. This proforma cannot be seen as a full AfL toolkit as it needs to be more than a simple tick list and this proforma needs to be used in conjunction with the other training techniques. This is borne out by the work by the ARG on its review into Assessment in Schools where it states that (2010: 22):

"there is evidence of a "tick-box culture", in which assessment information can be seen as being mainly concerned with meeting a bureaucratic need to provide evidence of learning to school managers and others…the need to develop effective formative assessment/assessment for learning without it becoming overly bureaucratic is therefore a key, but not insurmountable, challenge."

The use of AfL techniques in School B has been developed over a period of time and using a variety of training activities including the proforma.

The conclusions drawn from the Action Research cycles and the implications for future practice will be examined in the subsequent Chapter.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Implications for further research:

In this chapter I will present the conclusions from my findings during the Action Research cycles in both Schools A and B. This will focus on the key aspects of the findings from the data and the development of my own understanding in relation to Action Research. This chapter will also discuss the findings relating to other issues including those concerning Continued Professional Development. The key findings about the issues surrounding terminology will be examined in depth as will the epistemology of Assessment for Learning. Linked to this will be conclusions relating to the improve paradigm. The development and viability of an AfL toolkit will be discussed and a series of recommendations will be produced. The overall conclusions from this thesis will be examined in depth with recommendations for future research.

7.1: Introduction:

This chapter will present the conclusions from the work completed for this thesis and the new ideas postulated as a result of this work. This reflects the ideas described by McNiff and Whitehead where (2011: 13):

> *"Epistemology is to do with how we understand knowledge, and how we come to acquire and create knowledge"*

One set of the key findings of this thesis reviewed in the conclusions section are the concepts linked to common usage terminology; most particularly the concept invoked by the term "assessment", an epistemological assumption which is central to the findings of this project and the contribution to knowledge demonstrated by this thesis, which resulted from the examination of the original research questions.

The study also found that the methodology of CPD did not reflect the ideas implemented in classrooms. This is highly significant because not only was the original CPD approach to the dissemination of the AfL Strategy inappropriate, it utilised an approach which was at variance with the whole concept of AfL. A key postulate might be; that for every educational policy reform in real-life situations there needs to be planned a sympathetic, systematic and commensurate programme of CPD that seeks both ownership as well as leverage of the educational policy being proffered to the profession.

This chapter will begin by summarising the conclusions generated from the Action Research cycles, which developed in response to the later research questions and were epitomised by the work undertaken in Schools A and B.

7.2: Conclusions from School A:

7.2.1: Initial experiment:

Following the initial experiment, which led to the development of the original research questions a number of conclusions were drawn in that the responses; which were mostly oral; were noteworthy. One example was that one particular pupil requested that his coursework be returned in order to apply what he had learned from the exam feedback. I was convinced by the responses to this original limited experiment of the usefulness of the developments and was inspired to continue the research. I was not only conducting a reflective dialogue with the students but also was involved in peer to peer discussions, as my line manager was undertaking an educational research thesis in an unrelated field. This process echoes the comment made by Ritchie in his work from the University of Bath where he states that (1995: 306):

"I analysed my learning during action research cycles and used this analysis in a formative way to plan subsequent sessions."

My own learning was being developed throughout this process and consequently I began to develop my own epistemological and ontological thinking relating to this living experience. Such educational discoveries reflect the thinking of Whitehead and McNiff where they maintain that (2006: 44):

"at the heart of the living educational theories that practitioners generate as they study their practice and engage with questions of the kind "How do I improve what I am doing?" they identify the values that inform their work and find ways of realizing them. Their ontological and epistemological values are to do with the freedom of all to come to know their own ways and exercise their choices responsibly; their methodological values are to discipline their enquiries to show the systematic and rigorous research processes involved in masking their claims that they have realized their values and their social purposes are to do with developing ethical educational cultures."

Although lengthy this quote is key to my development as a researcher as it accurately summarises how I approached my engagement with this project.

7.2.2: Original Action Research cycle:

In this conclusions section it is crucial to note that my own understanding of the Action Research cycles are central to the design of this research approach and that the findings from the work at School A were significant in informing the research which took place subsequently in School B. The living theory of action research was at the heart of the approach adopted for this thesis and the findings from this examination of practice and the rationale behind them is grounded in Action Research thinking.

The first conclusion, which could be drawn, was that despite all the efforts made in establishing AfL the impact was not consistent. This conclusion can be drawn in answer to the original research question on how AfL was implemented within and across faculties.

The department I was leading at the time had embraced the ideas, owing to the impact I had as a leader but even here the impact was not consistent over all the subjects. Moving out from my own faculty there were significant differences in the uptake of the ideas between different departments and faculties. Some subjects had clear and unambiguous learning objectives, whilst other subjects either failed to provide evidence or there were no learning objectives available. It could be argued that this was a very early point in the development of the work and therefore was not an unexpected result, given that not everyone would embrace the ideas with the same enthusiasm as I exhibited. I was aware that I wished to make a change but as an emergent researcher it was apparent in my data however I was unable to clearly articulate the issues this raised. I was also unable to clearly articulate this in relation to the impact on the practice of others.

At the time and as a result of this reflection on the first attempts at intervention plus my reflection on the concept of Action Research I was able to identify with the quote from Carr and Kemmis where they state that (1986: 185):

> *"they (the researchers) are inclined to see the development of theory or understanding as a by-product of the improvement of real situation rather than applications as a by-product of advances in 'pure' theory"*

It is only as my understanding of the nature of research developed was I able to reflect more critically on my actions and develop my own living methodology.

7.2.3: Developing a structured approach:

In Chapter 6.2.3 I explained the findings from the more structured approach taken in School A and the conclusion which can be drawn from this is that I had begun to see this concept as AfL for all. This is significant, as by applying the idea of AfL and establishing a starting point on a learning journey then moving on from this a wide variety of issues can be addressed. This links to the original aims of the study and also to the concept of Action Research.

The fact that once again the results did not show a significant improvement from previous ones was due to my assumption that all departments would adopt the ideas and develop them, which shows that I although I had made progress in my understanding I was still conceptually naive. Once again the most noticeable conclusion which could be drawn, both at the time and subsequently, was that there was still no consistency across the different faculties and departments.

7.2.4: Conclusions from data:

There are a number of conclusions, which can be drawn from the data, the first of which is that despite all the work I had undertaken, the impact was still not consistent either across subjects or across School A. Once this was established the reasons for the lack of consistency was examined.

As a result of peer discussion and following discussions with my supervisor the idea that lack of consistency could be related to a poor QA process was postulated. This was a significant learning point and one of the key conclusions from this study is that there is a requirement for good QA processes to be embedded in a school's practice in order to ensure consistency and rigour. This reflects the modified questions which were added later in the study.

Linked to this was the need to develop a high quality CPD programme, the impact of which will subsequently be discussed in Chapter 7.5. These two processes of QA and CPD need to work hand in hand in order to ensure correct identification and tackling of the needs for training exhibited by teachers. This concept of developing QA and CPD is highly significant in terms of this study and is examined in more depth Chapter 6.4 and

Chapter 7.6 as a result of the Action Research cycles conducted in School B and the conclusions, which can be drawn from them.

7.2.5: Conclusions about student outcomes:

In School A despite all the efforts at improving the quality of student outcomes the impact of the work I had initiated on AfL was variable. It could be argued the work I did with the Faculty I was leading at the time had probably the greatest impact on the experience the students received which was evidenced in the interviews, as well as from the reviews of lesson observations and the Schemes of Work provided. This links to my own developing understanding of the concept of social justice as I was aiming to improve my own and others practice. It was also a result of examining in detail the original research questions and reflecting on the Action Research nature of the study.

7.2.6: Conclusions concerning the National Picture:

There was some more investment into the ideas relating to AfL postulated in the National Strategies as the DfES in 2007 produced a report on the Eight Schools project. (DFES 05 2007 Ref no. 00067-2007BKT-EN.) This report was badged as the results of an Action Research project built on the practice to be found in eight schools across a variety of Local Authorities. My small scale research project has come to similar conclusions to those which can be drawn from the DFES Eight Schools project (DFES 05 2007 00067-2007BKT-EN). The project report stated that:

> *"The initial audit of AfL … identified more issues relating to teaching than learning. All eight schools decided to maintain a focus on the development of objective led lessons with seven of the eight schools also working on additional aspects of AfL which included peer and self-assessment, and formative written and oral feedback."*

This very much reflected what I was hoping to achieve in School A at the beginning of the research project and validated my approach.

> *"However, it quickly emerged, through pupil interviews and lesson reviews…that nearly all the schools had: over-estimated the security of objective led lessons across the whole school, believing that the pockets of good practice were representative of the whole; not recognised the need for objective led lessons as*

the basis for developing other aspects of AfL, for example written feedback and peer assessment."

Once again this was an accurate reflection of how I was attempting to develop the work at School A and the issues I faced, although my research had been conducted independently as an emergent researcher.

7.2.7: A Summary of Conclusions from School A:

The overall conclusions drawn here mostly refer to a lack of consistency in the impact of the work on AfL. This resulted from a naivety in my original thinking; consequently these findings were then reflected on in the next cycle of Action Research, which I began, in a new role, as a member of the Senior Leadership Team in School B. There is an issue here due to the nature of the role as I had to distinguish between my role as a manager and as a researcher.

One of the results of the implementation of the Action Research Cycle was that the organisation and structure of the work undertaken at School B developed more systematically as a result my increased reflexivity following on from the work previously conducted in School A and that the research questions were further refined and reflected upon.

7.3: Conclusions from School B:

7.3.1: Data:

One concept which I was striving for during my initial actions in School B, although without clearly articulating it was the idea of AfL for departments, which can be seen as a key postulate arising from this research. What is meant by this term is that by using the self-assessment tool departments could look at where they were in relation to AfL, what they needed to do to improve and the steps they needed to take to get there. This approach, which mirrors the AfL journey of students, moves away from the 'one size fits all' concept and looks at individualised CPD. This linking of AfL, CPD and the implementation of QA systems is one of the additions to knowledge demonstrated by my findings for this thesis.

The conclusions that can be drawn from the badging the identity of the work on AfL with a corporate logo thus far are tenuous but the idea of badging the work did provide a visual coherence at least for stakeholders, although the impact of this was not

assessed separately. This concept related to sharing the vision could provide the data for further research, as there is mileage in the idea that someone could look at the impact this has had in relation to improving performance.

A further conclusion which can be drawn at this point was that when staff experienced the same frustrations as students they were more likely to implement the ideas shared with them, this is supported by McNiff and Whitehead as they point out (2011: 37):

"knowledge creation is a collaborative process."

