

Reconceptualising assessment for
learning using an action research
framework: implications for policy
and practice in England.

Abstract:

This PhD project is about developing the understanding of the pedagogy relating to the implementation of the National Strategies in Assessment for Learning using an Action Research framework. The theme of the research on Assessment for Learning was inspired in the first instance by the ideas expounded by Black Wiliam et al. and the thesis developed by examining the strategies in a real context.

The thesis summarises the findings concerning reconceptualising the ideas contained within the theory expounded by Black and Wiliam in light of the educational and political changes which have taken place from the implementation of the strategy to the removal of the National Strategy website by the coalition government. It has examined the pedagogical theories behind the implementation of Assessment for Learning in schools and has examined the views of a number of different stakeholder groups, as well as the impact of the theories on high stakes summative assessment. The seminal work can be seen as suggesting a rolling programme of action research projects co-ordinated by the researchers to develop the ideas they are postulating, as well as assessing their effectiveness. This final point is highly significant to this study as I have taken this idea and developed the research, reconceptualising the idea.

The thesis also use the preferred research framework which related best to the Action Research model, as it is cyclical and allows the researcher to amend their practice on a regular basis. A set of peer discussions resulted in linking the topic to the “improve” paradigm of research, and the thesis has reflected on the implications of the implementation of CPD and the needs for a change in culture. This has resulted in the author being able to reflect on her own practice and that of others.

As a result of this study there are a number of original contributions to knowledge, which are the examination of the nature of CPD and how Assessment for Learning can be used to differentiate teacher CPD, a second finding relates to the understanding of the terminology of the word ‘assessment’ and how this relates to different paradigms. The third finding concerns the importance of the concept of cultural change and the way the implementation of National Strategies was limited by cultural inertia. This has implications for Action Research and the necessity of taking the concept of cultural inertia and cultural change into account in future research

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Chapter 1:

1.1: Aims and Objectives:

This introduction will position this research in context and will outline my personal motivations in engaging in this project and the problematical issues faced when examining a National Strategy in a local context and the philosophical and practical issues raised by the use of an Action Research paradigm. It will also establish the aims of the research and will place the study in its social and educational context.

1.1.1: Introduction:

This chapter will begin by establishing my background and as a consequence will include a brief biography detailing the way in which the research originated and how it links to my previous experience. This is due to the fact that this thesis is the outcome of an Action Research based project and consequently my own background and professional development is central to the research paradigm and also to the results. This will result in the thesis being written in the first person, as “I”: will often be used. This reflects the ideas in McNiff’s writing which states (McNiff, 2011: 47) “*What distinguishes a living theory form of action research is that it is grounded in the ontological “I” of the researcher.*” This 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 1.2.1. 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.

The rationale for the choice of topic will be examined in section 1.3 with the background to the methodology appearing in 1.4. I will set the aims of the thesis within the framework of this chapter in section 1.1.2. The relevance of the research will be looked at in section 1.6. 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 1.5. The chapter will also signpost the following chapters in section 1.1.3 beginning with the context of the research, moving on through methodology and research paradigms, and explanations of the data collected as well as conclusions to be drawn and a brief summary of new areas of contribution to knowledge and the wider academy.

1.1.2: The aims of the research:

The purpose of this research was delineated at the start by examining a number of aims and can be summarised as examining the reconceptualization of a key aspect of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy in England & Wales, notably Assessment for Learning (AfL). The aims of the research can therefore be summarised using the following questions:

1. How the original ideas of AfL were adopted and have the intentions of the original researchers been fulfilled?
2. How was AfL viewed by staff, students and other stakeholders?
3. How was AfL used within and across Faculties in schools?
4. How did AfL impact on teacher's professional practice?
5. Could an original toolkit for AfL be created in order to develop its implementation in the curriculum?
6. How has AfL been used in high stakes assessment?
7. What were the practice issues relating to AfL? A critical analysis.
8. How could new strategies for educational change can be adapted and applied to a variety of situations?

As an emergent researcher I originally intended to simply examine the current practice relating to Assessment for Learning in secondary schools; however, other aspects related to the political implications mentioned earlier have become increasingly central to this study. The implications of the political significance of AfL developed as an emergent theme generated over the period the research was undertaken, which can be linked to the cyclical nature of the Action Research framework.

The original aim of the research could be subdivided into a number of different aspects. The most notable aspect is to consider whether the theoretical framework proposed by the originators of the theory was in fact what was being applied in practice and how Assessment for Learning was viewed by staff, students and other stakeholders. Closely linked to this was an examination of how Assessment for Learning was being utilised by different Faculties and Departments within and across the study schools. Moving on from this I also aimed to critically analyse the issues arising in relation to Assessment for Learning and how the theory will impact on teachers' professional practice and development. I wished to examine the possibilities for creating an original toolkit for the dissemination of Assessment for Learning, and when it is in place, to evaluate its effectiveness.

This aspect is highly significant and will be considered in more depth in Chapters 4 and 5. Throughout the course of this study I wished to understand if Assessment for Learning can be, or has been, utilised by the English examination boards in the design of their syllabi. Linked to these previous ideas was the fact that I intended to critically analyse the practices relating to the implementation of AfL. I was also aiming to examine whether new strategies for actions and change can be applied to a variety of situations including employment training; that is to say, whether the educational theory behind Assessment for Learning is transferable from the secondary education sector to other areas.

Another 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 links to relevant theoretical frameworks.

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. In order to accomplish this I was going to examine the use of different methodologies. As part of this research I was able to establish which type of methodology was most appropriate; following peer discussions with other researchers and my doctoral supervisor I used a range of methodologies, although the primary consideration was given to the Action Research paradigm and its methodology.

The original aims were reviewed over a period of time, and as time went on these still appeared to be relevant, although the scope of these objectives could be considered to be too broad and it was important to note that the original aims needed to be reviewed and refined over a period of time in line with an Action Research approach. This modification to the original research aims will be reconsidered later in this study.

I also had to reflect on the methodology linked to the aims and this too has developed over time. The sophisticated and final emergent methodology will also be considered in detail in Chapter 3. This research potentially offers a number of contributions to new knowledge.

Firstly, as it is centred in the improve to practice paradigm this study develops a fuller understanding of the links between improving professional practice utilising Continued Professional Development (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.

Secondly, this research has attempted the development of a curriculum development toolkit for AfL. 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.

Thirdly, the research offers a new insight into the understanding of the terminology of Assessment for Learning and the impact this has had on the study of stakeholder understanding.

1.1.3: Chapter plan:

The structure of this thesis has developed from a series of Action Research cycles which began with a small scale research project from which a number of issues emerged. These were then examined and analysed through the data generated from the subsequent cycles of the research as positive feedback generating new understanding and actions.

The structure of this thesis will begin by looking at the context of the research. The examination of the context will begin by looking at the original seminal research 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. It will consider how the original project was applied by the UK government of the time to the general context of education in secondary schools at the start of the 21st Century. Consideration will be given to the context I found myself in over the period of the research and how this has altered over time, both through changes within institutions, politically and geographically. I will also consider this changing political situation across the period of the project and how this has impacted in the world of education, although the scope of this aspect has broadened since the original research proposal and as such warrants separate treatment, which will occur within the conclusions.

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 Chapter 2. The literature review will consider the seminal text(s) and then examine the literature on the subject of assessment in general, 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 3 will establish the background to the research and look at the methodological paradigms employed, whereupon Chapter 4 will examine and report the methods developed and used. From here the study will move on to look at the data collected and how this can be interpreted within the framework of the action research model. 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 look at the conclusions and the contributions from this thesis to the academy of “educational assessment” and the wider education profession. This can be drawn from the available data and will also look at the importance of the political implications of the study, an aspect which is central to the way this study developed over a period of dramatic change of central government and its educational policies.

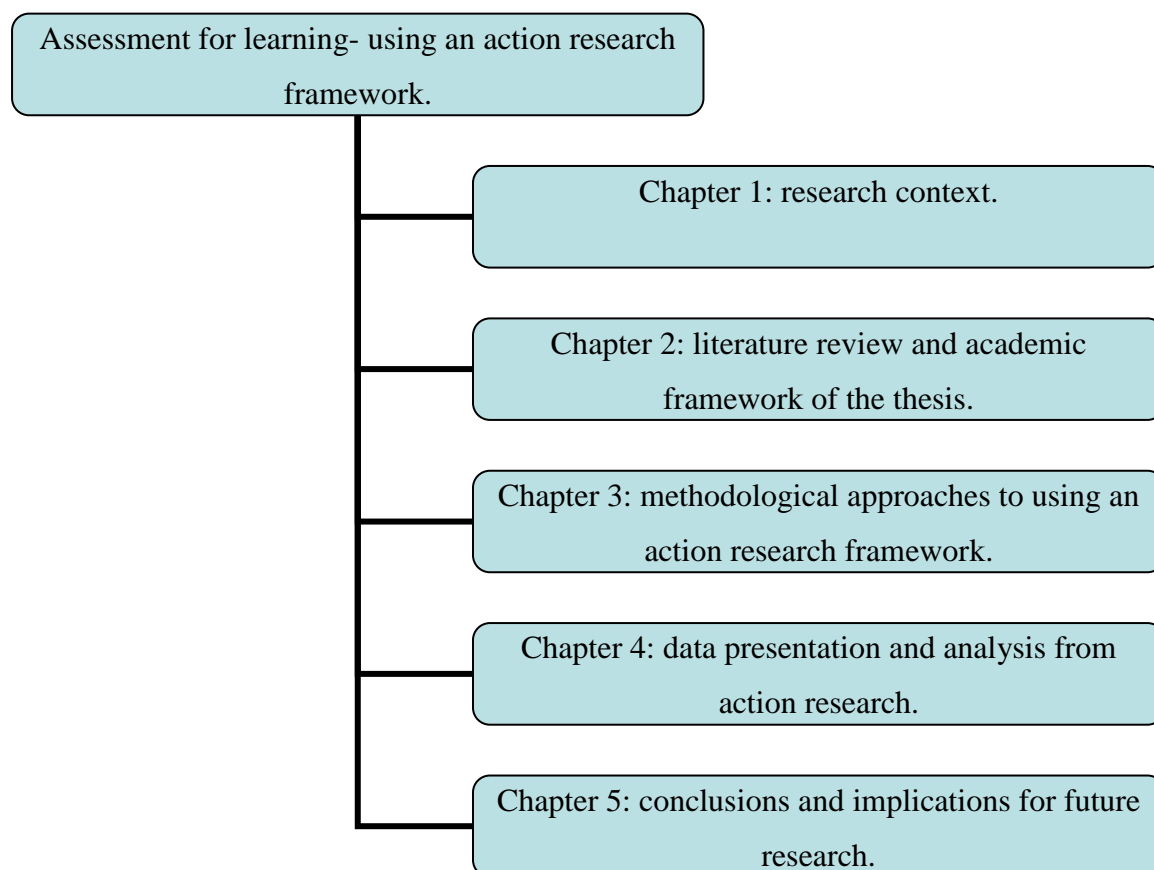


Figure 1: flowchart showing the research overview.

1.2: Background of the researcher:

1.2.1: Background:

I approached the current piece of educational research from something of a varied professional background; this included aspects of historical research combined with wide experience in schools as well as an educational management role. 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 ...the information acquired from traditional teaching, if acquired at all, 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.

My teaching experience, however, has been in contrast to this starting point, as during my career I have held a variety of roles within schools from purely classroom practitioner to Assistant Principal which has developed my understanding of pedagogy. As well as having teaching experience in England of all Key Stages from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 5 I have also taught across a number of different Counties from Humberside and Hampshire to Essex via Wiltshire and the London Borough of Sutton. As a consequence of this variety of experience I have been able to examine and utilise 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 Continuing Professional Development, an issue which will be examined in depth throughout this thesis.

During my career I have had the widest possible experience, having taught in primary, middle, upper (13-19) and secondary schools (both 11-16 and 11-19), as well as holding positions of responsibility for subjects as diverse as PE and History, as well as middle management and more recently senior leadership posts. This wide variety of experience has been utilised whilst examining the nature and impact of the current research into Assessment for Learning (AfL) and this has been combined with the academic background I brought to bear on the subject which built upon my Masters work in history.

1.2.2: Previous research undertaken:

Although this thesis is grounded in education it is important to reflect on the fact that my previous research experience had been based on the use of historical methodology, as this study is an Action Research project and embodies my living educational theory Whitehead and McNiff (2006). This research is based upon my experiences and builds on the fact that I graduated from the University of Leicester with a history degree. I then applied my interest in

Local History to my most recent piece of research. This was concerned with the position of Roman Catholic gentry' families during the eighteenth century. I pursued an interest in local history and combined this with knowledge of Roman Catholicism, which led to my choice of topic for my MA dissertation. The study itself focused on the Weld family of Lulworth in Dorset; this particular family was chosen partly as a result of the survival of the documentation relating to them; it was this survival, which made the detailed research possible. The research on the Weld family of Lulworth and other significant Roman Catholics was conducted as part of an MA in Regional and Local History and Archaeology based at King Alfred's College, Winchester, which I completed as a part time student.

This particular study linked together aspects of work on Roman Catholic gentry' families which I had begun as part of a University of Hull programme of adult education with work from the course at King Alfred's College, Winchester. The research was conducted in order to consider the life of one family in depth; as well as to compare them to other gentry' families, both Catholic and Protestant, who were extant at the time. In many ways this was a precursor for the research conducted into AfL with one school being studied in depth and compared to the political situation at the time. The study examined the lifestyle of the family in order to consider typicality in relation to the families' Protestant neighbours and compared the lifestyle of the Welds' to that of the Constable families of Everingham and Burton Constable, two other Roman Catholic families. This previous research is significant for the current research as there are a number of similarities between the basic methodological approaches of historical study and that of action research.

Previous studies I have completed have also adopted a case study type of approach which is utilised in the current research. This is because an 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, this can be seen as a personal research narrative similar to that of Action Research reporting. It can also be described as being situated within the ethnographic tradition. This reflects most closely my own personal research tradition which is integral to this current study.

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, from historical methodology used for the research on the Weld family with the start of this research project into Assessment for Learning (AfL), which occurred in a Wiltshire school in the first instance. This approach which clearly impacts on the current study could be described as using a type of case study methodology by examining one particular group in context and there are a number of parallels with the current study.

The historical methods used in this type of study conducted on the Welds included the extensive use of original documentary evidence, which was subsequently evaluated, as well as briefly considering the historiography of the subject and the nature of the problems the subject posed for historians. The historiography of the subject has particular relevance in this study in that some of the previous work I examined on the Welds was somewhat hagiographical with a lack of substantiating evidence, whereas other commentaries had nationalistic tendencies, with the original sources also presenting problems relating to the interpretation of the evidence being limited owing to the nature of survival. The hagiographical nature of some of the sources of evidence can be described in a pejorative way as it refers to the works of biographers and historians perceived to be uncritical or “reverential” to their subject. Some hagiographic works, particularly those of the Middle Ages, can often incorporate a valuable record of institutional and local history, and evidence of popular cults, customs, and traditions.

The historiography of a subject 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 the researcher call into question the validity of such evidence, validity being a key component of the current study, and so the previous historical research has underpinned some of my current methodology. The definition relating to the concept of validity will be addressed in the conclusions section on key terms in Chapter 5.5.

This utilisation of historical methodology was not simply considered at a simplistic level as I have taken into consideration, in the more recent work on Assessment for Learning, the ideas relating to the study of history from Richard J. Evans as quoted by Mortimer (2010: 12) in “Medieval Intrigue; Decoding Royal Conspiracies.” This source 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 mostly 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, through unconscious assumptions. This will require 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 the researcher will be able to prove that their data and findings are “true” but that it is the veracity of the interpretation of the data which is crucial.

It is imperative for this study to note that I took the ideas from this background as a historical researcher, and I am still actively interested in the development of historical research methodology. This has allowed me to move on as an historian to consider the topic of the current research in the light of my own experiences. It is important to take into account that in this research I have crossed fields and professional boundaries, in order to gain a greater insight into the educational research methodology adopted in this study. There are aspects of this study which need to be examined in greater depth and these will be described more fully in later chapters; these include the ideas which examines the Action Research paradigm; as this has had a critical influence on the way this research has been conducted.

1.3: Background to the topic of study:

From considering my own background it is a logical next step to look at the actual topic of this study; that of examining the role of Assessment for Learning in schools which was inspired in the first instance as a research project by the ideas expounded by Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2003) on the subject of Assessment for Learning. This is because the original research undertaken as a small scale study, which became the basis of this thesis, was grounded in my own experience. The original inspiration in this case which

led to the original small scale research project came from Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam's 2003 book on "Assessment for Learning, Putting it into Practice."

This interest was triggered in my mind to begin with as a result of my attending the initial training on Assessment for Learning from the UK government's Educational policy for England; namely the Key Stage 3 Strategy, (The Assessment for Learning strategy DCSF-00341-2008) from whence I read the above mentioned book. 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 to the work on this thesis.

At the commencement of the work for this thesis these ideas were then pursued further by examining the strategies suggested by Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam in a real context. In the first instance I was struck by the comment (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam, 2003: 2) that:

"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 struck 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. As well as looking at the idea of positive feedback to students, which was linked to the ideas of AfL as it could be described as "feedback for learning" the faculty was also working on developing the role of self-assessment by students, these ideas represent a higher order learning activity, these ideas which again was seen as a key feature in Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2003: 14) who stated:

"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."

The ideas above will be examined as part of the literature review. 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 over a period of time I was able to move on to work across one Faculty of the school. This was as a result of my role as the Head of Faculty; it enabled me as the person in charge of the management of the Faculty to establish the role of AfL in the five different subjects covered by my post of responsibility. With the support of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of the school at the time these ideas were then taken and disseminated across the whole school. This dissemination was completed in a variety of different ways, which will be examined in more detail later as part of this study (Chapter 4.1.2 and 4.2.2). Again, with the support of the head teacher and the SLT of the school 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. In the years since the research commenced I have moved from my former Wiltshire school into a senior management role at a school in Essex, which has allowed the research to be comparative and has also enabled the scope of the research to broaden out.

The research looks at reconceptualising the ideas contained within the theory expounded by Black and Wiliam, in particular, in light of the educational and political changes, which took place from 2003 to 2011, which comprises the period of the active phase of this research. As such, something, which began as a small-scale research project, has developed over time into a full-scale research project, with a useful comparative dimension.

1.4: Background to the methodology:

The methodology will be examined in detail in Chapter 3. 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. As a result of researching and then examining a number of research methodologies, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, and after consultation with my doctoral 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 thereby 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 held between myself, my supervisor, as well as peer discussions held with my line manager at the time, who was also undertaking PhD research on an unrelated educational field. These discussions also resulted in my linking the topic to the “improve” paradigm of applied educational research, which again will be examined in more detail in later chapters. This will be examined in relation to the following idea of Coombs and Smith (2003: 8) who underlined the social learning benefits of participatory action research by teachers’ operating within their own classrooms as a new paradigm interpretation.

It is significant for this study to note here that integral to the Action Research framework is the fact that it allows for various methods of data collection and also validates the researcher to fulfil the social inquiry role of “participant observer” as defined by Junker and Gold quoted in Hammersley and Atkinson (1995). These factors were important in my decisions to utilise this type of methodology once I had begun the investigation.

The Action Research methodology that I originally investigated builds on the seminal 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:

“A case study approach 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.”

My original ideas can thus be summarised as aiming to use the research design methodology embedded in the Action Research and case study paradigm. This had moved on from my initial thoughts as I had originally intended to simply use the case study methodology, which Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 447) explains as:

“The teaching case study. It is used to illustrate a point, a condition, a category, something important for instruction (Kennedy, 1979)”

This appeared at the time to summarise the approach I would need to take for this particular piece of research. This approach proved to be rather too simplistic and needed to be developed into a more sophisticated form of methodology, which is considered in Chapter 3. As the research developed 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. However, the more complex type of methodology will enable the research to impact upon school improvement, and as a result it can also be described as being centred on the “improve” rather than the “prove” paradigm of research postulated in Gardner and

Coombs (2010), a factor which was to develop in the course of the research and which again will be examined in more depth in Chapter 3.

The research from the beginning, however, could 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) (also cited in McNiff (1988)). These theories will be examined in more detail in the main thesis chapter on methodology. The grounded theory approach was examined because the main research question intended to examine the impact of Assessment for Learning at a variety of educational levels across a wide curriculum as well as attempting to develop the reconceptualisation of practice from the data collected. 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 moving the underpinning educational theory upon which Assessment for Learning is based forward.

The original theory on which Assessment for Learning was based will also be examined in depth and the intentions of the original researchers examined; this will be considered in depth in later chapters, particularly the seminal work on the subject produced by Black and Wiliam (1998).

1.5: Background to the terminology:

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, although other people have described this as A4L (which might appear depending on context). This theory (AfL) is based on the ideas related to formative assessment as it had previously been called, which will be discussed in later chapters. The views of a variety of different stakeholders about what the terminology actually means to them will also be examined in depth.

If we are looking at the seminal text then one of the important points to consider is the background to 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 as part of their original research will be referred to in this study but it is not the purpose of this thesis to re-examine the studies which were used as the basis for Black and Wiliam’s work. Throughout this research I have been looking at

reconceptualising the subject of Black and Wiliam's research as one of the main contributions to knowledge of this doctoral thesis project.

The actual 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. This is 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 the methodology chapter 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, newly appointed Secretary of State, looked at the first trial tasks in the core subjects and declared them to be 'elaborate nonsense'--this condemnation coming before the planned evaluation had produced evidence (Swain, 1991) that teachers approved of the Key Stage 3 tasks. For the new design 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 resulted in the Key Stage 3 Strategy documents, however, the use of the word "assessment" as part of the terminology in Assessment for Learning strand has led to confusion, which will be examined in much more detail in later chapters 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 later chapters. The word assessment is defined at the most basic level by Encarta online dictionary as *"a method of evaluating student performance and attainment."* This

concept will be examined in detail and indeed the findings on this subject will be a contribution of new knowledge produced by this thesis.

1.6: The relevance of the research:

Although this study began as a small-scale action research project it has developed and can be seen as particularly relevant in the current UK educational climate. Originally the work on Assessment for Learning was developed by the UK's DfES (as it then was) (0443-2004). This was 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 is highly relevant as it 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. This particular text, 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 a 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, which again will be looked at in Chapter 2. 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 speech to the Labour Party conference which took place 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. The detailed implications of this will be examined as part of Chapter 2 and will comprise part of the literature review, but 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 recent 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. In order to develop these theories I will need to consider the literature on the subject beginning with the seminal work.

1.7: Summary of the key objectives:

The most significant key objective of this research project was to consider whether the theoretical framework proposed by the originators of the theory was in fact what was being applied in practice and how Assessment for Learning was viewed by staff, students and other stakeholders. Closely linked to this was an examination of how Assessment for Learning was being utilised by different Faculties and Departments within and across the study schools. I also aimed to critically analyse the issues arising in relation to Assessment for Learning and how the theory will impact on teachers' professional practice and development. I wished to examine the possibilities for creating an original toolkit for the dissemination of Assessment for Learning, and when it is in place, to evaluate its effectiveness. I also wished to understand if Assessment for Learning can be, or has been, utilised by the English examination boards in the design of their syllabi. I was also aiming to examine whether new strategies for actions and change can be applied to a variety of situations including employment training; that is to say, whether the educational theory behind Assessment for Learning is transferable from the secondary education sector to other areas.

Another 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 links to relevant theoretical frameworks.

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. As part of this research I was able to establish which type of methodology was most appropriate, although the primary consideration was given to the Action Research paradigm and its methodology. These aims were to be considered in relation to the literature already available on Assessment for Learning and the underlying pedagogical framework articulated by the original researchers, which will be discussed in Chapter 2. The methodology used to meet these aims will be examined in more detail in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Academic Framework of Thesis:

2.1: Introduction:

This chapter will examine the seminal text which inspired this research and will position the work in context both political and local. It will examine the literature associated with Assessment for Learning (AfL) including that created by the original researchers and later interpretations. It will also initially examine the literature about ‘formative assessment’ prior to Inside the Black Box. This chapter will include an examination of the official publications from the Key Stage 3 Strategy which was the starting point for this research. There will be conclusions drawn from these texts which critically examine the impact of the literature on the subject.

AfL links to and makes sense of formative assessment as it uses the previous research available including that of Natriello and Dornbusch quoted in Crooks (1988), they:

“found that if students thought the evaluations of their work were not important or did not accurately reflect the level of their performance and effort, they were less likely to consider them worthy of effort. This conclusion is consistent with the results of research on student attributions of the reasons for success or failure in educational tasks. An important issue is whether the standards adopted are to be norm-referenced, criterion-referenced, or based on the effort and improvement of individual students (Natriello, 1987).... No clear consensus emerges from the literature to date, but Natriello (1987) suggests that self-referenced standards may be optimal for most students. When student performance on achievement tests is the criterion, research has generally shown that higher standards lead to higher performance (e.g., Rosswork, 1977), although again a curvilinear relationship may be predicted. Most of the relevant classroom-based research derives from studies of mastery learning.”

This research underpinned ideas of formative assessment and was utilised by the original researchers, they did not however clearly articulate the ideas linked to the implementation of the research and this study will examine an appropriate CPD framework for underpinning educational change and curriculum development in schools. As Gardner & Coombs (2010: 134) state:

“a work based action enquiry model that assumes the ‘improve’ agenda methodology of action research through personal case study related to workplace needs is

therefore to be highly recommended. It is also a work based epistemology and approach to leveraging useful research that develops professionals as proactive change agents within their learning organisation and immediate sphere of professional and personal influence.”

The literature based on the AfL Strategy was looking to impact on cultural and organisational change. Again it was unclear in the articulation of the Strategy where it attempted to lever up cultural change, an issue which will be addressed in more detail in this study.

2.1: An overview of Formative Assessment Prior to AfL:

In order to examine the concept of formative assessment there are a number of studies which need to be examined. As noted above the work of Natriello and Crooks formed the basis for the work on formative assessment which developed into Assessment for Learning. Natriello and Crooks summarised the work of earlier researchers and were used as the basis for the work produced by Black and Wiliam.

In this overview it is significant to point out that Black and Wiliam (1998: 3) themselves state that:

“Crooks used the term ‘classroom evaluation’ with the same meaning as we propose for ‘formative assessment’”

There was therefore no formally agreed definition of the term before it was used by Black and Wiliam in their 1998 article.

If the works on issues relating to formative assessment are examined roughly chronologically then the work from Block & Burns (1976) is the earliest in the studies examined. This study 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 a clear 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. In examining the motivational aspect of formative assessment Perrenoud (1991: 92) states:

“Every teacher who wants to practise formative assessment must reconstruct the teaching contracts so as to counteract the habits acquired by his pupils. Moreover, some of the children and adolescents with whom he is dealing are imprisoned in the identity of a bad pupil and an opponent.”