This can be seen in the responses to the work in Appendix 8: Feedback 1, where the concepts of AfL were shared by a GTP student in the whole staff training session and it was clear that when knowledge was shared new knowledge was created. This was a significant learning point and my reflections on the Action Research process here was important for my development as a researcher. This also answers the research questions linked to the concept of CPD which had developed from the original ideas found in Chapter 1.1.1

Reflecting on the previous Action Research cycles another conclusion from School A and implemented in School B was that it was important that the ideas relating to AfL were disseminated by a wide variety of staff. I ensured that I engaged fully with this idea as although I had championed the ideas in School A further research would have been needed to see if my involvement in all the CPD was a limiting factor.

7.3.2: Conclusions from Action Research cycle:

One of the conclusions to be drawn from all of this evidence as part of this Action Research cycle was that there was a need to ensure consistency of application in order for the work to develop further. In order to ensure this happened School B took the step of incorporating the work on AfL into the Performance Management (PM) system for teachers. This linking of PM and AfL took the format that every member of the teaching staff had to include at least one AfL target into their PM each year. In order to ensure consistency and quality targets were being set, in my role as Assistant Principal I wrote a set of targets, which were then issued as part of the PM paperwork each year. Although this was part of my school role there was an overlap between this and my involvement with this Action Research project. The PM system includes at least 2 lesson

observations in each academic year, which gave line managers the ability to check on the teachers' progress towards their targets at regular intervals. One significant point is that this raising of the status of the work on AfL has contributed to its development in School B although as part of the improve paradigm there was no control system to check the progress against.

7.3.3: Review of AfL Implementation from Action Research cycle:

Significantly the review conducted as part of the Action Research cycle produced the following conclusions that the learning objectives were being shared in a format most students understood in the majority of subjects. However, despite the fact that this had been a basic expectation of AfL at this point not all staff in all subjects were doing this; there were a number of the practical subjects where the learning objectives were not being shared at all. Some subjects which rely on written feedback were not informing students of where they were starting from and going to. All this feedback shows there was still a lack of basic understanding of the key principles of AfL, by the staff, despite all the work that had already been undertaken. The AfL suggestions relating to comment based marking were less widely followed across the range of subjects, than those relating to the sharing lesson objectives. There were few opportunities apparently being given to students in order improve their work in the light of the comments fed back, an aspect of AfL which is crucial to the concept of progress. Students were more confident in knowing what level they were at, what level they were aiming for and how they could improve, School B compared favourably to School A at this point. This understanding was apparently linked to the school based systems; School B had a target setting system which recorded the levels students were working at, plus target levels which were put into the students' personal organiser on a termly basis. Linked to this policy were a set of target stickers which were available to all faculties in a variety of formats, in most cases these stickers were put on the front of exercise books, so students could refer to them on a regular basis. This meant that levels were available to all students, however Dylan Wiliam has a very clear view on this point which will be discussed in more depth Chapter 7.7.

These conclusions were determined by the original research questions but by this point in the study these had developed following reviews of the Action Research cycle already undertaken.

7.3.4: A Summary of Conclusions from School B:

In reviewing the position, and reflecting on both the original research questions and subsequent additional ideas, the SLT and I were all disappointed to discover there was still a lack of consistency on the application of AfL despite the time and effort which had been invested in training, CPD and work with various subjects and departments. It should be noted however that some members of staff had taken the ideas on and they were able to use the ideas as part of later training for all members of staff, this was exemplified by the fact that there were sessions on AfL practice which were run by staff not directly involved in the original dissemination of the work. The conclusions which can be drawn from this are partially reflected in the comment that throughout the period of the research staff at School B felt that they needed more time to get used to each initiative and that teaching at that point could be described as suffering from initiative overload, which clearly answers question 9 of the original aims. Mulford points out (2003: 7):

> *"as the OECD (2001b: 1) itself points out, "… the intersection of … three demands for change by schools – to update their content, to become learning organisations and to deliver measurable outcomes - … creates … intense and potentially conflicting pressures."*

The conclusions which can be drawn from these cycles of Action Research could be said to be deeply personal. I believe that although all staff have the innate capacity for improvement the use of the initiatives such as those using AfL are viewed with suspicion in some quarters; this is because the strategies have been imposed on professionals rather than scaffolding their ownership of them. As a consequence of this I was determined to use the impact of the change in my own practice to model that for others; as not everyone could see the value of working in this particular way.

7.4: Conclusions from the Action Research Cycles:

This section reflects on the Action Research cycles and one conclusion relating to Action Research is demonstrated in Figure 14 below. This demonstrates the approach

taken in this project. It would be inaccurate to describe these as Action Research cycles in their purest form. The examination of the work I have conducted throughout this Action Research project has clarified my own ontological and epistemological thinking; as Whitehead and McNiff exemplify when they state that (2006: 44):

> *"Their ontological and epistemological values are to do with the freedom of all to come to know their own ways and exercise their choices responsibly"*

This argument covers one of the most significant conclusion in relation to my own practice, which has been a result of the journey through this research and has resulted in the development of my own methodological inventiveness. My thinking has been clarified and reflecting on the above quote I have exercised my freedom of choice in the methodology used and developed my own practice accordingly. The figure below shows similarities to the Action Research cycles described by Whitehead but each individual's interpretation of them is unique.
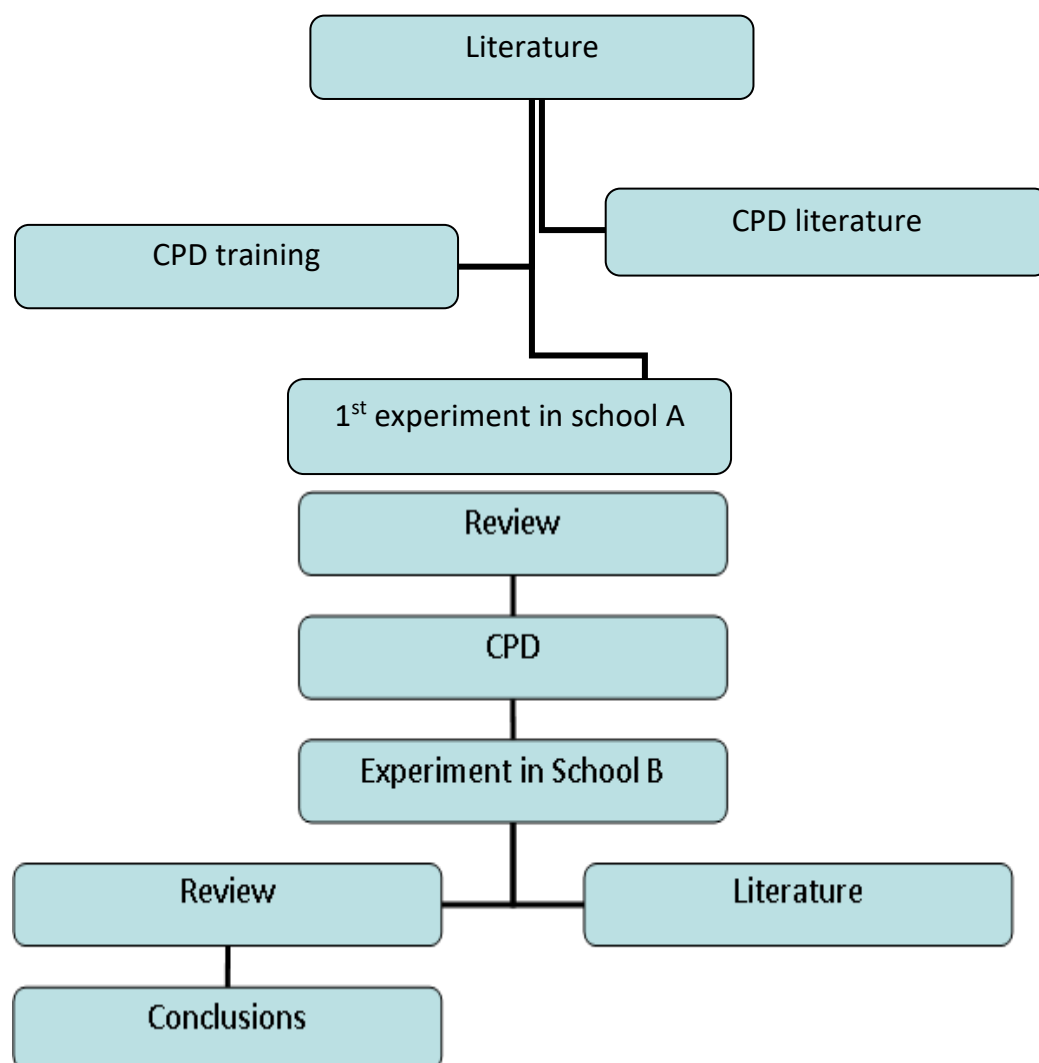
Figure 14: Unique figure outlining the approach to action research.

7.5: Conclusions relating to CPD:

In response to the request for implementation by the original researchers I took the ideas disseminated by the National Strategy and applied them across the Faculties in School A. The results of this have been seen in the description of the Action Research cycles. The conclusions that were drawn were similar to those experienced by other schools and observed by Ofsted, that is to say that there was a lack of consistency in the implementation of AfL in schools.

The link between high quality CPD and the use of AfL is highly significant for the implementation of other initiatives, both currently and in the future and this idea is one which both reflects the original research questions but also the placing of CPD in context which will be reviewed in the section.

7.6: Conclusions from School B: CPD and QA in education:

The deficiencies of the model of CPD provided by School B is that there were no clear QA procedures in place linked to the motivation of professional learners. This links to the ideas postulated in Gardner and Coombs for examining the key ideas and motivators associated with the learning and researching of adult professionals, whereupon they state (2010: 11):

"When we research our work we are usually driven by a further sense of curiosity and a desire to contribute to the knowledge base from our work experience"

Had Gardner and Coombs' suggestions been adapted then in this case the research undertaken and shared would be peer reviewed and form the basis of deeper thinking and the development of a clear epistemology, whereas the training undertaken in schools could be seen as isolated.

A key postulate is that it could be argued that the only external QA process available to schools is the Ofsted inspections, with the local situation in School B again mirroring the national situation. However, once more, consideration must be given to the fact that every school has a different experience of Ofsted, as there are different lengths of time between inspections, the teams are not the same from one inspection to the next and even the criteria under which schools are inspected are different as the guidance for inspections changes on a regular basis.

The Standard for Teachers professional development states that (2016: 7):

*"Professional development is most effective when activities have a clear purpose and link to pupil outcomes." a*nd that

"the activities are designed around:

• individual teachers' existing experience, knowledge and needs;

• the context and day-to-day experiences of teachers and their schools; and

• the desired outcomes for pupils;"

There is however no recommendation about what is meant by the context of the school or indeed how this process is to be Quality Assured. This thesis points out that schools are unique cultural institutions and as such require tailored CPD which will require investment in both time, resources and funding.