This is significant in relation to the development of AfL and my own learning journey as Dylan Wiliam is very clear about the changes teachers need to make in order to implement AfL. It required a change of mind-set and the assumptions I made in regard to this in School A will be examined in more depth in Chapter 4. This also links to the study by Baird et al (1991) where she:

“reported on work with 27 teachers and 350 students 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:

“A rather different use of questioning is to explore and develop students' prior knowledge. A review of work of this type establishes that 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) 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.

2.2: Context of the seminal text “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 the seminal work and the follow up to the

original research article, which I had accessed as an emerging researcher. The Assessment Reform Group 2002 (2-3) defined the concept of AfL as:

“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”,

This was a later articulation of the concept contained in the seminal text on Assessment for Learning, which was my inspiration for the research. It is at this point that the seminal text will be examined as the setting for the context of this doctoral project. This particular research paper which proved to be seminal can also be described as being responsible for generating a whole range of other publications and research.

This research paper was *Inside the Black Box: Raising standards through classroom assessment* by Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam. The primary purpose of this paper, which was produced with teachers in mind and was published by NferNelson of London in 1998, was to disseminate the findings of a more scholarly work in an accessible manner, it was not the purpose of this paper to examine the 200 studies which featured in the academic paper. It is significant in the political context of the time to note that the research in this article was initiated by the Assessment Group (later renamed the Assessment Reform Group) ¹of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) 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 as noted briefly in the previous chapter. There were, therefore, obvious political implications for any form of educational research being conducted at this time, the work of Black and Wiliam being no exception.

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 US was part of a Right wing agenda. This could be seen as being replicated in the UK, as the British educational system took the research from the US and applied it to their own system. The work of Black and Wiliam, therefore, which was to examine how standards were being raised

¹ ARG - the ARG originated in 1989 as the Policy Task Group on Assessment set up by the British Educational Research Association (BERA). The Group presented a symposium at the annual BERA conference in every year throughout the 1990s up to 2004 and again in 2007 and has run seven regional BERA conferences on assessment. 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 (Downloaded from <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110809101133/assessment-reform-group.org/index.html> Oct 2012)

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 started work as the Policy Task Group on Assessment and was funded by the British Educational Research Association. Membership of the group was described as changing slightly over the years, but the major focus of the group did not: they 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. It has also worked closely with teachers, teacher organisations and local authority staff to advance understanding of the roles, purposes and impacts of assessment.” Downloaded from <http://www.aaia.org.uk/afl/assessment-reform-group/> April 2014.

The significance of this fact in relation to this study will be further examined. The award of funding from the Nuffield Foundation however could be seen to minimise the political aspect as they claim political independence owing to the fact they gain income from investments, which are 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> Accessed May 2012).

This describes their beliefs as being underpinned by independent and rigorous research evidence, which has the power to bring about change. The research conducted by Black and Wiliam can be described as fitting this criteria as will be exemplified later in the chapter. The following Nuffield Foundation policy statement shows this:

“The Nuffield Foundation is a charitable trust established in 1943 ...Today, we work to improve social well-being by funding research and innovation in education and social policy. We are also increasing the proliferation and quality of research and professional skills – both in science and social sciences – through our capacity

building programmes. Underpinning all our work is a belief in the importance of independent and rigorous research evidence and its power to bring about change. We do not fundraise or receive funding from the Government. We are financially and politically independent.”

(Downloaded from <http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/education> Accessed May 2012)

At the time this research by Black and Wiliam was being conducted in the UK the Labour government had come to power in a landslide election victory in 1997 and then passed the 1998 Education Act, (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/40/contents>) which had brought together various aspects of educational change and rationalised them. The work by Black and Wiliam will be examined in greater depth later in this chapter and linked back to the political situation at the time. Embodied in the 1998 Act were the requirements for the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA), (established in this format in 1992) which consisted of not less than 10, nor more than 15 members appointed by the Secretary of State for Education.

The functions of this body were:

- a) to keep under review all aspects of the curriculum and all aspects of school examinations and assessment;
- b) to advise the Secretary of State on, and if so requested by him, ...to carry out, programmes of research and development for purposes connected with the curriculum for schools or with school examinations and assessment;
- c) to make arrangements with appropriate bodies for auditing the quality of assessments made in pursuance of assessment arrangements;
- d) to advise the Secretary of State on the exercise of his powers under section 400 (approval of external qualifications) downloaded from:

<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history/pdfs/1996-education-act.pdf>

The fact that SCAA's set up was reviewed at this point, and was embodied in the legislation, has implications for the later political adoption of the work of Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam. This was due to the fact that it was through SCAA and its successor QCA that assessment was regulated.²

² The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA's predecessor) was formed on 1 October 1997 through a merger of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) and the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA). The QCA had had additional powers and duties granted to it by the Education Act 1997, which established the role of the QCA. Under Section 24 of this Act, QCA was granted the right to regulate all external qualifications in England. In April 2004, the QCA launched the National Assessment Agency to take over its role in the delivery and

Although Assessment for Learning (AfL) is considered to be the embodiment of formative assessment the involvement of these ideas relating to the research in the Key Stage 3 Strategy is examined in more detail later in this chapter. AfL can be described as a curriculum development solution to the ideas and concept of formative assessment implementation. A key argument of this thesis is that feedback for learning is a key underpinning process that refines AfL. It is significant that the context of the research into Assessment for Learning is set in should be considered from the political aspect, where the UK government was looking to raise standards, but without providing any direct help in the form of any high quality CPD to teachers at this point. This links to the earlier section which relates to the use of CPD as an agent for change. The CPD framework is needed to implement change as genuine curriculum reform and change of practice in schools which will be addressed throughout this thesis. There are issues which also need to be addressed at this point, notably the problem raised by the terminology which included the word “assessment”, this issue will be addressed throughout this study. The agencies for change included the Department responsible for Education as well as QCA and their role included that referred to by Black and Wiliam (1998: 1) when they maintain that:

“Raising the standards of learning that are achieved through schooling is an important national priority. In recent years, governments throughout the world have been more and more vigorous in making changes in pursuit of this aim”.

This idea will be further examined in later in this c as part of the literature review of the “Black box” series. When the context is examined the fact that Ball (2006: 15) suggests in his work Education Policy and Social Class that:

“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.”

must be considered as significant. This could suggest that the research conducted by Black and Wiliam, which to the uninitiated might appear to be purely based on

administration of National Curriculum assessments. However, on the recommendation of The Sutherland Enquiry the National Assessment Agency was disbanded and its functions subsumed within the management structure of the QCA. On 26 September 2007, DCSF announced that the regulatory functions of the QCA were to become statutorily independent with the creation of a new body, Ofqual. On 8 April 2008, Ofqual began work as the independent regulator of exams and tests in England, accountable to Parliament rather than to government ministers. The remaining work of the QCA was transferred to the QCDA. The QCA was formally dissolved on 1 April 2010 when the QCDA and Ofqual gained their statutory statuses. The QCA was not ‘dissolved’; the QCDA was the same body corporate, just with a new name.

esoteric concerns, in effect had a political dimension and resulted in skewing the agenda and control of project funding.

2.3: The aims of the original research:

The aims and purpose of the original research by Black and Wiliam however was not originally to overtly support the government's policy relating to the National Curriculum at the time 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.”

This quote comes directly from the article *“Inside the Black Box”* and shows Black and Wiliam's thinking and original research purpose. However, the UK government policy of the time was to be built on the use of data from summative tests which informed league tables and this policy will be examined separately and in more detail later in this chapter.

If the title of the pamphlet *Inside the Black box* is taken into account it is possible to examine some theories about the background ideas of the researchers and the way in which they were approaching the research, including their aims, which again will be examined in more detail later in this chapter (2.12). This concept of the Black box will be explored in further detail here; to begin with the idea of the Black box needs to be placed within the context of behaviourist psychology which was summarised by Oates (1994: 25) where:

“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 idea is one of the central concepts in developmental psychology which can be found within a number of textbooks including Oates, *The Foundation of Child Development* (which is the first in a series of four books which form part of the Open University course on child development). An 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 has been stated 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. Mental processes such as thinking, memory, knowing, and problem solving

need to be explored. Knowledge can be seen as schema or symbolic mental constructions. Learning is defined as change in a learner's schemata. A response to behaviourism, people are not "programmed animals" that merely respond to environmental stimuli; people are rational beings that require active participation in order to learn, and whose actions are a consequence of thinking."

(Downloaded from <http://www.learning-theories.com/cognitivism.html> Accessed June 2011).

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

"Skinner (1953) has discussed thought as a refinement of discrimination and generalization responses...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 article (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 idea of the black box, as in this case 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. There are a number of views relating to such educational theories, which are accurately summarised in Roblyer and Edwards (2000: 50):

"One view, which we will call directed instruction, is grounded primarily in behaviourist learning theory and the information-processing branch of cognitive learning theories. The other view, which we will refer to as constructivist, evolved from other branches of thinking in cognitive learning theory.

Constructivists believe that humans construct all knowledge in their minds by participating in certain experiences; learning happens when one constructs both mechanisms for learning and his or her own unique version of the knowledge, coloured by background, experience and aptitudes" (Willis, 1995; Sfand, 1998)"

This conclusion could be said to reflect Black and Wiliam's thinking as *"most constructivists call for instructional intervention"* (Roblyer and Evans, 2000: 62). These ideas link to the ideas of George Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory, as he uses the idea

and examined the way the “Black box” works in terms of human learning. 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 in 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 Assessment for Learning were to progress. However, examining the effects of these psychological learning theories was not the purpose of the research as Black and Wiliam make it clear in their seminal research paper, this discussion is however pertinent as they do not clearly exemplify where their research is grounded.

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, which can be found in section 2.3 of this study. These research questions link to Kelly’s ideas from his work on Personal Construct theory in 1955. This does not mean to say that Black and Wiliam were solely concerned with the psychological processes, as the inference is that the processes in question relate to the experimental methodology and to the survey of the research literature. In the original article there are no overt references to the psychological learning theories and although assumptions must have been made it is very difficult to identify the researcher’s standpoint in regard to this. In subsequent articles they (Black and Wiliam) suggest that the ‘Black Box’ in question is the classroom where these activities take place, rather than anything else, which appears to clarify their thinking. This definition is not, however, part of the dissemination of the original research and as such both this article and subsequent books by the original researchers will be examined in more detail as part of the literature review later in this chapter, as will the previous work on formative assessment seen in section 2.1. It is, however not the purpose of this study to develop a critique of the original concept of formative assessment, but rather to examine the research conducted by Black and Wiliam and place this in a real world context.

2.4: The purpose of the original research:

The purpose of the research conducted by Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam could be seen as reforming practice and policy in the English and Welsh education system with the prime focus being centred on the classroom. This stated purpose in the policy and practice section of the article 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”

The statement made by the original researchers will be reviewed throughout this study and is central to informing the conclusions which I will draw. Consideration needs to be given to the link between the implementation of educational policy change and practice in relation to Continued Professional Development (CPD) and I will examine this in more detail later in this study. This recommendation about moving teaching forward had obvious political implications when it was first written. It is very clear that if the recommendations of the study were adopted this could lead 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). A third recommendation was that there should be a:

“reduction in the content of that curriculum when it is revised for the year 2000” and finally *“further research was recommended.”* (1998: 18)

Not all of these recommendations were adopted, although some were adopted in a limited way. There were examples provided via the KMOFAP project which could be seen to be the living examples described above. There were however no reductions in the content of the National Curriculum and further research was not systematically implemented, although funding was provided for work via the National Strategy. The theory and practice will be examined in more depth in the data and conclusions sections of this study in Chapter 4 and 5. In order to achieve the movement forward suggested by the original researchers it would require the ideas involved with AfL to be disseminated and then adopted across England and Wales, so there are broad ranging implications for the researchers, the government and teachers although it is unclear whether this was the guiding principle of the research. This research paper (Inside the Black box) was produced at this point in time in response to the political will that was driving education and the writers of this were challenging the situation they found themselves in. It was written as previously explained by what became the Assessment Reform Group (ARG) (see footnote 1) and Paul Black, one of the authors was the chair of the TGAT (Task Group on Assessment and Testing). This had obvious implications, as he had experience working within the political dimension with the TGAT report being presented to the then Secretary of State for Education in 1987, although the political implications of this connection were not obvious from the paper itself. The significance of this will be examined later in this study as will the issue of terminology which

can be raised again here. 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 Assessment for Learning was the confusion created by using ambiguous terminology. This terminology will be examined in greater detail and is that linked to the key concepts of “assessment” and “testing”.

Another suggestion particularly relevant to this study was made in the conclusions of the original article, which related to several key purposes; this recommends that further research should be initiated and that it should be carried out by a variety of different teachers and should take place in a wide range of schools. Taken to a logical conclusion this can be interpreted as a rolling programme of Action Research projects co-ordinated by the researchers in order to develop the ideas they are postulating, as well as assessing their effectiveness, again this has implications for teaching and learning as well as for CPD. The accepted paradigm of CPD for teachers, at that point in time, can be described as more of a passive one, in that CPD tended to be “done” to teachers, in that they attended courses. Whereas the idea of teachers as “active” action researchers has deep underlying significance for me as I have taken this approach and developed my own research, reconceptualising the idea of Assessment for Learning as a result of conducting the study on which this thesis is based. The conventional view of CPD is often limited to attendance at in-service courses, workshops or formal study. (http://www.ifl.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/5501/J11734-IfL-CPD-Guidelines-08.09-web-v3.pdf). The rationale for the idea of the action research model will be discussed further in the methodology chapter of this study as will the “improve” paradigm embedded within this research framework. The discussion of the findings relating to the implications for CPD will also be examined in more detail in the Conclusions sections of this thesis.