7.7: Conclusions linked to terminology:

The findings in this section can be linked back to question 8 of the original research aims as it links to the implementation of AfL in practice. When asked to clarify their use of the word assessment as part of the terminology relating to AfL in private conversation both Dylan Wiliam and Paul Black acknowledged that it could be perceived that there were errors made. Indeed Dylan Wiliam stated that:

"This may have been the biggest mistake that Paul and I made. In a desire to 'reappropriate' the term "assessment" we made have allowed people to think that AfL is all about levels, tracking, and targets."

In comparison to this statement from Dylan Wiliam Paul Black had a slightly different view on this subject as he explained that:

"One reason for this is that the term is taken to mean end-of-course summative assessment, and a reason lying behind that is that most theories of pedagogy don't treat assessment as an intrinsic part so the process of teaching and learning. Note that in our publications, the 'formative use of summative tests' is a step in the direction of breaking down the barrier between testing and learning. Note that if assessment is defined as the elicitation of evidence about progress in learning, the terms formative and summative don't appear. It is the way in which the evidence is interpreted and used that distinguished formative from summative"

One conclusion, which can be drawn here is that there is still a difference in perception even between the original researchers about the use of the term. As this is the case, the fact that the term "Assessment for Learning" was misinterpreted either consciously or unconsciously by the politicians who wished to implement a National Strategy and practitioners in schools, who had to implement it on the ground should really not come as a surprise.

Christine Harrison in her response to the same question regarding the confusion of using the word "assessment" adopts a slightly different view as she states that:

"I think there are some who see AfL as an adjunct to summative assessment/testing and not for its position of bringing together teaching and learning."

This particular conclusion is comparable to one I found in the information I gathered during the work undertaken for this thesis. In examining the initial findings they suggest that teachers felt this to be the case, however, it is very difficult to present any empirical evidence to support this statement. Over the period of time some members of staff have come to a deeper understanding of what is meant by the term AfL demonstrated by a change in practice but I would question whether everyone involved in education has developed a deep understanding and an ability to implement the ideas suggested by the original research and developed by me in my own practice. This is due to the unique nature of the culture of each individual school and their ability to implement a single idea.

It could be postulated that this conclusion is the case because the original use of the term was flawed and allowed for a variety of interpretations, not all of which were in keeping with the original intentions of the authors. If this thinking is then followed through to the implementation of the National Strategy this lack of clarity in terminology could be used as a reason for the failure of the Strategy to fundamentally change education in the way the originators could have hoped for. There is also the point that there is embedded cultural behaviour in the teaching profession, which sees assessment as low level summative and behaviourist throughout. The politicians also held the same assumptions, which could be described as the living culture of the profession. This point clearly links to the developments in the epistemology relating to AfL, which will be considered in the next section of this chapter.

7.8: Conclusions linked to epistemology of AfL:

In peer discussions with my supervisor the idea has been postulated of Adaptive Assessment for Learning (AAfL) strategies linked to adaptive testing tools. Thus it could be postulated there could be an argued rationale for a new educational system linked to the philosophy and epistemology of AAfL, or indeed there is the potential to bring the concept of education into this as Adaptive Assessment for Educational Learning AAfEL.

In order to make sense of this I have provided the following postulate ; the reconceptualising of the concept of assessment and test could be described as a rethinking of terminology in which assessment should be described instead as a new learning methodology for practitioners. This rethinking should clarify what is meant by

'assessment' and 'testing'. These show how they are best defined and linked to more appropriate forms of pedagogy suited to the needs of the 21st Century that wants transferable skills and knowledge production. This concept clearly links to the ideas in Dylan Wiliam's book on Embedded Formative Assessment where he points out that (2011: 162):

> *"We now know that the teacher is the most powerful influence on how much a student learns and that teachers can continue to make significant improvements in their practice throughout their entire careers. If all teachers accept the need to improve practice, not because they are not good enough, but because they can be even better, and focus on the things that can make the biggest difference to their students, according to the research, we will be able to prepare our students to thrive in the impossibly complex, unpredictable world of the 21st century"*

This links to the notion of improved CPD for teachers and the concept of social justice, where the outcomes for students are improved and was a later development in this research. Adaptive testing has been described as being:

> *"based on a simple concept: more information can be obtained from a test item if the item is matched to the ability level of the examinee. To discriminate among low ability examinees, relatively easier items should be administered; to discriminate among high-ability examinees, relatively more difficult items should be administered"* http://www.assess.com/docs/Brief_Intro_Comp_Testing.pdf

This describes the processes in a lesson, which has the AfL component of "hinge questions" which Dylan Wiliam describes as (2011: 101):

> *"The design of diagnostic questions to be used at hinge points in lessons – hinge point questions for short- is much more a craft than science, work with teachers suggests that the following two principles are useful guidelines. First, it should take no longer than two minutes, and ideally less than one minute, for all students to respond to the question; the idea is that the hinge point question is a quick check on understanding, rather than a new piece of work in itself. Second, it must be possible for the teacher to view and interpret the responses from the class in thirty seconds (and ideally half that time)."*

It can clearly be seen from this that the idea of adaptive testing already occurs within the classroom that has adopted the details of AfL, however the problems still

occur because of the confusion between the terminology and the lack of clarity about the epistemology of AfL.

The confusion between summative and formative assessment is a major epistemological deficit and could be described as a blind spot for both policy makers and educationalists. In order to remove this confusion the terminology needs to be clarified but this would prove difficult. This is due to the fact that even if they do not understand the concept correctly most educational professionals believe they know what AfL is. If there was to be a move away from the term incorporating the word assessment this would not prove to be a sufficient alteration in the epistemological understanding of the concept.

In order to change this global culture everyone with any responsibility for education would need to be involved and the difficulty would be that if anyone did not accept the cultural change then there would be a reversion to the previous default settings.

7.9: Conclusions linked to the 'improve' paradigm:

The concept of the 'improve' paradigm is examined in Coombs and Smith (2003) who underlined the social learning benefits of participatory Action Research by teachers' operating within their own classrooms and is also supported as a professional development process of change by Whitehead's Living Educational theory. The nature of this research has been such that I have operated within my own classroom but I have also fulfilled a role where the results of my research appear to have had an impact across a number of faculties and ultimately across School B, which has extended the idea of the improve paradigm from my own practice to that of others. This addressed my aims, which can be found in Chapter 1.1.1, of using an Action Research framework for my study. Consideration does however need to be given to the potential conflict in my role as manager versus that of researcher in this case.

It could be argued, however, that unless all staff undertook their own Action Research type projects the impact I had cannot be viewed as significant. It appears to be relatively easy to assess the impact my Action Research project has had in my own classroom and how my understanding of teaching and learning as well as my understanding of research paradigms has developed. What is more difficult to assess is

whether my work and the improvements made to teaching and learning across the school is as a direct consequence of the Action Research project based on the 'improve' paradigm, as a range of other factors also need to be examined. Other factors could include the implementation of other initiatives; both national ones and school based ones as well as the impact I had in my SLT role, which is the role of manager versus that of researcher referred to earlier.

The identification of staff for different types of intervention in relation to the types of CPD and all the work related to performance management targets can all be linked to the 'improve' paradigm, as they were looking to move the standards of teaching and learning forward for teaching staff in School B.

7.10: Conclusions about the AfL Toolkit:

In Chapter 6.10 there are some ideas described relating to the concept of an AfL toolkit; these are useful, however, making the suggestion that they comprise a comprehensive toolkit is not helpful. This idea addresses one the one of the original questions in this study, whether it was possible to create a comprehensive AfL toolkit. The conclusions which can be drawn on this matter are described below.

The staff at School B would not see the Lesson Observation proforma as the toolkit; rather they would be able to explain the techniques in detail as exemplified by the training sessions run by a variety of staff. There was also use made by the staff of the Assessing Pupil Progress (APP) grids developed as part of the KS3 Strategy which was linked to the AfL proforma and the PM target template.

The review of AfL in Schools A and B demonstrate that a deeper understanding developed using CPD is needed rather than the superficial view presented by the original Strategy. This links to the concept of staff having access to a toolkit which comprises their teaching and learning strategies as well as the tick lists.   The comments made in the TES article by John Bangs is apposite here (2010):

> *"But he (Dylan Wiliam) said that the technique had not had the impact it should have done because of the lack of a proper strategy for teacher professional development." Instead we had a highly bureaucratised and ossified way of turning AfL into some kind of weird amalgam of formative and summative assessment where everything had to be recorded to the nth degree,"*

This quote is significant as it is condemning the bureaucracy of tick lists which need to be compared to the concept of a toolkit. The concept of a toolkit is one of the key developments which resulted from this research but it is not possible to view this development in isolation, nor should my attempts be seen as simply a tick list provided to staff. The significance of this finding is that once again the links between the different aspects of training and application in practice need to be stressed.

There is potential for different types of aspects of the toolkit to be linked to the concepts included in the AfL framework; one of these aspect is the speaking prompts exemplified as Appendix 15. Following this concept through, schools could develop their own specific toolkits, relevant to their own specific needs following this methodology using the toolkit as an outline prompt. It would be important for schools to design their own toolkits due to the fact that they can be seen as culturally unique institutions; an issue which has proved to be significant in the findings from this thesis.

7.11: Overall conclusions and implications for further research:

There are a number of conclusions which can be drawn from the work which resulted in this thesis, the first of which reflects my development as a research by my engagement in practitioner research. This was the development of my own methodological inventiveness following on from my original Action Research project based on the reconceptualising of Assessment for Learning. This resulted in my having a more authoritative voice and being able to articulate my thinking more clearly as I reflected on the iterations of the work.

This point regarding the development of AfL for schools, departments and teachers is one of the most important ideas in this thesis and providing a simple tick list type toolkit is not the answer. The application of AfL to each layer of education is one of my most significant points for further development. In an attempt to provide something more detailed than a simple tick list the assessment tool for school leaders developed by the CIEA appears to meet this requirement more fully than the original training for the National Strategy.

One significant conclusion drawn from this work is the development of understanding of the links between schools as unique cultural institutions, the use of CPD and the requirements to embed this understanding in order to develop sustainable

change. Linked to this is the notion of AfL linked to CPD that is to say AfL for departments and schools, aligned to this is the current lack of QA processes available to evaluate these developments.

Significantly the use of terminology has posed problems throughout the work on AfL with the precise nature of assessment being difficult to define and the use of the term causing problems for a variety of stakeholders. The development of a toolkit was an idea which generated more specific examples than originally intended and the tick list culture proved to be and oversimplification of this problem.

Finally the conclusions are built around the developing concept of methodological inventiveness and it is this most recent development which has led to a more clearly articulated and defined set of conclusions.