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

The original research which was published in 1998 in the research paper “*Inside the Black Box*,” was something that proved to be significant, but happened from a fairly small-scale beginning. Black and Wiliam state that (Black & Wiliam, 2003: 6):

“For other academics, we produced a 30,000-word journal article (Black & Wiliam, 1998a), which, together with short responses from invited commentators from around the world, formed the whole of a special issue of the journal Assessment in Education. As well as detailing our findings, we tried to lay out as clearly as possible how we had constructed the review so that, while we would not necessarily expect

different authors to reach identical conclusions, we hoped that the process which we followed was verifiable and could be repeated. To make the findings accessible to practitioners and policy makers, we produced a twenty-one page booklet in A5 format entitled Inside the black box.”

As previously stated it is not the purpose of this Action Research project to examine all the academic articles but to use the most relevant paper, the twenty one page booklet. Subsequently there was then a series of research papers produced relating to the role of Assessment for Learning in a number of different subjects, including Science, Mathematics, English, Geography and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). There are others including one on Design Technology and another on Modern Foreign Languages. From these apparently small beginnings, which originally seemed to be aimed at a limited range of educational researchers as well as a limited number of 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 stakeholders. The foreword to the training materials set the scene and gave the purpose of the strategy as:

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

It should be noted at this point that the phraseology of the previous sentence has been carefully chosen and the “apparent” adoption idea will be examined in much more depth later in the study looking at the Context of the Key Stage 3 Strategy in section 2.6.

These publications were crucial to this project as the seminal text and the Key Stage 3 Strategy inspired this project and began my work as an emergent researcher.

2.6: Context of Key Stage 3 Strategy:

The UK government policy of educational assessment was essentially seen throughout the life of the National Strategies by practitioners and other stakeholders as one of “summative testing” with all the implications that involves, however originally in the early days of the National Curriculum assessment was seen according to Daugherty, 1997, p. 201 as:

“...a complex matter requiring sophisticated procedures and careful use of data for several purposes. Officially at least, the government was embarked on the

development of an assessment system as envisaged by TGAT, with formative purposes, directly in support of student learning at its centre.”

This statement suggests that at the start of the National Curriculum journey the government was prepared to accept the report of the eminent TGAT group chaired by Paul Black, but as time went on this changed. According to Daugherty (1997) this was due to the fact that both teachers and the designers of the tests used for the National Curriculum Assessments were more used to norm referencing models rather than the criteria referenced models proposed by TGAT. The move away from the TGAT model and towards summative testing was made in the early 1990's. This began with the appointment of Kenneth Clarke as the Secretary of State for Education. Black states in his work 'Learning, League Tables and National Assessment: opportunity lost or hope deferred?' in the Oxford Review of Education (57) that:

“Thus the four principles on which a system should be based--criterion referencing, progression, formative and moderated--were distilled.”

The mid 1990's following the UK governments Dearing Review removed almost all of the last vestiges of the TGAT model with externally set and marked tests for the end of KS2 and KS3 in the “core subjects” of English Maths and Science. It would appear that the government naturally favoured summative assessment processes over formative ones. This would seem to be a reversion to lower order approaches and avoids anything that might appear to be more “complex” or sophisticated. This again raises the issue of the terminology where the meaning of assessment is equated with the idea of testing. The reasons behind this are obscure but could be said to be related to the following idea from (Taras, 2005: 246):

“Explicit parameters go some way towards creating a shared forum for assessment and therefore allowing transparency of process, although within any given context, meanings can and do vary between individuals (for a discussion of ‘fuzzy criteria’ see Sadler, 1989)”

In 1996 the effects of the testing at KS3 were described as:

“schools essentially perceive the national tests as examinations without certification”

Radnor quoted in Daugherty (EAQ: 212).

Dylan Wiliam pointed out:

“claims that National Curriculum Assessments will be both reliable and valid cannot be taken seriously ...At the moment they are used as high status labels that make a product seem attractive.” Wiliam quoted in Daugherty 1997 (EAQ: 214).

These statements came from journal articles produced before the dissemination of the Key Stage 3 Strategies; however, the concepts they reflect are important in the development of the ideas relating to the National Strategies. The National Curriculum itself had been described by Hughes (1997: 188) as:

“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. The next developments were significant as they were the beginning of the National Strategies prompted originally 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 beginnings of the development of the National Strategies in Literacy and Numeracy, which began as a support project but were then developed subsequently by the next government. These Strategies developed to include the Assessment for Learning Strategy, the one under consideration in this research project. At the same time there were also revisions to the National Curriculum itself, with another review of secondary provision in 2005, which became statutory in 2008, when Key Stage 3 tests for English and Maths were discontinued with Teacher Assessment remaining in place.

As far as the UK government was concerned the National Strategies as a whole were introduced originally 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.

As a result of the UK government's development of the Assessment for Learning Strategy the following definitions were disseminated to all schools via the training materials, as exemplified by the following slides. This could be said to exemplify the idea of CPD as a *passive* one where information and design for change was presented to staff via a hierarchical model, which will be further examined later in this chapter.

The following slide (figure 2) gives the definitions of Assessment for Learning taken from the work of the Assessment Reform Group and presented to school staff. The characteristics of the ARG have been examined earlier in this chapter in section 2.2.

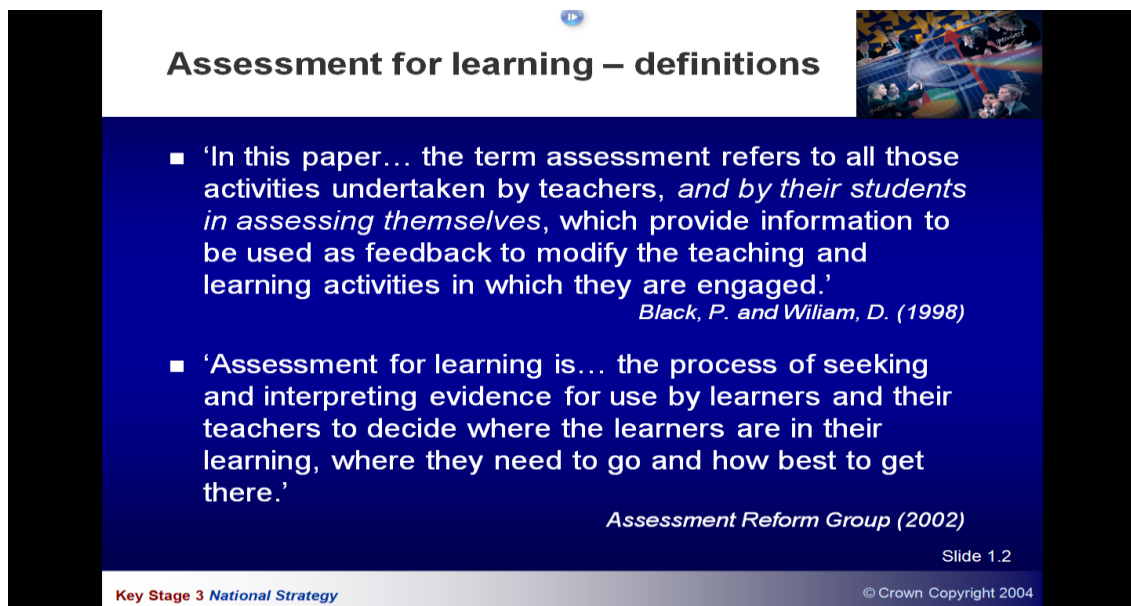


Figure 2: A slide showing assessment for learning the definitions as shown in the DCSF training materials.

The key characteristics of Assessment for Learning were then defined, again as part of the training materials, in order to ensure that all schools were provided with the same opportunities for understanding these ideas, as exemplified by the slide in figure 3.

These key characteristics are taken from the research paper “Assessment for Learning; Beyond the Black Box” 1999 whose stated aim was to “*follow up the work of Black and Wiliam and take it further*” (1999: inside front cover)

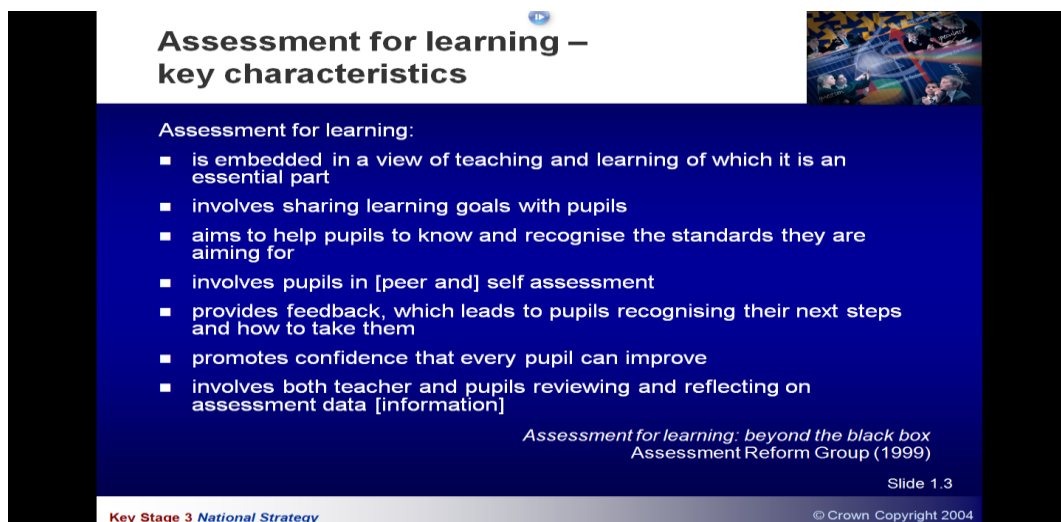


Figure 3: A slide showing the key characteristics in assessment for learning in the DCSF training materials.

The summary of the characteristics come from Page 7 of the research paper with the only deviation being in the sixth bullet point, as exemplified in figure 3, 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 later in this chapter as 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 which will be examined throughout this study.

When examining the training materials it could be extrapolated from them that the government in fact was suggesting that schools follow an implicit action research type framework in order to implement the Assessment for Learning training materials. At this point it is important to note that there was a lack of any clear CPD strategy to back up the implementation and any form of linked evaluative research of the impact. The dissemination of the materials was given to the Local Authorities across England to deal with and the support given to do this was indirect and unclear. The examination of the problems involved with the CPD implementation will be examined in more depth in the chapter on methodology, as this was one feature of the action research framework undertaken by myself. The ideas relating to the Action Research type of CPD delivery can be clearly exemplified by the following slide (figure 4) from the training materials.

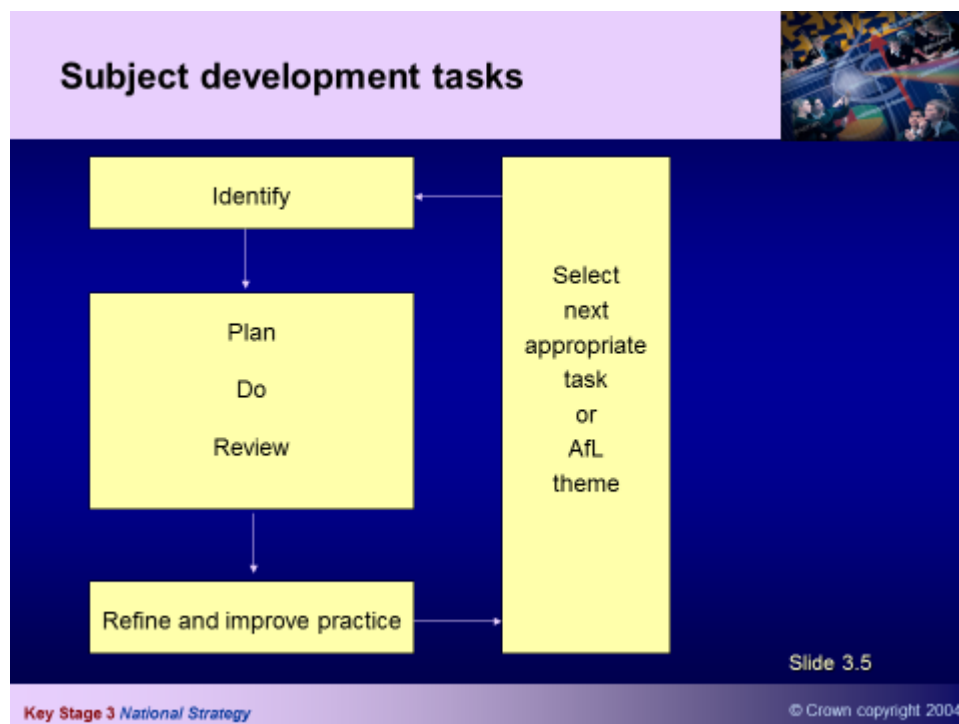


Figure 4: A slide showing the subject development tasks as part of the DCSF training materials.

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 is only implicit however, it was not explicitly stated. This reflects the cyclical nature of Action Research, which can be seen in Chapter 3 and the Action Research process adopted for this PhD project. These ideas are similar to those exemplified by the quote from McNiff and Whitehead (2011: 35), which states:

“Action enquiries do not aim for closure, nor do practitioners expect to find certain answers. The process itself is the methodology (Mellor, 1998) and is frequently untidy, haphazard and experimental. One step leads to another and one cycle of action-reflection leads to another.”

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 5). It also accurately reflects my own experience throughout the duration of this research as exemplified in Chapter 3 of this thesis. It is linked to the methods and processes of Action Research which was adopted for this PhD project and which I explain in Chapter 4. This suggestion could then be clearly linked to the idea of the cyclical Action Research framework discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.1 and Chapter 3.3

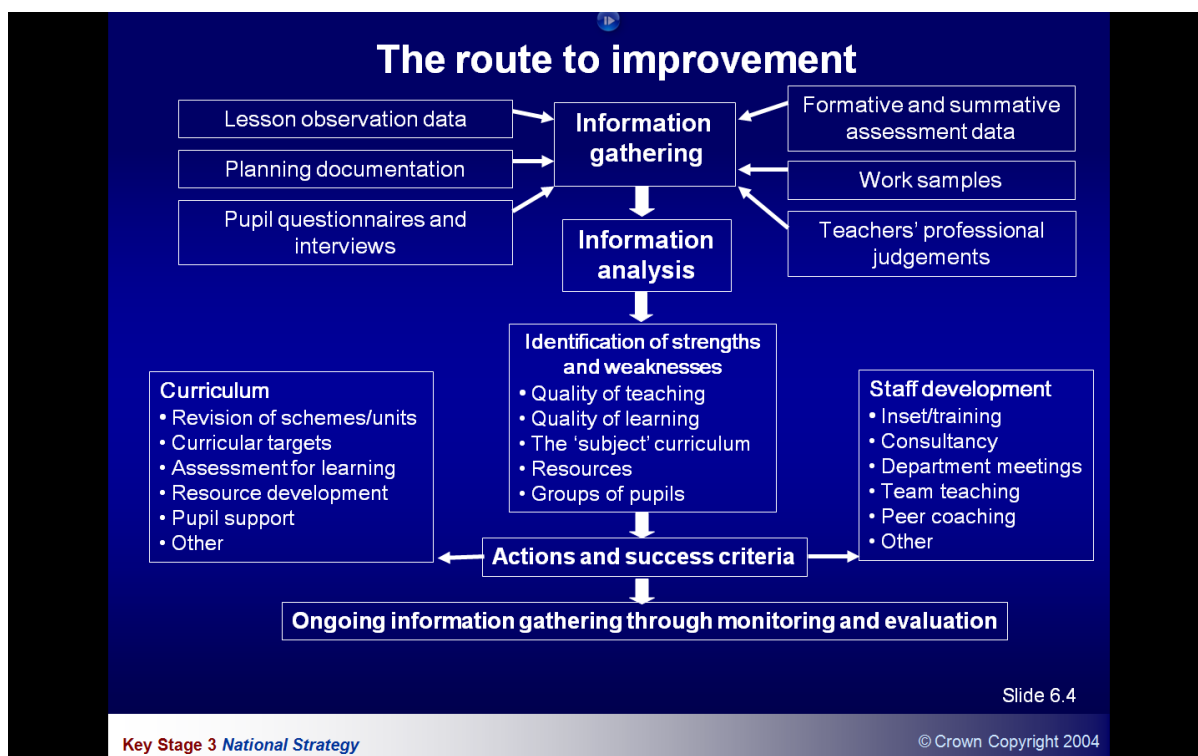


Figure 5: A slide showing the route to improvement taken from the DCSF training materials.

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”, which was issued 01-2004 by the then DfES. This CD-ROM was part of the original training materials disseminated to all maintained schools in England and Wales. These materials were swiftly followed up in 2005 with a 2nd edition. In doing a comparison between the two editions it is possible to see that the 2nd edition contains the same materials as the previous edition, but also includes a new section, which includes the results of further research. This further research by Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam was written up as a book entitled *Assessment for Learning; Putting it into Practice* and this subsequent research will be examined in more detail both later in this chapter and in the section on methodology; in order to explain how it influenced changes in the Strategy and my own practice examined in this study.

These results in the training materials refer to different aspects of Assessment for Learning, one of which is demonstrated in Figure 5 from one of the slides from the 2nd edition of the Training Materials. 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

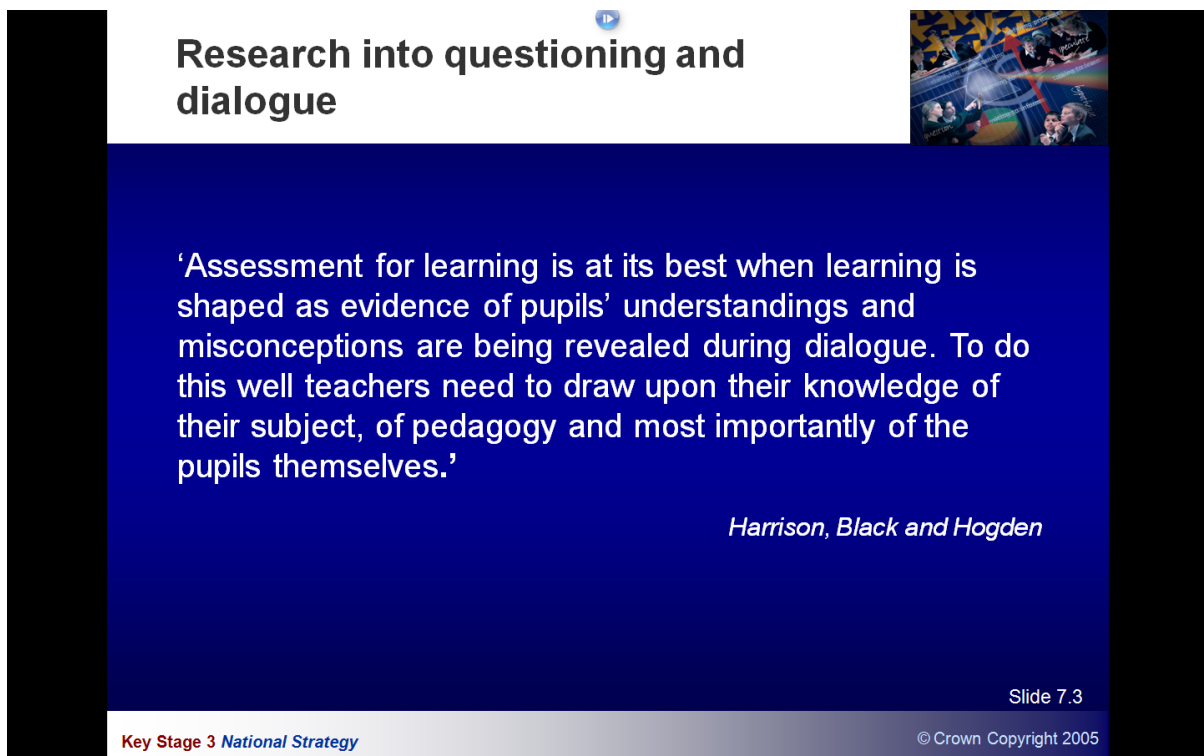


Figure 6: A slide showing the research into questioning into questioning and dialogue, from the DCSF materials.

It was this group comprising of Black and Wiliam who developed the original research into Assessment for Learning and whose work was then followed up by working with Christine Harrison, Clare Lee and Bethan Marshall. So it is interesting to note that they were involved in the dissemination of materials approved by the government of the day. Christine Harrison began working on the AfL project and is currently Senior Science Lecturer at King's College London; Clare Lee was the research fellow on the project and is still involved with CPD as a teacher advisor, while Bethan Marshall is a senior lecturer also at King's College. At least some of the original researchers were therefore not antipathetic to the use of their material in a political context, although not all the original researchers apparently feature on the training materials.

Interestingly the researcher who is not mentioned on the results of the research slide is Professor Dylan Wiliam who from 1996 to 2001 was the Dean and Head of the School of Education, at the Institute of Education (part of the University of London) and from 2001 to 2003, was Assistant Principal of the College. Given that Dylan Wiliam was involved in the original research on Assessment for Learning, and that he co-authored the seminal texts on

this subject it is significant to note that he was not explicitly involved in the official research relating to the implementation of the National Strategies. He has been highly critical of the National Strategies subsequently and as a result his views will be examined in more detail throughout this research investigation. They will also be examined in the conclusions section in order to determine if they are consistent across the period and will be identified as 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 Departments 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.”

(Downloaded from:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmchilsch/344/344i.pdf> 2012)

The implications of this statement are that the Department for Education was out of tune with teachers who saw the guidance as more of a requirement and the members of the committee who felt differently to the civil servants. It should be pointed out that 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 made here is that the politicians in this case are 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 ideas relating to assessment be it formative or summative despite the fact that the concept of assessment 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”

The next statement gives it in the format in which was issued to all Local Authorities:

“The Secondary National Strategy builds on and has grown out of the success of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. The Key Stage 3 Strategy began in 2000 with a subject focus, initially English and Mathematics. In the third year of the strategy, this was broadened through a cross-curricular approach using whole-school initiatives and the behaviour and attendance strand. The work of the Key Stage 3 Strategy has been extended across the 11 to 16 age range.”

(Downloaded from <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/secondary/ks3/> Accessed August 2010).

As part of the Rose review of 2008 into the primary curriculum the point was made that (2008: 38):

“few heads and teachers rejected the principles of good assessment... their concerns centred on the way in which the outcomes of tests are reported.”

The point of this is that Rose and indeed most head teachers and teachers were making the assumption that assessment meant summative testing so in order to do AfL justice we should examine these ideas of different paradigms of assessment in much more detail. The different understanding of these concepts will be examined in greater depth later in this study.

In comparison to the concepts of assessment in place in the political sphere we must examine the alternative assumptions underpinning formative assessment, which was incorporated into the National Strategies as the Assessment for Learning strand. For the original researchers AfL was more than a tick list 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 (LAs) had in common, were then utilised by the LAs and 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 an ad hoc variety of ways depending on the interest and enthusiasm of the member of staff who had to disseminate the materials and put the policy into practice. This ad hoc nature was as a result of the implementation of the National Strategies which will be examined in more detail later in this thesis.

In order to understand the context of this study in relation to the National Strategies it is important to note that I was tasked with disseminating the materials to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of the school I was working in at the time; the SLT then decided how the materials were to be delivered to the rest of the staff. At this time there were no specific strategies offered by the Local Authority in order to deliver these messages. It was left to the individual schools to develop their own strategies and the situation could be described as a CPD vacuum, which schools had to fill. This passive approach to CPD also reflects poor Quality Assurance systems measuring the quality and consistency of the implementation of AfL. The ideas relating to the dissemination of the training materials and the links to CPD will be examined in more detail and linked to other types of professional development with reference to the work undertaken by Steven Coombs and Fiona Gardner (Gardner and Coombs, 2010) later in this study. At this point, however, the following description (Leat & Higgins, 2000) can be seen as describing the situation of the dissemination of the National Strategy (2003: 3):

“Current curriculum developments tend to be manifested through curriculum packages, bundled in a folder, a box or ring binder...they are stamped with authority, either governmental or from research findings”

To return to the political arena briefly we can look, with hindsight, at the ideas contained above and Wiliam (2011: 43) in explaining the context of formative assessment said:

“I think the following definition works pretty well. An assessment functions formatively to the extent that evidence about student achievement is elicited, interpreted and used by teachers, learners or their peers to make decisions about the next steps in instruction that are likely to be better, or better founded, than the decisions they would have made in the absence of that evidence”

These ideas were significant because they marked a shift in the thinking from the idea that assessment meant *test* and that this default setting of the concept of assessment being part of a behaviourist summative assessment paradigm, a discussion of this in depth will appear as part of the conclusions in this study. This epistemological shift could be said to have affected decisions once the idea was adopted as part of the Key Stage 3 Strategies and can also therefore be used to explain the paradigm shift required from a policy which was dependent purely on summative systems of testing to one that integrates assessment into a more on-going pedagogical process, i.e. formative assessment linked to active learning processes, which involve feedback. It could also have what is described as ‘Feed-forward’ pedagogical strategies, which could be utilised by everyone engaged in the learning environment; that is teachers, students, the designers of materials and tests. Thus, it could signal a paradigm shift from behaviourist notions of testing to a more constructivist interpretation. This shift actually never happened in its entirety, but using the Key Stage 3 Strategy and ideas related to AfL some small steps were made in this direction, for example this thesis, and the work done by Local Authority Advisers and working groups.

2.7: Starting point of the current research:

It is at this point that the context of this particular research project needs to be established. It has been claimed by Leat & Higgins (2000: 2) that:

“Joyce, Calhoun and Hopkins (1997) drawing on evidence from both sides of the Atlantic conclude that the main reason for the failure of programmes intended to eradicate the disadvantages of poverty is the failure to support them with adequate professional development.”

The most significant part of this study is the latter part of this quote. The training for the Key Stage 3 Strategy was a key moment in the process for me as a starting point of this study as I was inspired by the training materials to work on the ideas they contained and

originally conducted a small scale project, in conjunction with the Local Authority Consultant/Advisor, in School A.

I became involved with the Key Stage 3 Strategy AfL strand originally owing to the fact that I expressed an interest in assessment to my line manager at the time. At this point my understanding of the ideas linked to assessment were, at this point in time, aligned to the default setting for the vast majority of teachers, in that, I assumed that assessment was basically summative and could only be used in a diagnostic way towards the end of the taught courses. This understanding at the beginning of the Action Research cycles is significant as it provided a starting point.

As a consequence of expressing my interest in assessment and as I was the Head of the Humanities Faculty in School A I was nominated to become involved in the Local Authority training for the cross-curricular aspect of the KS3 Strategy. I was sent as the school representative on the training and from this training there was one immediate result; this was to lead to me conducting a very limited experiment within the confines of the classroom with a group of Key Stage 4 History students.

The aim of this very small-scale project was for me to assess for myself, in my own mind, the usefulness of the materials to which I had been given access. I was, in fact, inspired to attempt this limited experiment by the accessibility of the original research and decided to design my own simple experiment mirroring these ideas. This could be described as a “design experiment” as Cobb et al (2003: 9) explains the intention was to:

“Develop theories, not merely to empirically tune “what works”. These theories are relatively humble as they target domain-specific learning processes.”