The implications for further research lie in a number of areas, including the ideas about badging concepts in a visual way being one, more significant however is the concept of CPD being tailored to the unique cultures of different establishments, this could be linked to the Action Research methodology to examine impact in detail. Examining the impact of linking CPD to Performance Management would be an interesting point to consider for future research and development. In regards to the concept of methodological inventiveness there are opportunities to apply this to the dissemination of good practice across institutions as I move to a new role which will allow me to work across a larger number of schools. Part of the job descriptions states that I will be required to provide in-service training for head teachers, staff and governors on a range of subjects, with a focus on preserving a distinctively Catholic response to the key issues in current educational thinking, contribute to the development of appropriate resources to support the work of schools, as well as contributing to improving standards within schools. As part of this role I wish to continue to develop my understanding of the unique cultures of different institutions and to examine further the concept of Adaptive Assessment for Learning or Adaptive Assessment for Educational learning AAfEL.

Glossary:

AfL: Assessment for Learning.

AifL: Assessment is for Learning.

AAfEL: Adaptive Assessment for Educational Learning.

AAfL: Adaptive Assessment for Learning.

APP: Assessing Pupil Progress.

ARG: Assessment Reform Group.

AST: Advanced Skills Teacher.

BERA: British Education Research Association.

CIEA: Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors.

CPD: Continued Professional Development.

DFE: Department for Education.

DFES: Department for Education and Skills.

GTP: Graduate Training Programme.

HE: Higher Education.

HMI: Her Majesty's Inspectorate.

ICT: Information and Communication Technology.

ITT: Initial Teacher Training.

KMOFAP: Kings' Medway and Oxfordshire Formative Assessment Project.

LA: Local Authority.

NS: National Strategy.

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

OfQual: Office for Quality in Education.

Ofsted: Office for Standards in Education.

PACE: Progress Continue and Achieve in Education.

PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment.

PDP: Professional Development Plan.

PGCE: Post Graduate Certificate in Education.

PM: Performance Management.

QA: Quality Assurance

QCA: Qualifications Curriculum Authority

QCDA: Qualification and Curriculum Development Authority.

SCAA: School Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

SEF: Self Evaluation Form.

SIDP: School improvement and Development Plan.

SIG: School improvement Group.

SLT: Senior Leadership Team.

SMART: Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Timed.

TDA: Teacher Development Agency.

TES: Times Educational Supplement.

TGAT: Task Group on Assessment and Testing.

TTA: Teacher Training Agency.

WAG: Working at Grade.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Audit of provision in School A

Audit of Assessment for Learning

Focus areas

The focus of the audit will be on these three areas:

- Objective led lessons
- Independent learning
- Peer and self assessment

Refer to the attached sheets for more detail about these areas.
We have chosen to focus the work on Years 11 to 13.

Research methods

The methods used will be:

- Lesson observations
- Work sampling
- Student interviews
- Student questionnaires
- Scheme of work scrutiny

Audit Team

- [_____] carry out lesson observations.
- [_____] arrange questionnaires
- [_____] do student interviews
- [_____] do work sampling and scheme of work scrutiny.
  [_____] is a LA consultant for AfI.

Timing of Activity

Audit to take place from December 2nd to January 18th
[____] to report to Governors on January 21st.

Please pass the following through to [____] by Friday 14th December

Schemes of Work

One module of work for each Year group (11-13) taught since September.

Work Sample

Three samples of work from students in Year 11 who have covered the module chosen from the scheme of work.

We are looking for evidence of learning objectives and outcomes and peer and self assessment.

If there are any difficulties with this please let me know.
Thanks

Suggested timetable for AfL day 20--

From Cathy McKenna: To LA Adviser: Cc Deputy Head, Headteacher

Period 1

Art Teacher A or Teacher B (head of department)

Drama Teacher C (NQT)

Period 2

Technology Teacher D

RE Teacher E (SMT)

Period 3

English Teacher F (AG&T Co-ordinator)

Humanities Teacher G (from middle school)

Period 4

Maths Teacher H (from middle school)

Work sampling or interviews

Period 5

Science Teacher I (Head of Faculty)

ICT Teacher J (Head of Faculty)

Period 6

PE Teacher K Teacher L (from middle school) Teacher M (Head of Faculty).

Work sample and conclusions

To all staff

Could you please pass a photocopy of the milestone assessment from Term 1 for the following pupils to your head of faculty by the end of Tuesday 16th January?
This will need to include the assessment itself and any written feedback provided to the pupil.
Year 7
A C 7X2: G K 7Z2: J W 7Z2: P C 7X3: C M 7X2: D K 7Z1
Year 8
M V8Z3: D T 8X2: A O 8Z1: K P 8X3: D P 8Z2: N F 8X1
Year 9
A C 9Z1: T G 9X1: H K 9Z2: D R9X2: T W 9Z1: J McD 9Z1

To Heads of Faculty
As promised here is some feedback on the milestone assessment tasks from Term 1

Dept. A
The test was clearly presented
Clear generic level descriptors
Ideas to think about
Could the test be used at the start and end of a unit to show progress?
How effective is the leveling and target setting after a test?

Dept. B
Clear layout of tasks
Clear language used
Transfer of targets between units
Student involvement in target setting
Big picture is clear
Consistency; a faculty approach
Progression
Appropriate challenge
Nothing to think about

Dept. C
Challenging
Overview and plan provided for Year 7
Generally the tasks from G were more accessible
Interesting tasks
Well presented
Ideas to think about
Check accessibility for less able
Do the students have the knowledge, skills and understanding to access the higher levels?

Dept. D
Clear language on generic levels
Very clear curriculum plans and overviews
Things to think about
Was difficult to identify key tasks
Do pupils get task sheets?

Dept. E
Subj. 1
Clearly laid out tasks
Clear descriptors

Interesting tasks
Progression evident
Subj. 2
No tasks provided
Subj3
No tasks provided

Dept. F
Clear curriculum plans
Clear tests
Things to think about
How to use tests formatively

Dept. G
Clear levels provided

Dept. H
No tasks provided

Could you collect the photocopies of the milestone assessments for Term 1 from your staff and hand to me by the end of Wednesday?
Thank you,
XX

A guide for Writing Schemes of Work

- What skill are you assessing in each unit
- How are you assessing that skill
- How are you going to assess formatively
- How are you going to give the students the Big Picture
- How are you going to ensure progression within the scheme of work, across the schemes of work, across the key stage?
- How are you presenting milestone tasks
- How are you giving the students descriptors
- How are you going to peer/self-assess
- How are you going to deliver feedback
- How are you going to monitor progression and consistency across the faculty

Factors to take into account
- Do you have mixed ability or set groups
- How frequently does the subject see pupils
- How many assessment strands do you have
- School calendar

Appendix 5: Sample of Table showing results of AfL in School A

	Observations	Work Sample	Schemes of Work	Pupil Responses
Strengths	Effective use of peer and self-assessment Time is provided for reflection by pupils Success criteria secure progression and allow pupils to make progress	Top tips for achievement is available and teacher comments reflect this. Mark scheme easy to access *Teacher comments on what can be improved*	Clear overview Good learning objectives Well organised *Clear learning objectives*	Shows how they are helped to learn Some students understand where learning fits in Do review learning Regularly mark or comment on own work
Areas for Development	Students to review progress against learning objectives	To show links to previous and future learning *Produce clear learning objectives and outcomes* *Provide feedback to students on draft work*	Develop learning objectives and strategies across all schemes *Gaps in Schemes of Work*	All task to be linked to learning Year 13 to receive more feedback Students to know what standards to aim for Peer marking needed

Conclusions

Students feel they are helped to understand what is being learned Divisions between students views on learning objectives

Action Points

Consistency to be achieved between A and B. Clear learning objectives to be written into schemes of work across the faculty. All tasks to be linked to learning objectives in order for students to understand learning

Review Needed and Dates

Appendix 5: Sample of Table showing results of AfL in School A

Appendix 6: Feedback from LA Consultant/Adviser on AfL work in School A

"Student voice reveals that when teachers share learning objectives, it supports learning e.g. kick starts the learning, improves behaviour, removes frustration and anger that some have with learning, know what is needed, feeling that they can achieve, keep focus, takes some of the pressure off learning and helps trust in the teacher

"Lesson observations show that sharing learning objectives is not embedded"

"Student voice reveals that it supports effective learning and progression when teachers share success criteria, use mark schemes, allow students to engage with other students' work."

"Lesson observations show that there is some evidence of this in A and B although further development is required to make explicit the standards expected."

"Student voice reveals that the use of a plenary to review learning is not embedded. A small number of teachers use a question and answer session at the end of lessons and some teachers sum up the learning for students."

"Student voice in year 11 reveals that peer and self-assessment is an unpopular strategy because they do not trust the accuracy of their or a peer's marking, find mark schemes difficult to use and they do not understand the standard required."

"The 6th form students value peer and self-assessment because they can learn from each other and engage fully with the criteria."

"Peer and self-assessment was not observed. In G the students were marking work, but they did not have any criteria."

"The evidence gathered shows that a number of teachers are using a range of AfL strategies effectively to support learning and progression and to raise standards. The gap between the best and weakest practice is wide and strategies must be put in place to support and monitor AfL in these identified weak areas."

Agenda for Twilight on Assessment for Learning
Objectives
To develop strategies for staff on Assessment for Learning linked to performance management
To produce assessment criteria linked to skills progression through Key stage 3 or Key stages 4/5

3:30 Start
3:30 to 4:00 Activity in groups
4:00 to 6:00 Working in departments on producing assessments and criteria based mark schemes showing progression and feed back to student and parents

```
            ┌──────────────┐
            │  Assessment  │
            └──────────────┘
          ↗                  ↘
 ┌──────────┐              ┌──────────┐
 │ Feedback │              │ Criteria │
 └──────────┘              └──────────┘
          ↖                  ↙
            ┌────────┐
            │  Data  │
            └────────┘
```
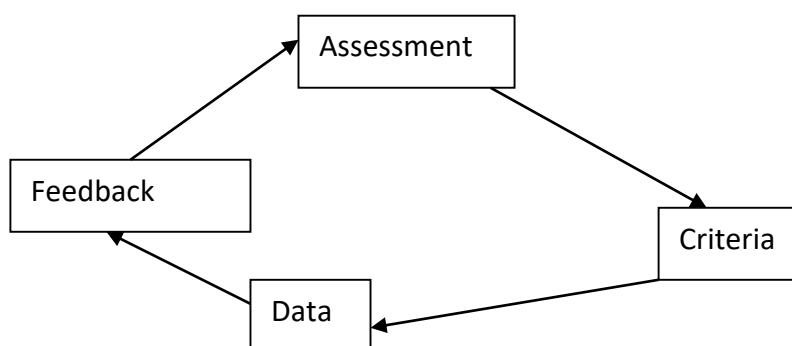
Subject/Faculty leaders to decide on outcomes and to share with XX before … on attached reply slip
What next?
When?