Although I wished to replicate the research design exemplified in the literature I also intended to alter some of the parameters to suit my own purposes, starting with the rationale for the choice of group. I had decided to begin with a Year 11 group; who consequently were not involved in the Key Stage 3 Strategy, as the rationale was to conduct the experiment for a group of student for whom I held a valid set of data on; whom I knew well (having taught them as a group for a year, although I had taught two thirds of the group for the previous two years). I also believed the group would respond positively to the experiment if they could see the relevance of it for their own development, due to my previous knowledge of them.

The experiment was fairly simple in design as it was to examine whether students responded to comment only marking, as this was a key point in the original research and the conclusions, which were to be tested, where (Black & Wiliam, 2004: 4):

“Feedback through marking: The provision of comments to pupils helps ... to focus on the learning issues rather than on trying to interpret a mark or grade.”

The experiment was based on exam feedback from the end of Year 10 exams as: *“The aftermath of tests can also be an occasion for formative work”* Black & Wiliam (2004: 4) and required the results for the exam being shared with the students on a comment only basis using the exam criteria. This idea reflected the information about grades versus comment only marking given in the Strategy. The students were then given sample answers (taken from their exam papers anonymously and typed up) that they had to comment on using the criteria provided. They were then given their own answers back and had to see if their work fitted the criteria. What in fact they proved was that they were quite adept at this process, although on occasion they could be quite harsh with their criticisms of themselves. Looking back on this very simplistic experiment what can be noted is the fact that I had used a summative piece of assessment in the shape of a mock exam in a formative way, the idea of which is key to making the paradigm shift mentioned earlier in section 2.5. The objective of the lesson (for the students to set targets) had been shared with students at the start of the lesson. As this experiment was taking place very early in the life of the Strategies on this occasion I had used another comment in Black and Wiliam’s study in order to complete the design of the experiment. This particular comment states that (2004: 4):

“sharing the objectives of the lesson or topics with students was mentioned by most of the teachers through a variety of techniques. About half the plans included references to helping the students understand the marking criteria used for investigative or exploratory work, generally using exemplars from students from previous years.”

The outcomes of this limited experiment provided me with an interesting set of short-term responses. These responses, which were mostly oral, were noteworthy as one particular pupil requested that his coursework be returned in order to apply what he had learned from the exam feedback. This was a significant development, as this particular pupil was not at that point generally noted for his deep reflection on his own learning. This request reflected not just what he had learned, but the fact that it was transferable and he was able with no external prompting to apply it to a different situation. Over the longer term lessons from this exercise were apparently learned by a number of students as they referred back to the targets, which they had set as a result of familiarising themselves with the criteria, on a regular basis, throughout the remainder of the course.

This limited experiment, which was key to the context of this study, and the fact that the results proved to be successful can be seen as part of the Action Research cycles which

will be discussed in more depth in both the Literature Review later in this chapter and the methodology in Chapter 3. These results were shared with other staff within the school; this was done through a variety of forums, including Heads of Faculty Meetings and Professional Development days. This sharing of the experiment was implemented in order to model the fact that the principles of Assessment for Learning, as disseminated by the Strategy, could be seen, in a real context as a system which can work with pupils for whom other methods might not have been previously as motivating or as effective.

It was as a result of this small-scale experiment and the apparent successes it generated which inspired me to incorporate more of the ideas from the training materials into my own classroom practice on a regular basis. Owing to the fact I believed in the ideas and as a result of the success with the students in the school I became a champion for the ideas within the school, an idea from Shirley Clarke in *Formative Assessment in the Secondary Classroom*. (2005) which will be examined in the next section (2.8). I was also able to develop this further by working collaboratively with the Consultant for Assessment for Learning from the County in order to develop the use of Assessment for Learning across the school. The Local Authority had employed a number of consultants, mostly former Heads of Departments or Faculties to work across a range of schools in the area in order to assist with the implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategies. A number of these consultants also had roles, which combined their Key Stage 3 Strategy responsibilities with those relating to subject specialisms.

2.8: The school setting:

In relation to the context it is important to note that the school itself where the data was originally being collected and the research was taking place, was effectively a new school at KS3 from September 2005. This context is important in the development of the research as it was within this framework that I was working. The changes, which occurred were as a result of incorporating Years 7 and 8 into the school for the first time as a consequence of a review of local provision for secondary age pupils. The review meant that three local middle schools closed in July 2005 and School A had all years at KS3 (7, 8 and 9) for the first time, previously students had entered the school at the beginning of Year 9.

As a consequence of the changing numbers the school had to appoint new staff to fulfil its requirements, some of the new staff were from the closed middle schools, other staff were Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT's) and there were also some experienced staff that were appointed from elsewhere. This meant that I was able to work with a range of staff and

observe practice across a range of teaching and learning situations. I was supported in this by the senior leadership of the school, who allowed me to work with a variety of members of staff ranging from Heads of Faculty and Department to Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs). This significant expansion of staff as well as the admission of three year groups (7, 8 and 9) at once had raised the issue of consistency in assessment practices, as well as in teaching and learning in general, it also led to new opportunities for me to work within and across Faculties.

The original research on AfL formed part of my training materials for the members of staff in the school, along with the Key Stage 3 Strategy materials and this was delivered on Professional Development days, along with more targeted support for different Faculties and support for individual members of staff. The original materials I put together to support these ideas can be found in Appendix 1. It was at this point that I began to develop a theory that would eventually result in reconceptualising the ideas originally developed by Black and Wiliam; this began with some more peer discussion with my line manager and my doctoral supervisor.

Returning to the context, the school was eligible for support from the Local Authority in relation to the Key Stage 3 Strategies; Assessment for Learning in particular, and this enabled me to work with the Local Authority consultant. As a result of this co-operation I was able to elicit information on the views relating to Assessment for Learning across the County, which proved to be valuable in comparing experiences between schools, although it must be pointed out that much of this comparison is anecdotal and not obtained as a result of direct observation or empirical evidence.

As time went on the context of the research then moved on, as over the period of time of the study I moved from the school where I commenced the research. In this move it was not only a change of schools but also of Local Authority areas and involved a significant change in my role. Although my role changed I was fortunately able to continue with the research in the new school context, as I became a member of the school leadership team given responsibility for teaching and learning. This allowed me to use the work I had begun on Assessment for Learning so as to develop the skill sets of the teachers in another whole school setting. What was also useful was to compare the responses between the two different school communities to the training provided. The context of the second school was somewhat different as it was already established as a fully comprehensive secondary school of 1500 pupils, which included a post 16 provision for approximately 200 students. The comparative work between the two schools and the impact that the training had is an important part of this

study, but there is also a wider context in which the research was carried out. The rationale for the methodology of working in an authentic school setting will be problematized in a later chapter as living Action Research theory and the reality of an ongoing social situation. This could be described as an unpredictable grounded theory research paradigm. This will be linked to the authentic changes described in Chapter 3, which will detail a deeper rationale for this living Action Research journey.

2.9: Ideas relating to the context of the study:

There are a number of ideas relating to the context which this study was part of. There was the political context, which as a Head of Faculty I was aware of, but at the time did not seem to be of crucial importance. As an individual, ideas such as the role of champion appeared to be more useful to me at the time and so can be seen as being important in the context of this research study. This particular role was described by Shirley Clarke (2005: 4) in “Formative Assessment in the Secondary Classroom” where she states:

“Once teachers really get going with formative assessment they can find the impact on student learning is so great they cannot go back to what they were doing before. However it needs a “champion” in a school for the first few years to keep it high profile.”

Reflecting on the context of the time I can see that in reality it was this role that I undertook over the first couple of years in School A. I was seen as the champion in line with the ideas expressed by Shirley Clarke as I had a role relating to a whole school responsibility for Assessment for Learning, which I was given by the Head Teacher as a result of my developing interest in the subject and the results of my small scale research project. This reflected the idea suggested by Coleman in Education Management Administration and Leadership (2007: 479):

“...for many practitioners, securing tangible improvements in conditions in schools is a fundamental driver behind their decision to undertake research (Coleman and Lumby, 1999; Barker, 2005).”

This role enabled me to work across the whole school, which in itself changed the direction of the project, although I was given a small amount of time for the work there was no official recognition of my developments by either the school or the Local Authority and I used the experience mostly for my own professional development. The project became an official doctoral study shortly into the work on the AfL strategy, and I wanted it to be externally validated at this level in order to develop my own understanding of scholarship,

but also in order to inform my own and others practice using a theoretical framework. Although there was no official recognition of my developments a circumstance which does not reflect the ideas in Muijs and Harris (2006: 2) in Teacher Education where they explain that:

“Within the literature the concept of ‘teacher leadership’ is defined in various ways (see Harris and Muijs, 2001). However, most commonly it is interpreted as comprising of the formal leadership roles that teachers undertake that have both management and pedagogical responsibilities i.e. head of department, subject co-ordinator, key stage co-ordinator; and the informal leadership roles that include coaching, leading a new team and setting up action research groups. Teacher leadership is conceptualised as a set of behaviours and practices that are undertaken collectively.”

This study was one, which would be encompassed by this concept of distributed leadership, although it is quite difficult to establish if the lack of official support was a common problem across a variety of projects or whether it was limited to Action Research projects relating to the National Strategies. For the implementation of the National Strategies in schools Senior Leadership Team (SLT) support and vision was the link to any change in schools. This links to the ideas postulated by Fullan (2007: 292) where he states that:

“when standards of practice and cultural change are working together, we will create powerful mutually connected forces of change.”

2.10: The wider political setting:

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

“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 that is observable and independent of human consciousness. 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 (see section 2.6) and as the study progressed the political landscape changed, which was also reflected in the changing nature of the study. The detail of the changes to the political landscape and the effect this has had on education in general and this study in particular will be reflected subsequently, but more importantly will also inform the conclusions. Where possible these will be extrapolated from the macro to the micro level in relation to individual schools. The political landscape moved from the central tenet of Labour policy at the opening of the study to the realignment of certain institutions under the coalition government; notably the changes made to QCDA (see footnote 2) and the recently renamed Department for Education, a department which has moved through a variety of names reflecting the different political interpretations placed on its work by different governments and their ministerial priorities. Linked to these changes will be the examination of the pedagogy and shifts in political ideology impacting on different attitudes to pedagogical approaches which underpins these developments, Examination of these ideas will follow in subsequent chapters.

2.11: Context of the Action Research Framework of this study:

It is at this point that the context of the study within an Action Research framework needs to be established. The study is based on the ‘improve’ paradigm of such social research (Coombs & Smith, 2003) and reflects the ideas expressed by Whitehead and McNiff (2006: 13) where they state that:

“Practitioners investigate their own practice, observe, describe and explain what they are doing in company with one another, and produce their own explanations for what they are doing and why they are doing it.”

The work of Coombs and Smith validates authentic social enquiries, including Action Research projects within the “prove” paradigm. In these cases they seek a social manifesto of change based on improvements rather than meet or prove a hypothesis or test question. This fundamentally describes the processes through which I, as the researcher, was involved in. This study was an attempt to investigate the implementation of a government strategy within

a *living* institutional framework, and I as the researcher in this study observed its implementation as a participant hence the rationale of being both a living and observant participant; this links to the methodology chosen as described in Chapter 3. I then used the information obtained to describe and explain my own and others practice and examine the implications this had across a number of schools so as to feed back for purposes of improvement to self and wider practice. This was an attempt to reconceptualise the nature and core purpose of the social experiment; which was to implement a specific piece of government strategy and place it in a real world context. This was a key point in my learning journey as I articulated this point, which established my understanding of the nature of this project.

As a researcher I was looking to examine my own practice and took as my starting point the question posed by Whitehead, 1998 of Action Research:

“How do I improve my practice?” and from this original limited experiment I then moved onto examine how I impacted on other people and their practice as well as continuously re-examining my own practice, over a specified period of time.

This reflects the epistemology developed by the Action Research theorists, particularly Whitehead and McNiff (2006: 23) who suggests that:

“If you believed that you were part of the world and not a fly on the wall, you would probably see knowledge as something you create, in company with other people who are also creating their own knowledge.”

This in turn led to the understanding that the methodologies I was using were significant and valid as Whitehead and McNiff (2006: 23) state:

“Methodology refers to a theory of how we do things...if you perceive yourself as a participant in the world, interacting with others, you may see your interactions as a process of creating new knowledge individually and collectively. You would test any provisional understandings against the critiques of your companions. This living process would require an openness to new possibilities and a resistance to closure.”

As a result of the work being aligned with the living theories of Action Research I have made the conscious decision to refer to myself and my research throughout this study in the first person. The use of the term ‘I’ is significant in this work as it as a result of my own examination of the ideas generated by the UK government and applied by a school such that my understanding of my own practice and that of others has developed and been refined over the period of this study. As a consequence the research became an autobiographical account of personal and organisational change and a narrative of authentic living experiences akin to

Harre's social episodes (1999) as reported by Coombs (1995) and Coombs and Smith (2003). This reconceptualization of the nature and core purpose of the social experiment was a key development in my understanding of the living theories of Action Research.

2.12: Conclusions relating to the context of this research:

The context of this research is highly significant, as without the changing political landscape, then the research itself could not be seen to reconceptualise the ideas relating to AfL. This could be seen as a real life interpretation and can also be seen as a hybrid between grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and living educational theory (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006). This can be seen as a point where the emergent new knowledge has the potential to be transformational as well as being a contribution to knowledge within the educational field. There are a great many quotes pertinent to this but perhaps the most significant to the way I, and indeed many of my colleagues felt, are those which were expressed by Dylan Wiliam (2011: 29) in a recent book about Embedded Formative Assessment where he explains how teachers feel about new developments:

“One year it's language across the curriculum; the next year, it's 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.”