Faculty/Subject…………………………………………………………

Faculty/Subject Leader…………………………………………………

Outcomes to include

Feedback from Twilight

Assessment for Learning

January 20--

Starter

What went well?

PE

- Time to work together
- Easy/ simple one task to look at

Geog

- Interesting and thought provoking
- Excellent starter
- Good ideas
- Clear instructions

History

- Clear well presented
- Reminder about all ideas for AfL

Science

- Illustrated key ideas sharing objectives, criteria awareness, exemplar material, and feedback to learners

Music

- Clear presentation
- Confident delivery
- Demonstrated the skill well
- Although seen before enjoyed the starter
- The whole point was well demonstrated with confidence

Pace/citizenship

- Good sharp clear intro of the importance of AfL
- Good ideas given for starters and plenaries

Maths

- Rachel's bit

Technology

- Very good capable and competent
- Made us realise that if we didn't give the right info we will not get the results

ICT

- It was an interesting activity

- Full involvement
- Interesting feedback from staff

Business

- Clear simple exercise
- Point made practically
- Good to see a GTP with confidence

English

- Staff engaged with the activity, a positive show of support for an otherwise basic (though fundamental)lesson in AfL

Starter

Even Better if:

PE

- Follow up time given

Geog

- Could hear all

Music

- A slide with your mark scheme 1 on (the initial scoring process)
- Some people had been more focussed on listening

Pace/Citizenship

- Maybe a little more depth on info relating to AfL
- More examples of how specific departments are using AfL

Maths

- People at back weren't so rude
- It wasn't first week back

Technology

- Everyone listened (rude people at eh back)
- Quicker start

ICT

- none (objectives achieved task of correct length)

English

- Top down presentation again
- Proper discussions/views about whole staff nominated issues what we can do together to…
- Patronising tone for an experienced audience needs to be addressed

- It was a basic approach to AfL we want to hear about "new" best practice

Feedback from Twilight:

Subject Based sessions

What went well?

PE

- Time to work together
- Production of relevant resources

Geog

- Started on first module and got completed
- We have completed work for year 7 very pleasing progress

History

- Completion of KS4 feedback sheets for essays and source work
- Completion of KS5 essay planning sheets and self assessment
- Discussion of KS3 assessment tasks and mark sheets

Science

- Time to identify opportunities for AfL
- We were able to spend a lot of time on the task and complete enough, so that our skills assessment procedures are in place for year 7 programmes of study

Music

- Identification of key skills
- Progress towards skills ladder
- Linking national Curriculum with present assessment of Year 7
- Having member of slt present helped focus and be more objective

Pace/Citizenship

- Time spent looking at the new citizenship curriculum and how to implement AfL activities
- How AfL tasks can be used which does not take hours of marking

Maths

- How much we did
- What quality planning we got to do
- Majority of time was in faculty

Technology

- Consolidation/focussed thought
- We are trialling more effective worksheets with key level descriptors

ICT

- Have managed to revamp all Key Stage 3 mark grids in line with the KS4 OCR grids
- Emailed copies to all staff teaching subject (including non-specialists) hard copies and electronic copies stored

Business

- Stream lined last Year 11 work tasks
- Looked at feedback sheets
- Looked at exemplar materials to inform grading and feedback

English

- Grid ranking session
- Clear plan for improving Afl in faculty review weeks to tackle fundamental issue
- Feedback from Twilight

Even Better if:

PE

- Resources were paid for

Geog

- All staff were available to make sure everyone had an input
- Got all the modules done

Science

- Have only scratched the surface and further development is needed

Music

- Follow up needed
- Departments/faculties may have other priorities that would benefit from a focussed 2/3 hour session. An opportunity to do this would be most useful

Pace /Citizenship

- Maybe more guidance from slt on what specific parts of AfL to focus on

Maths

- We had more time

Technology

- Need more time for it to be really productive
- Everyone is in (all teachers could contribute)
- People knew what the PD days are so part time staff can chose wisely

ICT

- More staff to help with task

English

- SLT rotation through meetings to give insights/comments
- Need more time to get used to one initiative first – although the whole system is integrated and makes a lot of sense to…?

Work Scrutiny Proforma
Name

Subject	Type of Evidence		Good	Satisfactory	Development needed
		Evidence of Learning Objective			
		Evidence of student or peer review of learning objective			
		Feedback linked to learning objective (student peer teacher)			
		Feedback is understood and acted on			
		Next step targets are set			
		Evidence of progress			
Comments					

[some images removed from this digitised version due to potential copyright issues]

Assessment for learning

Whole Staff Meeting

2nd March 2009

Matt Cooke

Models for assessment

| Work's done | → | Work's awarded a level/grade | → | Student knows their WAG |

Models for assessment

Success criteria is shared with students	Students can see why their work does not match the next level's criteria	Students are given moving on targets
Work's done	Work's awarded a level/grade	Student knows their WAG
Students are able to establish their own success criteria or write their own mark scheme.	Students can match their own work to a level descriptor	Students can set their own targets

Lesson Elements

- Teacher explanations
- Questioning
- Assessment for learning opportunities
- Student behaviour
- The way students work
- The tasks set
- The lesson pace

Lesson Elements

- Praise
- Students' verbal responses
- The starter task
- The plenary
- Differentiation
- Subject knowledge
- Body language
- Use of voice

The Post mortem

| What Assessment for learning was there? | What went well? | Even better if... |

My own moving on targets

163

Appendix 11: AfL audit School B

Assessment for Learning Audit October 2009		Staff Initials

Please complete the following as accurately as possible as this will be used to inform training sessions

1. Use of skills based learning objectives
Secure………………………………… not secure
1   2   3   4   5   6

2. Providing opportunities for students to absorb feedback
Secure…………………………………not secure
1   2   3   4   5   6

3. Ensuring students do not leave sessions without knowing how well they have performed against learning goals or success criteria
Secure…………………………………not secure
1   2   3   4   5   6

4. Use of self assessment
Secure…………………………………not secure
1   2   3   4   5   6

5. Use of peer assessment
Secure…………………………………not secure
1   2   3   4   5   6

6. Ensuring feedback focuses on individual action points
Secure…………………………………not secure
1   2   3   4   5   6

Optional
Your Performance Management Assessment for Learning focus

_____

_____

Assessment for Learning performance management targets

As part of the performance management process staff should be including an aspect of Assessment for Learning. In order to help with this process there are a number of targets suggested below.

1. Embed the use of learning objectives and review these to enhance learning
2. Embed the use of learning objectives and review these to enhance learning
3. Focus on success criteria to facilitate learning
4. Enhance and embed the use of feedback to promote learning
5. Use or enhance reflection from the teacher and the student together to review progress and develop targets for improvement
6. Develop or enhance learners peer and self assessment skills, in order that learners recognise and reflect on which aspects of their performance they need to improve

To assist further the targets have been broken down using the most recent research on the subject and as part of the performance management process staff will be asked to provide evidence.

1. Embed the use of learning objectives and review these to enhance learning by
    a. Sharing the structure of the lesson with learners as part of introducing the session, highlighting the opportunities for feedback
    b. Providing opportunities within each session for learners to absorb the feedback they have received and undertake the required action if appropriate within the timeframe of the lesson
    c. Ensuring learners do not leave any session without knowing how well they have performed against learning goals or success criteria

2. Focus on success criteria to facilitate learning by
    a. Making learners aware of the standards they are required to achieve and help them to recognise when they have achieved that standard
    b. Using individual or small group learning objectives

3. Embed and enhance the use of feedback to promote learning by
    a. Ensuring feedback is prompt
    b. Providing detailed feedback
    c. Providing evaluative feedback
    d. Providing constructive feedback
    e. Ensuring feedback is tailored to meet the needs of the individual and is directly linked to observable evidence – either a learners written or practical work or performance of a given task
    f. Ensuring feedback focuses on individual action points
    g. Ensuring feedback is clearly written or spoken in plain English
    h. Ensuring feedback Identifies strengths and weaknesses and provides effective guidance on how a learner can improve
    i. Ensuring feedback is specifically linked to learning goals/task/assignment/unit success or assessment criteria (cross referenced to what practitioners have asked learners to do)

4. Use or enhance reflection from the teacher and the student together to review progress and develop targets for improvement by

a. Building in feedback to learners as an important element of each lesson as part of effective lesson planning, whether it is on group or individual progress
b. Focus on motivation for learning
c. Demonstrating that staff genuinely believe that all learners can learn and improve against their own previous performance, not that of others
d. Setting individual targets
e. Developing the use of curricular targets

5. Develop or enhance learners peer and self assessment skills, in order that learners recognise and reflect on which aspects of their performance they need to improve by
   a. Encouraging learners to take notes when oral feedback is being shared
   b. Providing opportunities within each session for learners to absorb the feedback they have received and undertake the required action if appropriate within the timeframe of the lesson
   c. Encouraging learners to action plan using targets based on feedback
   d. Ensuring learners recognise success criteria
   e. Ensuring learners assess their own performance against criteria and identify areas for improvement

Learning objectives

- Share the learning objectives with learners and check their understanding before progressing
- Make learners aware of the standards they are required to achieve and help them to recognise when they have achieved that standard
- Give effective feedback on assessment decisions, so that learners know how to improve
- Demonstrate high expectations and promote learners confidence that they can improve on their past performance
- Provide regular opportunities for themselves and learners to reflect on the last performance and review learners progress
- Develop learners peer and self assessment skills, so that learners can recognise and reflect on what aspects of their own work need to improve

Effective feedback

- It is tailored to meet the needs of the individual and is directly linked to observable evidence – either a learners written or practical work or performance of a given task
- Focuses on individual action points
- Deals with one point at a time
- Allows learners to compete with the task and with themselves not in competition or comparison with others
- Is written or spoken in plain English
- Is written or spoken clearly
- Is detailed
- Is evaluative
- Is constructive
- Is positive
- Identifies strengths and weaknesses
- Provides effective guidance on how a learner can improve
- Begins by saying what the learner has done well
- Progresses to areas the learner could have done better
- Ends on a positive note
- Is specifically linked to learning goals/task/assignment/unit success or assessment criteria (cross referenced to what practitioners have asked learners to do)
- Must be prompt

Practitioners' need to:

- Build in feedback to learners as an important element of each lesson as part of effective lesson planning, whether it is on group or individual progress
- Share the structure of the lesson with learners as part of introducing the session, highlighting the opportunities for feedback
- Encourage learners to take notes when oral feedback is being shared
- Provide opportunities within each session for learners to absorb the feedback they have received and undertake the required action if appropriate within the timeframe of the lesson
- Encourage learners to action plan using targets based on feedback
- Ensure learners do not leave any session without knowing how well they have performed against learning goals or success criteria