This quote does indeed summarise how many teachers felt relative to my empirical observations and experiences, about the National Strategies and subsequent developments and it is significant to note that the original researcher in the shape of Dylan Wiliam is apparently critical of the variety of initiatives which education has been subjected to over the past few years. This view will again be examined in more detail later in this study and the views of a variety of stakeholders will be researched and evaluated in more detail, the conclusions section of this study will be particularly focussed on this aspect of the study. The next sections however will examine more thoroughly the seminal text and other important pedagogical theories, which underpin the idea of Assessment for Learning as it was implemented in England and Wales through the National Strategies. The dichotomy between this and the original intentions of the originators of the theory will also be critiqued.

2.13: Inside the Black Box Raising standards through classroom assessment:

This thesis is based on an Action Research/case study approach looking at the reconceptualising of Assessment for Learning within the educational and political climate of England over the period 2003 to 2011. This section examines the seminal text in detail.

I have chosen to begin this section by examining the short research paper entitled *Inside the Black Box Raising standards through classroom assessment* by Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam published by NferNelson of London in 1998. The key academic fields which are being investigated in this literature review are the ideas relating to the work of Black and Wiliam on Assessment for Learning (AfL) and the concept of utilising an Action Research framework. In this study I will be examining the concept of using an Action Research approach to reconceptualise one of the National Strategies and consequently will review the appropriate literature. The key findings from this approach, to reconceptualise Assessment for Learning will be discussed in the conclusions chapter (Chapter 5). However the key findings will relate also to the use of the Action Research framework and the impact of the National Strategies on my own and other peoples' practice.

The reason for the choice of Black and Wiliam's short research article to begin this section is because it is the key foundation for all work on Assessment for Learning and helped inspire me to develop my own practitioner research leading to this thesis. This work builds on earlier work completed in the US and UK on formative assessment, discussed previously in this chapter (2.1). There are implications in this work on learning pedagogy for AfL, which will be considered in line with the development of the academic framework of this thesis.

The ideas below come from the article "Inside the Black Box" which shows Black and Wiliam's thinking (1998). (The concept of formative assessment will be discussed in more detail later having been touched on earlier in this chapter in 2.1). Although the political context of the original research has been mentioned briefly earlier in the chapter (2.2), it will be considered in more depth in subsequent chapters. The aims and purpose of the original research was not to overtly support the UK government's policy relating to the National Curriculum which was developed following the 1985 Education Reform Act, initiated by Kenneth Baker (the then Secretary of State for Education) and the testing and league tables subsequently allied to it, but rather for Black and Wiliam as previously stated (1998: 2) to examine:

“One aspect of teaching – formative assessment ... this feature is at the heart of effective teaching.”

Black and Wiliam make it clear in the article that they wanted to look at the processes involved with formative assessment and they set themselves three clear research questions (see section 2.12.2 below). It is not clear at this point whether they are purely referring to pedagogical processes in isolation and this idea will be examined later in this study. In subsequent articles such as *Working Inside the Black box* and *Assessment for Learning, Beyond the Black box* previously referred to in this chapter, they suggest that the Black Box in question is the classroom where these activities take place. The title of the original article itself suggests that they are working within the context of behaviourist psychology, as discussed earlier; this idea is clarified in later works by Black, Harrison, Lee & Wiliam (2003) where they state the black box they are working is the classroom.

These concepts are 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 made in this literature review it is crucial to examine the content of the seminal work and show the links to other authors and critical theorists as well as the relevance to this study.

2.13.1: Research questions from Inside the Black Box text:

In order to clarify these postulates the basis of the original research needs to be examined. The original research was looking specifically at the idea of formative assessment and according to the article the researchers; Black and Wiliam (1998: .2) set themselves three questions; notably:

“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 this has yielded up 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 Assessment for Learning.

According to Black and Wiliam the research began with examining the work of other researchers including Fuchs and Fuchs (1986) who were using quantitative evidence of learning gains. This concept of learning gains appears quite frequently in the work on formative assessment discussed in Chapter 2.1 and merits further examination at this point. Black and Wiliam reviewed this particular concept in their article in *Assessment in Education Principles Policy and Practice* (1998: 3):

“(Fontana & Fernandes, 1994). The students of a further 20 Portuguese teachers who were taking another course in education at the time served as a control group. 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. This links to the question related to terminology of assessment and the apparent default setting used for this term which is integral to this study. The literature review conducted as part of the research will be considered in more detail as a separate entity later in this chapter (2.13.4) and it will be linked with an examination of the terminology used by the original researchers.

2.13.2: Research Paradigm:

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

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

This suggests that they are involved in 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, a theory which will again be examined later in this study. The “improve” paradigm is explored in Coombs and Smith (2003) who underlined the social learning benefits of participatory Action Research by teachers’ operating within their own classrooms. This can be seen as a new paradigm interpretation of social research and this approach plus the validation of the Hawthorne Effect as discussed in Chapter 3.7, as part of the methodology used in this study. Black and Wiliam again implicitly refer to these concepts but it should be noted that the Hawthorne effect has

previously been used as a criticism of a ‘researcher’ operating within their own social domain relative to the research assumptions of a positivist paradigm. In examining the second of the research questions proposed in the article the authors Black and Wiliam (1998: 6) inform us that:

“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 clearly 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 seminal text had a clear paradigm but have not been clear in their elucidation of it.

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

“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 for myself as well as nationally and it needs to be examined separately in Chapter 5.3.1 on the reconceptualising of the research in its local and national context.

In relation to the second research question Black and Wiliam (1998: 17) themselves included the contrast between the ways in which formative assessment was viewed by official bodies; it seemed 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 as:

“features in the educational system which 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. The external 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 of these tests hinder the implementation of formative assessment; the knowledge gained from the examination of these ideas are crucial in answering the second of the research questions. The third research question posed by Black and Wiliam (1998: 2) was:

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

...and the first set of findings the study appears to examine is related to the self-esteem of pupils. This is a clear example of where the researchers are using qualitative research methods and at this point note should be taken of the fact that as Gronlund (1981) points out:

"In qualitative data the subjectivity of respondents together contributes to a degree of bias. Validity, then, should be seen as a matter of degree rather than as an absolute state" cited in Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2000: 105). Again validity as a concept is crucial to all forms of educational research and this concept can be defined as *"Validity is an integrated evaluative judgement of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of inferences and actions based on the test scores or other modes of assessment."* Messick, (1989: 13).

Black and Wiliam have clearly reached a substantive conclusion from examining the available evidence and make a definitive statement about the outcomes of the study. As one of their conclusions Black and Wiliam (1998: 9) state that:

"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 assessment which is defined by Black and Wiliam (1998: 2) as:

*"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, a key learning point which is integral to the development of this study will be examined in further depth throughout; conclusions regarding this point will be drawn later in the study in Chapter 5.5.

2.13.3 The conclusions drawn from “Inside the Black Box”:

In this particular research paper the researchers, Black and Wiliam, do not specify a typical methodology used to establish the results, 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. They have drawn a series of conclusions in their commentary which will be examined more closely in this section. Throughout the research paper there is no clear description of the empirical nature of the data or indeed where the data has been collected. Although Black and Wiliam (1998: 11) in their explanation do mention that:

“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 of this statement it is possible that some basic assumptions can be made; these assumptions include the fact that the data has been collected from original sources. These assumptions are made based on the language of the paper which refers to “*recorded examples*”. However the research paper 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’ articles. 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 validity of the data being presented.

In the research paper 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, (Black and Wiliam, 1998: 4) which state that:

“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. This measurement of the impact of AfL on learning gains was something which was later fixed on by a variety of different agencies to promote the idea of Assessment for Learning as a part of the National Strategy; it appears to have been given particular significance given the political situation and the development of government policy, which has previously been mentioned in

this chapter 2.4. These ideas 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 reflect the original researchers thinking. This will be again examined in greater depth in the conclusions section of this thesis, as it proves to be another key finding.

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 Assessment for Learning. 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 (1998: 63) states in an article in the Oxford Review of Education it was conducted as part of:

“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 description could not be described as explaining quantitative gains as the phrase “larger than” is not a quantitative measure. As has been stated earlier these studies were important as at the time the government was looking to drive up standards as discussed in the political context earlier in this chapter (2.5) The definition of standards can be seen as “referring to the achievement of students.” As a consequence any research which could show a statistically significant improvement, in measurable outcomes, 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; as previously referred to. This political interest is evidenced by the work of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in their Programme for International Student Assessment (Pisa) rankings:

“The approaches to standard-setting that OECD countries have pursued range from the definition of broad educational goals up to the formulation of concise performance expectations in well-defined subject areas.” (Downloaded from <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/46624007.pdf> Accessed March 2013).

It is this concern with the position of the UK in these ‘international league tables’ which impacted on the teaching and learning strategies and on government policies; this in turn led to the utilisation of the research as part of the Key Stage 3 National Strategies.

2.13.4: Problems posed by the text:

The way in which the research was written up 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 seminal text on a subject without providing the reader with empirical evidence could be seen as a weakness and is visible in this particular piece of research.

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 article summarises the results of the research and the ways it is looking to move teaching forward. Black and Wiliam (1998: 15) put forward the proposition that:

“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 this was not developed any further by the original researchers. This could create problems when reading the text as this point in particular resonated with me, when I began to examine the literature, as once it was followed up it would impinge directly on my own professional practice as well as that of my colleagues. As a result of following up this statement I have been examining ways to reconceptualise the ideas expressed by the original researchers. It was this concept of the application of AfL which was developed by the government of the time as part of the National Strategy which I was examining, in conjunction with the ideas postulated 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 this 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 (2009: 1) in her article on the Misrepresentation of Assessment for Learning suggests that:

“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 such as prescribed lesson formats, “booster classes” and revision suggestions 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.”

This links to the issues raised above as the original researchers did not have a clearly expressed vision for the adoption of their work. 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.

Another problem which occurs as a result of a suggestion made in the conclusions of the article *Inside the Black Box* is 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 it is really suggesting a rolling programme of Action Research projects co-ordinated by the researchers (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam) 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 to be postulated are seen by Black and Wiliam (1998: 19) as those which:

“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 more examples could be formulated, and it would be important for future development that some of the 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.”

It was at this point that my current research could be seen to fit into the potential development of the original research.

There are, however, still further problems to be encountered in the interpretations of these views as the subsequent researchers would have to look at concepts, which had not been tackled in the original text. One of the concepts, which were not tackled in the original research was the idea relating to how the evidence would be validated. This concept of validity is again going to be considered in more detail later in the study with the conclusions drawn to be found in Chapter 5.6. However, in order to postulate one idea of how the study could have developed validity is suggestion that the triangulation required could be provided by external evaluators and their work would in this instance include the use of video

evidence, as one method. This use of evidence could also be described as evaluation as maintained by Hitchcock and Hughes (1995: 6);

“by “evaluation” we mean the systematic study of a particular programme or set of events over a period of time in order to assess effectiveness.”

This concept of evaluation might be described as typical of qualitative research; Hopkins Bollington and Hewett (1989: 62) comment:

“Yet qualitative methods are especially suited to research and evaluation in education, particularly where the raison d’etre of the enquiry is understanding rather than proof. This is not to imply however that qualitative methods are unable to provide proof but rather to emphasise that often educational research is more concerned to generate hypotheses about complex social situations than test them.”

There are a number of problems in the seminal text in relation to methodology, which is not clarified; issues relating to the wider issues of methodology will be considered later in this chapter in section 2.19.

2.14: Wider reading on Assessment for Learning:

When examining the literature on Assessment for Learning it is important to note the original work was published as a research paper by nferNelson, where the research was initiated by the Assessment Group of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) supported by the Nuffield Foundation. This research paper has been examined in detail above in Chapter 2.13 but there were a number of subsequent research papers in the same series which were produced to follow up the original research and these will be dealt with in turn here.

I am intending to deal with the research papers on AfL in broadly chronological order, which will mean examining a number of the papers in the series interspersed with books on the subject by the same authors and benchmarking these sources against each other educational assessment literature to develop the critical theory and thesis’ AfL academic framework.

2.14.1: Assessment for Learning: Beyond the black box:

The research paper which followed up the work was called *Assessment for Learning: Beyond the black box*. This was published in 1999 by the Assessment Reform Group (ARG) but this time was made available by the University of Cambridge School of Education rather than through a commercial publisher. When approached in some Internet search engines it

appears under the heading of reports from the ARG (see footnote 1 Chapter 2) rather than as a book or research paper, the reasons for which are unclear. This research paper sets out the aims of the work as it: (1999: front cover)

“describes the key factors needed to put assessment for learning into practice...it critiques elements of current national policy and concludes with proposals for future action.”

This particular research paper is therefore of crucial importance in this study as 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. The work in this research paper looked at evidence relating to the problem faced by the educational community in England and Wales. This concerned the implementation of initiatives aimed at helping teachers to improve standards by using assessment. One of the points made by the Assessment Reform Group (1995: 5) is that:

“the reforms have encouraged teachers to develop their understanding of, and skills in, assessment. However, the very high stakes attached to test results, especially at Key Stage 2, are now encouraging teachers to focus on practicing test-taking rather than on using assessment to support learning.”

This again is a salient point as it refers to the concept of “test” being the default mode for “assessment” an idea which permeates through this study, the discussion of these key terms being integral to the study and are developed throughout and in the conclusions in Chapter 5.3. The research paper itself is clear in its aim to distinguish AfL from other forms of assessment, which can be considered highly significant in this context.