Demonstrate that they genuinely believe that all learners can learn and improve against their own previous performance, not that of others

Assessment for Learning the process

Share the learning objectives and encourage learners to contribute to feedback opportunities

Check learners understanding of learning objectives

Brief learners on what they have to do and what they have to hand in, or on the task they have to perform

Introduce the success or assessment criteria to learners and check their understanding

Provide learners with opportunities to apply the criteria to examples of work produced, possibly by a previous cohort, to illustrate standards required and the application of the criteria

Provide the necessary guidance and support to learners on an individual basis and provide oral feedback

Provide peer assessment opportunities

Provide self assessment opportunities

Undertake the practitioner led assessment of learners work

Provide timely written or oral feedback to learners

Create opportunities to personalise the learning so that learners can undertake remedial action and/or consolidation activities, or activities that provide challenge and stretch

Subject	Type of Evidence		Good	Satisfactory	Development needed
		Evidence of Learning Objective			
		Evidence of student or peer review of learning objective			
		Feedback linked to learning objective (student peer teacher)			
		Feedback is understood and acted on			
		Next step targets are set			
		Evidence of progress			
Comments					

Summary sheet

1. White hat – what ideas/facts have I/we learnt? (When where who why)

Language of learning

2. Red hat – what skills have I/we used

6. Blue hat: what are my/our conclusions & main ideas?

4. Green hat – what creative ideas & solutions have I/we come up with?
(Use of group work, peer support etc.)

7. Black Hat: What are the next steps in my/our learning?

3. Purple hat: what problems have I/we faced?

5. Yellow hat: what positive progress have I/we made?

Subject specific De Bono's thinking hats prompts to generate oral feedback

Subject specific prompts for Oral feedback
White hat prompts
The ideas I have learnt are...
The facts I have learnt are...

Red hat prompts
Looking back at the learning objectives I know how to …

Purple hat prompts
In this topic/lesson misconceptions are…

Green hat prompts
In this rich task I have used the following methods…
The main problems are…
The most important problem is…
The three best solutions to this problem are…

Yellow hat prompts
The progress I have made is…
The positive progress we have made is…
We have learnt…
The story told me...
I now understand…
It helped me…
It showed me…
I have thought about... and suggest…
I want to know more about…

Blue hat prompts
The main learning points were…
I have concluded that…
I first thought…but then…
The 3 main ideas I am taking away are…
This makes me feel…
This makes me think…

Black hat prompts
The next steps in our learning are…
We will show…

Speaking prompts by faculty
Mu
The instruments I could identify/ recognise are…
I thought the speed of music was…
I thought the volume of music was…
The music made me feel… this was because the music (was)….
I found this difficult because…
It would be better if…
I could have made it better by…
I could have made it longer by…
The best part of my piece was…
The easiest part was…
The skills I need to develop are…

H, BS C and LS
I used listening today to…
I described… today
I explained… today
I showed understanding today by….
I evaluated… today
Today I had to deal with…
Today I had to solve…and this is how I did it…
My ideas were…
Our group's ideas were…
A different approach could be…
The thing I enjoyed most about this lesson was…
My summary of the main ideas are...
Our conclusions are...
I want to find out…
I need to know…
You could find out more by…
I want to understand…
To get to the next level/grade I need to …
My next step target is…

M
The facts I learnt in this unit are...
Using the learning objectives I know how to…
In this topic the misconceptions are…
In this rich task I used the following methods…
The progress I have made…
The main learning points for this topic were…
My next step targets are…

I

I used… software to produce….

We use this software because…

I created impact by using…

I made it suitable for my audience by…

I corrected my work by using…

When using…I have learnt to do…

I have met the learning objective by….

E

My evidence for this is…

This suggests…

Another question I would like to ask is…

I can improve by...

Next lesson I would like to...

I would like to learn to do…

The key word for this lesson is…I know this means….

I know I have met my objective because…

I'm really proud of the way I've been able to…

I overcame that problem by…

I supported others by…

My teacher asked me…

To move up the APP grid I need to…

To improve my writing I need to ….

My next target is…

I am working at …and my target (level) is…

The next steps in my learning are…

I have made progress by….

I came up with this solution…. to help me overcome….

P

The rules I use in my sport are…

The rules are important because…

The … rule allows players to …

I would apply this rule…. Because….

The performance is….

The performance is not…

The key techniques of the skill are…

The teaching point is…

The coaching point is…

To execute the skill the performer needs to…

To improve the player needs to…

The strength(s) of the performer is/are…

The weakness(es) of the performer is/are…

To improve the weakness(es) I would…

The strength(s) mean the performer….

The difference between an elite performer and me is...
The method of training is...
To improve the component of fitness I could use... method of training
In my Personal Education Plan I have included...
I would develop a player by...
I would develop/ progress this by...
A beginner would start by...
The role of a coach is...
The role of a captain is...
A good captain should... because...
Before competition a leader should...
A leader should always check...
I would need to...
To motivate my team I would...
To improve my team I would...

S
I have learnt that...
In order to make this a fair test I need to...
My biggest problem is...
I have learnt to...
I can use...
My main ideas on this are...
To improve my work I need to ...
I am having problems with...
What I need to do next is...
This lesson I have learnt to...
I am really proud that...
This lesson I have developed my skills in...
I have learnt to annotate my work by...
I reflected on my work...
I graded my practical work as...because...

	My teacher always shares the learning objectives	When my teacher marks my work they give it a level	When my teacher marks my work they give it a comment	I get chance to improve my work using the comments I am given	I know what working at level I am	I know what my target level for the future is	I know what to do to improve	total	My teacher always shares the learning objectives	When my teacher marks my work they give it a level	When my teacher marks my work they give it a comment	I get chance to improve my work using the comments I am given	I know what working at level I am	I know what my target level for the future is	I know what to do to improve
7G1									7G1						
English	30	12	24	19	19	15	24	30	100	40	80	63	63	50	80
Maths	28	18	26	16	27	27	24	30	93	60	87	53	90	90	80
Science	29	12	21	11	18	17	20	30	96	40	70	37	60	57	67
ICT	2	2	5	7	4	5	15	30	7	7	17	23	13	17	50
Language (MFL)	28	21	28	10	24	26	22	30	93	70	93	33	80	87	73
History	28	16	27	15	11	13	19	30	43	53	90	50	37	43	63
Geography	13	4	18	10	6	7	17	30	43	13	60	33	20	23	57
RE	7	3	10	8	3	5	13	30	23	10	33	27	10	17	43
Drama	3	4	4	6	4	7	14	30	10	13	13	20	13	23	47
PE	4	8	6	9	12	12	15	30	13	27	20	30	40	40	50
Art	13	12	24	13	11	9	19	30	43	40	80	43	37	30	63
Music	19	4	18	8	6	7	15	30	63	13	60	27	20	23	50
Technology	21	20	20	9	14	17	21	30	70	67	67	30	47	57	70
7GA									7GA						
English	28	19	24	20	19	17	21	32	88	59	75	63	59	53	66
Maths	22	19	24	17	20	19	22	32	69	59	75	53	63	59	69
Science	23	20	23	14	23	24	21	32	72	63	72	44	72	75	66
ICT	12	14	6	9	11	2	12	32	38	44	19	28	34	6	38
Language (MFL)	27	20	24	9	18	19	15	32	84	63	75	28	56	59	47
History	22	11	20	11	4	5	12	32	69	34	63	34	13	16	78
Geography	19	9	17	7	6	6	11	32	59	28	53	22	19	19	34
RE	7	7	9	2	3	4	12	32	22	22	28	6	9	13	38

Drama	9	9	4	5	3	5	12	32	28	28	13	16	9	16	38
PE	5	15	6	3	16	9	11	32	16	47	19	9	50	28	34
Art	16	14	21	16	18	15	14	32	50	44	66	50	56	47	44
Music	8	10	7	5	8	9	11	32	25	31	22	16	25	28	34
Technology	21	17	18	15	19	14	17	32	65	53	56	47	59	44	53

Appendix 18: Year 12 progress School B

	My teacher always shares the learning objectives	When my teacher marks my work they give it a level	When my teacher marks my work they give it a comment	I get chance to improve my work using the comments I am given	I know what working at level I am	I know what my target level for the future is	I know what to do to improve	Total
English	14	9	16	11	7	13	13	19
Chemistry	2	2	3	3	1	3	3	5
Geography	0	1	2	2	1	0	2	3
Media	5	5	6	7	5	6	6	8
Drama	4	6	6	6	4	9	9	9
Photography	7	9	9	9	7	7	7	9
HSC	3	5	5	4	3	2	3	5
Sociology	3	1	2	0	2	3	1	3
History	4	3	5	2	4	3	4	6
ICT	5	4	5	5	4	4	5	6
BTEC (performing arts)	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
Textiles	2	2	2	3	1	2	2	3
Human Biology	7	6	6	5	7	7	4	8
Biology	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Maths	7	4	8	3	7	7	8	8
Physics	2	2	1	2	3	3	3	3
Art	3	1	2	3	2	3	2	3
Citizenship	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
BTEC (sport)	4	5	3	5	5	4	5	5
Graphics	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Dance	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Resit English	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
BTEC (*3)	35	36	33	31	37	31	33	38
College Academy								28
Sports' Academy								43

Framework focus: Using and Applying/ Number/Algebra/Geometry//Calculating/Data Handling   20/11/2013

Learning objective(s):   Level/Grade:

• share learning objectives at the start and throughout lesson are they clear about the purpose of their learning?

• remember to include any cross-curricular links to ICT, sport and literacy, cultural, spiritual, social, historical, economical and enterprise opportunities

• To develop/able to…(skills)

• To know that…(knowledge)

• To understand how/why (understanding)

• To develop/be aware of (attitudes and values)

• How are they learning? E.g. "to appreciate how peer assessment can help you to improve your own work"

Key words: share with students insist on correct spellings
•
•

We Are Learning Today …

These are the learning outcomes.. How to meet the learning objective(s). It shows you are differentiating the learning objective

1. Must (all students to …)

2. Should (most students…)

3. Could (some students…)

*Review with traffic lights or smiley faces at the start and then at the end of the lesson where they feel they are.

This Is Because…
put the lesson in context, share the bigger picture

What A Good One Looks Like…

Model examples of good work, worked solutions, doiagrams, graphs etc

Scan them in for next lesson to show the standard you wish them to aspire to.

Where Are You Now?

1. Put the lessons learning objectives here….
2.
3.

Have we met today's objectives?
Put the appropriate face next to each objective.

I understand completely

I sort of get it but I am a bit unsure

I don't have a clue – help!!!

Title Pie Charts	Grade D	20/11/2013

Outcomes
I can construct pie charts.

RAG RAG
RAG RAG
RAG RAG

MW Clip 86
Page 26

Key words
Sector

Tasks
1. Warm up
2. Discussion
3. Quick Progress Check
4. Independent Learning
5. Plenary/Review Learning

A2L
1 2 3 4 5 6

Homework
Task:

Due in: Date here…

WAGOLL

Wagoll here…

M   Misconception here.. !

Learning Walk Analysis

This took place on 3 occasions

***First occasion* 15 members of staff were seen for between 5 and 10 minutes.
Faculties observed were S I E F A H M T**

**Of these
66% were using skills based learning objectives
33% were showing evidence of students making progress
26% showed evidence of high quality questioning
26% showed evidence of self/peer assessment/feedback
And 20% showed evidence of high quality feedback**

**There was outstanding practice demonstrated in a M lesson which in the short space
of time covered all of the above. There were potential opportunities for a number of
the staff to develop the feedback to students about where they needed to go next.**

***Second occasion* 8 members of staff were seen for between 10 and 15 minutes
Faculties observed were S T I**

**Of these
62.5% were using skills based learning objectives
62.5% were showing evidence of students making progress
25% showed evidence of high quality questioning
25% showed evidence of self/peer assessment/feedback
And 12.5% showed evidence of high quality feedback**

***Third occasion* 8 members of staff were seen for between 10 and 15 minutes
Faculties observed were E Ps G H**

**Of these
37.5% were using skills based learning objectives
50% were showing evidence of students making progress
50% showed evidence of high quality questioning
50% showed evidence of self/peer assessment/feedback
And 12.5% showed evidence of high quality feedback**

Assessment For Learning   Observation Proforma

Teacher name	Subject	Date	Time	Observer

Prompts:

Is the learning objective context free and focussed on the learning rather than the activity (we are learning not we are doing)?	
Is the learning objective clearly shared with the learners at an appropriate point, learners are clear about the purpose of their learning?	
Are learners clear about the criteria for success in the learning and can use these to focus their work?	
Is 'good work' modelled to help define or illustrate the success criteria?	
Does the teacher's questioning help all learners show what they know (questioning of learning)?	
Does the teacher's questioning move pupil thinking/learning forward (questioning for learning)?	
Does the teacher encourage pupil to pupil talk?	
Does the teacher provide feedback to learners as the learning progresses, linked to the success criteria and objectives?	
Are learners encouraged to reflect on and or evaluate their own work as it progresses?	
Are there opportunities for learners to make improvements based on feedback?	
Is there evidence of peer assessment or support?	
Is the current work linked to ongoing targets where and if appropriate – target setting. Are learners aware of the link?	
Does the teacher use reflective plenary opportunities to reinforce/summarise what has been learned/achieved?	
Are learners encouraged to reflect on HOW they learn not just WHAT they have learned (metacognitive thinking)?	
Where work is 'marked' does the feedback identify/scaffold how work could be improved as well as identifying/reinforcing success?	
Evidence of independent learning:	
Areas for development/additional comments:	

Name _____

CLASS _____

Level	AF1	Thinking like a scientist	Skill 1	AF2	How science Affects us	Skill 2
7		I can explain changes I have observed using a model e.g. the particle model to explain a chemical reaction. ☐ I can explain how different bits of evidence support a scientific idea. ☐			I can list the moral, ethical, social arguments for and against a scientific development, e.g. genetic engineering ☐	
6		I can identify the strengths and weaknesses of a model. ☐ ~~~~~ I can use evidence to support a scientific idea, e.g. pressure increases as temperature increases supporting the particle model. ☐			I can describe how the uses of science or technology may be different in different societies. ☐	
5		I can use a model to explain a scientific process, e.g. the water model to explain the current in a circuit. ☐ ~~~~~~ I can say when scientists have used creative thinking when developing their ideas. ☐			I can describe an ethical issue coming from a scientific development, e.g. it is possible to choose the sex of your child, but should parents be allowed to do this? ☐	
4		I can describe a scientific idea using a simple model, e.g. drawing a force as an arrow. ☐ ~~~~~~~ I can identify scientific evidence that is used to support an argument. ☐			I can describe an application of a scientific idea, e.g. when things burn they need oxygen. Using a fire blanket cuts out the oxygen and the fire goes out. ☐	
3		I can Use a scientific idea that has been given to me to answer a question. ☐ ~~~~~~ I can make of suggest simple models to show how things are in the world. ☐			I can explain the purposes of some scientific processes. ~~~~~~~~ I can say how scientific ideas affect our lives. ☐	

Individual Assessment of Teaching and Learning

	Quality of Learning and Progress	Quality of Teaching	Assessment	Behaviour
Outstanding 1	•The learners acquire knowledge, develop understanding and learn and practise skills exceptionally well. •Learners demonstrate excellent concentration and are rarely off task even in extended periods of time. •Tackle challenging activities and show resilience. •Progress is at least good within groups and key stages and is exemplary in some.	•Teaching is at least good and much is outstanding, the result is learners make exceptional progress. •Teaching is highly effective at inspiring learners and ensuring they learn extremely well. •Excellent subject knowledge is applied consistently to challenge and inspire learners. •Resources make a marked contribution to the quality of learning. •Targeted support given by additional adults makes a marked contribution to quality of learning.	•Teachers and other adults are acutely aware of learners' capabilities and prior learning and plan very effectively to build on these. •Marking and dialogue between teachers, other adults and learners are consistently of a very high quality. •Learners understand in detail how to improve their work and are consistently supported in doing so. •Teachers systematically and effectively check learners' understanding throughout lessons anticipating where they may need to intervene and do so with striking impact on T & L.	•Learners consistently thoughtful behaviour is an outstanding factor in their successful learning. •Learners are highly considerate and supportive of each other in lessons.
Good 2	•The learners acquire knowledge and develop understanding. They learn and practise skills well. •The learners are keen to do well, apply themselves diligently in lessons and work at a good pace. They seek to produce their best work and are usually interested and enthusiastic about learning. •A very large majority of learners make at least good progress and some make outstanding progress.	•The teaching is consistently effective in ensuring learners are motivated and engaged. •Majority of teaching is securing good progress and learning. Teachers have strong subject knowledge which enthuses and challenges most learners and contributes to good progress. •Good imaginative use of resources including ICT and other adult support is focused and makes a significant contribution to progress.	•As a result of good assessment procedures, teachers and other adults plan well to meet the needs of all learners. •Learners are provided with detailed feedback, both orally and through marking. They know how well they have done and can discuss what they need to do to sustain good progress. •Teachers listen to, observe and question groups of learners during lessons in order to reshape tasks and explanations to improve learning.	•Learners' behaviour makes a strong contribution to good learning in lessons. •Their behaviour is welcoming and positive. •They routinely show responsibility in responding to the expectations of staff, set consistent standards for themselves. •They respond quickly and well to any additional guidance from staff about how to conduct themselves.

	Quality of Learning and Progress	Quality of Teaching	Assessment	Behaviour
Satisfactory 3	•The extent to which learners acquire knowledge, develop understanding and learn and practise skills is at least satisfactory. •Most learners work effectively in a range of subjects when provided with appropriate tasks and guidance but lack confidence in improving the quality of their work. •Learners generally work steadily and occasionally show high levels of enthusiasm and interest. •The learners make the progress expected given their starting points and some, though not the majority may make good progress.	•Teaching may be good in some respects and there are no endemic inadequacies. •Learners show interest in their work and are making progress broadly in line with their capabilities. •Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. Adequate use is made of a range of resources including new technology, to support learning. •Support is provided by other adults effectively deployed.	•Regular and accurate assessment informs planning, which generally meets the needs of all groups of learners. •Learners are informed about their progress and how to improve through marking and dialogue with adults. •Teachers monitor learners' work during lessons, pick up general misconceptions and adjust their plans accordingly to support learning.	•Learners behave so that learning proceeds appropriately and time is not wasted. •Learners understand what is expected when asked to work on their own or in small groups and gentle prompting is needed to maintain discipline. •Pupils are polite and respond appropriately to sanctions.
Inadequate 4	•Learners acquiring knowledge, developing understanding, and learning and practising skills is inadequate. •Too many learners fail to work effectively unless closely directed by an adult and give up easily. •Learners do not enjoy activities. •Learners or groups make too little progress.	•Expectations are inappropriate. •Too many lessons are barely satisfactory or are inadequate and teaching fails to promote the learners' learning, progress or enjoyment.	•Assessment takes too little account of the learners' prior learning or their understanding of tasks and is not used effectively to help them improve.	•Learners' poor behaviour and rudeness inhibits progress in lessons. •Time is wasted through persistent low level disruption, excessive off task chatter and a lack of attention. •Pupils show a lack of respect to adults and other young people.

Limiting factors are in bold text.
A lesson is deemed as inadequate if one is highlighted on an observation.

Assessment for Learning

Peer & Self Assessment

What are the benefits of peer & self assessment?

- Motivation for learners
- Provides immediate support in the classroom
- Students often respond more positively to a peer
- It is interactive and individualised
- Allows the teacher to stand back and observe
- Allows teachers to give more beneficial feedback
- Allows achievable goals and targets to be set
- Progress is more regularly monitored
- Encourages students to take more responsibility
- The assessor gains as well as the assessed
- Improves social and communication skills
- Effective assessment can raise self esteem

Peer & Self Assessment

- Peer and self assessment is much more than children marking their own and each others work.
- To improve learning, it must be an activity that engages children with the quality of their work and helps them reflect on how to improve it.
- Peer Assessment gives an opportunity for children to talk, discuss, explain and challenge each other and to achieve beyond what they can learn unaided.
- Peer Assessment helps develop Self Assessment, which promotes independent learning, encouraging children to take increasing responsibility for their own progress.

Further ideas…

- Students create their own checklist / success criteria for a specific task/skill.
- Post-It feedback – post-it notes attached to students work for self assessment comments or peer feedback.
- Green-Amber-Red Peer Assessment – is their work better than yours, the same as yours, not as good as yours. Why?
- Peer / Self assessment worksheets

Summary

- We are all aware of the benefits of peer and self assessment and that it doesn't have to take much time in your lesson.
- Hopefully you have a new idea to take away and try in your lessons tomorrow!

Meeting with RF on AfL

There were some Advanced Skills Teachers for AfL and some more to be appointed.

The Local Authority will be appointing lead schools next year. We (School B) would be happy to help so long as it doesn't impinge too much on school business.

There was an update on the National Strategy website as by this time it was no longer government policy. There were suggestions made for a conference where subject leaders create a standards file for moderation e.g. level 5 from year 7, 8 and 9 and to develop one departments' understanding of AfL by linking up with another department

Paul Black

Your original research took place and was published in 1998 so how much progress do you believe schools have made in implementing the concepts?

The article was followed by a programmes to test out and develop practical formulation of the ideas with a group of schools. See:

Black, P., Harrison, C., Lee, C., Marshall, B. & Wiliam, D, (2003) *Assessment for Learning– putting it into practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Black, P., Harrison, C., Lee, C., Marshall, B. & Wiliam, D. (2002). *Working inside the black box: assessment for learning in the classroom.* London, UK: GL Assessment. (Also published in *Phi Delta Kappan* 86(1), 9-21.)

Black, P. and Wiliam, D. (2003)   'In Praise of Educational Research': formative assessment. *British Educational Research Journal*. 29(5), 623-37.

Wiliam, D., Lee, C., Harrison, C. and Black, P. (2004) Teachers developing assessment for learning: impact on student achievement. *Assessment in Education,* 11(1), 49-65.

C. Harrison (2005) 'Teachers Developing Assessment for Learning : Mapping Teacher Change' *Teacher Development*, 9 (2), pp. 255-264.

Lee, C. and Wiliam, D. (2005). Studying changes in the practice of two teachers developing assessment for learning. *Teacher Development* 9, 265–283

Schools in Scotland have made a great deal of progress: their Education people consulted the King's group and used our advice to propose a development programme, AiFL (Assessment is For Learning) using my colleagues to train teachers in selected pilot schools, and teachers who had worked in our own development project. They then set up an independent evaluation of the work and as this was very favourable, asked all regional authorities to implement it for all. See Hallam, S., Kirton, A., Pfeffers, J., Robertson, P. & Stobart G. (2003). *Interim report of the evaluation of programme one of the Assessment Development programme: support for professional practice in formative assessment* (London, Institute of Education, University of London).

In Dylan Wiliam's training in Essex he was critical of the National Strategies. Do you believe the AfL National Strategy reflected the original findings of your research accurately?

No it did not. Those responsible did not consult us formally about the programme. It leaves out one key element – comment-only marking. The London government seems to have the view that a one day course and a ring-binder of recommendations are all that is required. Our own development project, as described in the publications listed above, took two and a half years during which the teachers had additional support and INSET time: the Scottish project was similar – two years of phased development.

Do you believe policy makers understood the concept of AfL?

The understanding is shallow – the failure to grasp that it requires a difficult and quite radical change for teachers in their classroom practices, and the omission of serious consideration of the need to give comments and not marks on regular homework, shows this failing.

Do you believe the use of the term "Assessment" in the AfL strategy leads to confusion in some people's minds?

Yes it does. One reason for this is that the term is taken to mean end-of-course summative assessment, and a reason lying behind that is that most theories of pedagogy don't treat assessment as an intrinsic part so the process of teaching and learning. Note that in our publications, the 'formative use of summative tests' is a step in the direction of breaking down the barrier between testing and learning. Note that if assessment is defined as the elicitation of evidence about progress in learning, the terms formative and summative don't appear. It is the way in which the evidence is interpreted and used that distinguished formative from summative

Is it possible to establish if there is any easily measurable impact of AfL on standards of achievement in England

Our 2004 paper on impact provided limited evidence. It would only be possible with a research project which collected measures from balanced sample in implementing schools and non-implementing schools. The problem would be to identify schools which could be clearly classified as being in one or other of these two categories.

As AfL is a powerful tool in improving pupil progress why do you think we don't use it more in the professional development of teachers?

It requires a two-year development plan informed by clear understanding of what is involved and including means to help teachers find time and to set up procedures to collaborate in in-depth discussion of their experiences of making difficult changes in their classroom practice.

There are courses currently entitled "The future of AfL". The current political situation has moved on recently so do you believe schools should or will continue to take the next steps with AfL or will it disappear like other initiatives?

It may not be encouraged. But given the evidence that achievement can be improved, even by the standards of traditional testing, by investment, it should continue. Moreover, those teachers who have taken it seriously have found it professionally rewarding in many different ways.

Do you think that the emphasis on traditional methods and ideas like the English Bacc will affect schools use of AfL?

"Traditional methods" is unhelpful. But for the E Bacc and the coming EBC, it may not make things any different – these are not teaching schemes, so all depends on the quality of the curriculum specifications.

What do you think will be the next steps in educational research given the current political climate?

I wouldn't try to generalise. My own interest is in the development of teachers' summative assessment skills. See the following.

Black, P., Harrison, C., Hodgen, J., Marshall, M. and Serret, N. (2010) Validity in teachers' summative assessments. *Assessment in Education* 17(2) 215-232.

Black, P., Harrison, C., Hodgen, J., Marshall, M. and Serret, N. (2011) Can teachers' summative assessments produce dependable results and also enhance classroom learning? *Assessment in Education.* 18(4), 451-469.

Also in re-formulating theories of pedagogy to weave in assessment as intrinsic to the whole enterprise. A step in this direction is:

Black, P. & Wiliam, D. (2009) Developing the theory of formative assessment. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, **21**(1), 5-31.

Dylan Wiliam

Your original research took place and was published in 1998 so how much progress do you believe schools have made in implementing the concepts?

Very little: most schools think AfL is all about tracking children's progress. Heads tells me that AfL is "embedded" in schools in which it is impossible to find even one teacher doing good AfL.

In your talk at Cornelius Vermuyden School in Essex you were critical of the National Strategies. Do you believe the AfL National Strategy reflected the original findings of your research accurately?

No; see above

Do you believe policy makers understood the concept of AfL?

Absolutely not

Do you believe the use of the term "Assessment" in the AfL strategy leads to confusion in some people's minds?

This may have been the biggest mistake that Paul and I made. In a desire to 're-appropriate the term "assessment" we made have allowed people to think that AfL is all about levels, tracking, and targets.

Is it possible to establish if there is any easily measurable impact of AfL on standards of achievement in England

It hasn't been tried yet, so no

As AfL is a powerful tool in improving pupil progress why do you think we don't use it more in the professional development of teachers?

When everything is a priority, nothing is

Your courses are currently entitled "The future of AfL". The current political situation has moved on recently so do you believe schools should or will continue to take the next steps with AfL or will it disappear like other initiatives?

I think we need a re-launch. Paul and I still use the term "formative assessment" because I think it helps communicate the original meaning more clearly.

What do you think will be the next steps in educational research given the current political climate and do you think that the emphasis on traditional methods and ideas like the English Bacc will affect schools use of AfL.

Don't forget that FA is the best way to increase student achievement even on traditional exams. The E.Bacc. may hasten the adoption of FA in classrooms

Christine Harrison

Black and Wiliam's original research took place and was published in 1998 so how much progress do you believe schools have made in implementing the concepts of Assessment for Learning?

Schools and school teachers are much more aware of the purpose of AfL and many teachers do use strategies that have been reported to work for AfL. What teachers are sometimes unaware of or don't focus sufficiently on is the formative aspect and so do not take action on the incoming data they collect. There is also a tendency to demonstrate that teachers are doing AfL and so SLTs focus on whether learning objectives are used etc. when the focus should be on what the data tells teachers and how they respond to this in that lesson or subsequent lessons. The focus needs to be on the learners and helping them develop self-regulation techniques and this aspect often gets omitted

In Dylan Wiliam's training in Essex he was critical of the National Strategies. Do you believe the AfL National Strategy reflected the original findings of the research accurately?

National Strategy focused on strategies rather than purpose and so, along with a cascade model of dissemination, it is not surprising that teachers now focus on strategy rather than purpose. I think the NS responded to the original review findings, although very belatedly and not strongly to comment-only marking, but not necessarily to the work that Paul, Dylan and I have done since then with schools.

Do you believe policy makers understood the concept of AfL?

Difficult to say as the folk in charge change and also you only get to see a small amount of what they think when they respond to questions.

Do you believe the use of the term "Assessment" in the AfL strategy leads to confusion in some people's minds?

I think there are some who see AfL as an adjunct to summative assessment/testing and not for its position of bringing together teaching and learning.

Is it possible to establish if there is any easily measurable impact of AfL on standards of achievement in England

Take a look at the 8 Schools project where they attempted to do this. It's not easy with so many other changes being made and getting a measure of the adoption and adaptation of AfL is not possible unless you want to do an in depth qualitative study alongside.

As AfL is a powerful tool in improving pupil progress why do you think we don't use it more in the professional development of teachers?

I do. I have worked with hundreds of schools now.

There are courses currently entitled "The future of AfL". The current political situation has moved on recently so do you believe schools should or will continue to take the next steps with AfL or will it disappear like other initiatives?

I don't think AfL will disappear. It might be repackaged but it is at the heart of good teaching.

Do you think that the emphasis on traditional methods and ideas like the English Bacc will affect schools use of AfL?

Good teachers always find a way through to do what they believe best.

What do you think will be the next steps in educational research given the current political climate?

Much as it is now. It just might be that you have to go outside UK to get funding. For e.g., I have got two grants to look at the assessment of science Inquiry from EU funding.

Appendix 28: Context of research

This research was undertaken primarily in two schools over a period of time although references are made to other schools in Chapter 6.

School A

School A was a small upper school situated on a council estate in a small city. At the outset of this research it comprised of students in Years 9 to 13 who were recruited from a small number of middle schools. The city had grammar school provision and as a result the intake did not cover the full range of abilities, some of the more able students going to the grammar schools. It also had a partly rural catchment with students being bussed in on a daily basis. The school roll was under 800 with less than 200 students being in the post 16 provision. This had an impact on the implementation of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy as theoretically it only affected Year 9.

Part way through this study there was a local authority re-organisation and the middle schools were closed. This meant that the school expanded with the addition of years 7 and 8, which meant an increase in staffing. These member of staff were recruited from the middle schools which were closing but the school also recruited Newly Qualified Teachers and experienced staff from elsewhere. There was however still the issue of the grammar schools taking the most able students from the city.

My role in this school was as a Head of Faculty and this comprised 6 separate subjects, each with a head of subject and in some cases with additional members of staff.

School B

School B was a large comprehensive secondary school based in a coastal town. It comprised of students from Years 7 to 13 who were recruited from a number of primary schools. The school roll was approximately 1,500 with less than 200 being in the post 16 provision. This post 16 provision included a small number of A levels and a greater preponderance of Vocational Qualifications. The school covered the full range of abilities but access to the local Sixth Form College results in the more able students mostly leaving at the end of Key Stage 4. There is also a college which caters for hard vocational courses and a number of students also leave at the end of Key Stage 4 to attend this college. School B also has a partly rural catchment with students being bussed in on a daily basis.

This school constantly recruited new staff to all levels and developed a CPD programme in line with this.

My role in this school was as a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). I was appointed as an Assistant Principal and worked on the Progress and Standards team during the duration of this research.