One of the aims of the research paper is to examine the role of the government and its agencies and the research paper (ARG, 1999: 9) offer 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 Continuing Professional Development (CPD). This point is important given what happened subsequently with the Assessment for Learning Strategy; the group suggested that in 1998/99: (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.”

In fact instead of this AfL was adopted by the government as a National Strategy, this led to the final section of the research paper was dedicated to the group's proposals (ARG, 1999: 12) which included:

- "1. Assessment for learning should be a central focus of the Government's programme for raising standards...*
- 3. Classroom assessments and their role in teaching and learning should be given greater prominence in initial teacher training and continuing professional development*
- 4. Development by schools and local authorities of assessment for learning as a means of raising standards should be supported by Government-led funding such as the DFEE's Standards Fund."*

(DfEE Department for Education and Employment)

This research paper built on the work from the original research and again with the benefit of hindsight had an impact on the implementation of government policies on Assessment for Learning. It could be said that the recommendations in the final section had been adopted by the Labour government who had come to power in 1997 and who won a subsequent general election in 2001. It was this government who implemented the AfL strand of the National Strategies in 2004 via the Department for Education and Science (DfES).

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

The next research paper 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 but had other contributors, notably Christine Harrison, Clare Lee and Bethan Marshall. As well as being supported by the Nuffield Foundation in the UK (see Chapter 2.1) this work was also supported in the USA by the US National Science Foundation who is:

"an independent federal agency created by Congress in 1950 "to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; to secure the national defence..." With an annual budget of about \$6.9 billion (FY, 2010), we are the funding source for approximately 20 percent of all federally supported basic research conducted by America's colleges and universities." (Downloaded from <http://www.nsf.gov/about/> Accessed Dec 2012)

The detailed information for this research paper 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 the practices.

The research paper is described as the successor to the seminal text *Inside the black box* and it summarises the research questions from the original discussed above in section 2.12.1. This research paper then goes on to look at the new findings and explains that these findings come from working with teachers, although the KMOFAP³ project was supported by the DfES, QCA and TTA⁴. The research paper explains the political situation at the time but does not clarify at any point the pedagogical paradigms behind the research. Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2002: 3) state that:

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

In the research paper there is no in-depth explanation of why this particular initiative was chosen to be implemented as part of the Strategies and the reasoning behind this remains obscure as the Strategy itself is not clear on its pedagogical motivation. There are certain assumptions made by this research paper. Following immediately on from the section on National Policies it launches straight into examining the concept of learning gains; by implication this gives an implied motivation for the adoption of AfL as part of the National Strategy. It could almost be looked on as conveying a subliminal message linking the two ideas. Unlike in the first research paper there is no adverse data presented in this section with the conclusion to this section written by Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2002: 4) reading as follows:

“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 paper 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.

³ KMOFAP. This was the King’s (i.e. King’s College University of London) Medway Oxfordshire Formative Assessment Project.

⁴ TTA was the training body at the time (called the Teacher Training Agency) which was subsequently renamed the Training and Development Agency (TDA) for schools

These strategies are developed further in other literature which will be considered later in this chapter, most notably the book by the same authors called *Assessment for Learning: Putting it into practice* (see Chapter 2.14.3) which was first published in 2003 and which followed a very similar format to this research paper.

To return to *Working inside the black box* Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2002: 16) there is a section which considers the underlying issues relating to teaching and learning. There was brief consideration given to learning theory which given the amount of space available meant it was by necessity brief, but did suggest the truism that “*learning cannot be done for the pupil; it has to be done by the pupil.*” Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2002: 15). More interesting to note 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 conclusion by the original researchers should be considered highly significant as the research has been used as something of a blunt instrument in the attempts to lever up standards in schools. It can be argued that all subjects in the secondary phase have been given the same treatment and 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 attended by me, “*changing teaching and learning was like turning a supertanker, not achieved in an instant!*” These concepts relating to teaching and learning will be investigated in more detail when examining the data gathered for this study as well as in the section in Chapter 5.3 which draws the conclusions from this research.

The final section of the research paper 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 here made by Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2002: 24) is one which is significant to my own position as it says:

“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 quite close, 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, in a number of cases. The Strategy also expected staff to change the habits of a lifetime without in many cases providing them with the rationale or structure in the form of coherent CPD to aid them to do so. This is in direct comparison to the ideas from Cordingley Bell and Rundell’s BERA paper where they comment on the fact: (2003: 6):

“that participation in the collaborative CPD programmes was linked to enhanced teacher confidence.”

The key term in this quote being ‘collaborative’, as the Strategy needed teachers to ‘buy in’ in order to be successful. These ideas are considered in more depth in Chapter 3.3 on methodology and in the conclusions drawn in Chapter 5.10.1.

2.14.3: Assessment for Learning: Putting it into Practice:

This seminal book forms part of the literature review, although there are distinct similarities between it and the previous research paper. It is coming under consideration at this point as in the broadly chronological review of the literature it is the correct place for it. There is however a caveat to this, as along with the seminal text 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 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 Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2003: 1) state is *“not a simple or innocent term.”* This statement is something which will inform a discussion later in this study, 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. I will also compare this to other key sources from the range on Assessment for Learning.

The book is divided by the authors into 3 sections with the overarching concepts of “overview, implementation and practice.” This format is very similar to the research paper

discussed above in 2.13 but develops the detail further. The book 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 which appeared in the previous research papers but then moves on to expand on the development of the KMOFAP³ project mentioned above. The examination of the data collection and analysis is significant as there is a brief synopsis of the qualitative data and the book then moves on to the significance of the quantitative data which the authors Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2003: 26) state:

“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 the implementation of AfL. 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 other publication was the article by Dylan Wiliam et al 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 book then moves on to look at putting the ideas into practice and it was this section which was instrumental in developing my interest in the ideas relating to AfL which developed subsequently into the subject of this thesis. The section builds on the ideas first described in *Inside the black box* which this book *Assessment for Learning: Putting it into*

practice makes clear in its introduction to this section, but the authors Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2003: 31) were also developing the research further with the addition of the idea that “*the formative use of summative tests had an important part to play.*” The researchers were persuaded to incorporate these ideas as part of the collaboration with the teachers who were part of the project. This is a significant point to note for two reasons, the first is 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. The second is that I designed my original limited experiment using the ideas behind developing the use of summative assessment in a formative way, which proved beneficial to the students who were part of the small-scale trial.

The authors did not believe that the activities they investigated were the complete package, but they were prepared to examine ideas relating to teaching and learning more deeply. 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 expected to adopt. The researchers did come to some conclusions, which included the statement: (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam, 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 (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam, 2003: 80) “*assessment for learning is ‘a way of thinking, almost a philosophy.*” is the one which most strongly links to my own ideas following the development of my idea over the period of time I have been involved in my own Action Research project.

There are two more key points from this piece of literature which will be examined more closely in the conclusions to this study which are noted below. Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2003: 113) states that:

“‘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 paper can be said to have influenced the direction in which AfL progressed and as such can, in itself, be seen as a seminal text.

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

This article was published in *Assessment in Education* in 2004 and was referred to in the section above as it summarises the results of the KMOFAP³ project and gives some of the statistical analysis, which does not appear in the book.

This article begins in the same way as the other literature so far reviewed with the history of the background of the research described. There is a significant addition to the information given, however, as the authors (Black, Harrison, Lee and Wiliam) (who in this case did not include Bethan Marshall) in *Assessment in Education* (2004: 51) stated:

“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 for the experiment, in that here Wiliam is claiming that the intention of it was to draw policy implications for the experiment. 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 is described by Wiliam (2004: 49) in the introduction to the article in *Assessment in Education*:

“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, which varied slightly from previous accounts produced by Dylan Wiliam in *Assessment in Education* (2003: 2). The previous accounts did not mention the fact that:

“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 does not appear to consider the fact that the model the researchers were undertaking was more closely linked to the theories of Action Research although this article with its analysis of statistics seems to tend to a more positivist model than an Action Research one. However the researchers themselves particularly Dylan Wiliam points out in the article in *Assessment in Education* (2004: 57) that:

“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”

It is clear from this that there was apparently a confusion of the research paradigm and the different rules they impose on the notion of “experiment”. It would seem that this article by Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2004: 3) clarifies some more of the rationale behind the experimental approach adopted as it states that:

“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 given great significance in the actual article it is something which needs to be examined in greater detail here. This statement is of crucial importance when reflected on, as 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 curriculum subjects in secondary schools. These could be considered to be approached in a different way to other subjects at Key Stage 3. 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. The nature of the subjects is very different and as a result changes to

the pedagogy required needed to be tailored to each subject. In relation to Mathematics there had been reflections on practice and the types of learning tasks undertaken in Mathematics classrooms, for example Pepin (1998: 5) stated that:

“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 next issue which needs to be considered in detail, as it is central to 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. The authors themselves in Wiliam, Lee, Harrison and Black in *Assessment in Education* are clearer here about the background of the research design than in other publications noted above as they state 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.”

This is a crucial point as in the paper there is the use of statistical surveys a part of the positivist paradigm, although it is not unusual for researchers to use both the positivist and behaviourist paradigms in their work. 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 Black, Harrison, Lee and Wiliam (2004: 55) state that:

“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.

The results are contained in a summary which appears to include tables of data, most of which would apparently be used to clarify these points, but this does not seem to be the case. 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* (27) and *Working inside the black box* (4) plus information on statistical analysis from the internet 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 is also no longer available to peruse, 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 to the reader.

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 appears 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 (2010: 2) points out that:

“Siegle (2002) notes that each approach functions with different assumptions and ‘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. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) suggest that at an epistemological level it is not clear that one approach has a greater claim to truth than the other, rather it should be noted that both approaches have helped educational researchers make important discoveries.”

This clearly links to the work carried out by Black, Wiliam et al. although there is a lack of clarity of articulation of which approach they have used, which can affect the understanding of the practitioners, at whom the research paper was targeted. The final conclusions in this paper are again significant in light of further events with the authors including Wiliam (2004: 63) stating *“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 and indeed more research was required.

2.14.5: ...inside the black box:

In this section a number of the research papers relating to the subject guidance on Assessment for Learning will be considered together, these were those on Science, Mathematics, English, Geography as well as Information and Communication Technology (ICT). These research papers are not comprehensive as there are others including one on Design Technology (DT) and another on Modern Foreign Languages, but can be considered a representative sample. The authors of the research papers 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 booklets follow a familiar pattern with an introduction looking at what the research paper offers and a brief history. This is because each of them has a different target audience of specialist teachers in secondary schools who were unlikely to refer to a number of other subjects, they tended to specialise in one or possibly, at most, two subjects. It would be rare for a secondary teacher to teach across the spectrum of subjects reviewed here.

The research papers then move on to the aims and principles of learning in the subject, ideas which have already been examined elsewhere in this study. The major differences are in the subject specific context which is examined separately in each of the research papers and which could be applied within individual classrooms, or indeed across a department in a school. These aspects are of the most significance in this study as it was through using guidance such as this I was able to work across the school and which were utilised as part of the training materials linked to the AfL subject development materials from the DFE, which will be considered separately.

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

“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.”

These ideas were reflected in previous examples of the literature where the original research was extended as Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2003: 84) point out in *Assessment for Learning Putting it into Practice*:

“Katrina joined the project as part of the English extension to the project in Autumn 2000. Although many of the techniques of formative assessment were well established in her classroom, she nevertheless found that there were things that a systematic focus on formative assessment could contribute to her practice.”

These research papers 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 Assessment for Learning.

2.14.6: The role of teachers in Assessment for Learning:

This research paper was produced by the Assessment Reform Group (ARG) and was published in 2006 (although it does not state this anywhere in the publication itself) and again states that its work was supported by the Nuffield foundation whose political views are explained earlier in this study in Chapter 2.1.

The research paper summarises the work of the ARG and 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 in this literature review. It is important to note at this point that the study puts others into context and so is relevant to this study. It is useful as a comparison to the work being done on formative assessment at a broadly similar point in time. The authors (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam, 2006: 4) point out that there are similar qualities between summative assessment and other forms including the:

“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.”

The research paper explains they have used available research 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 again there is no empirical evidence to support these statements included either in the text or as an appendix, although there is pointers to the ARG website which is now available at (<http://www.aiaa.org.uk/afl/assessment-reform-group/> downloaded from <http://www.aiaa.org.uk/afl/assessment-reform-group/> Accessed Dec 2012) where some of

the research findings are available. In their consideration of AfL they (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam, 2006: 9) state:

“Many schools give the impression of having implemented AfL, when in reality the change in pedagogy that it requires has not taken place. This may happen, for example, when teachers feel constrained by external tests over which they have no control. As a result 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.”

This provides a key point as it demonstrates that there is the assumption that assessment means *test*, a conceptual problem which will be examined in detail throughout this study and in the conclusions (Chapter 5.5). This statement is supported by data on motivation from the Progress Achieve and Continue in Education (PACE) project, which was a longitudinal study over eight years and is also supported by my own experiences in secondary schools at the time. It could be said that my learning experiences over the period of this study reflect the ideas that the term ‘assessment’ has created problems; this has been related to the fact that testing systems have been seen as a driving force in schools. Students’ progress has been measured in terms of levels at Key Stage 3, which were never intended as a measure of progress, rather levels were developed as a summative judgement and at Key Stage 4 the outcomes of the GCSE exams have most significance in terms of league tables. In my roles as Head of Faculty and as a member of the Senior Leadership team the limiting factors of the misconceptions relating to the terminology of assessment has loomed large. It could be said 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, my understandings of which create a significant contribution to academic understanding.

This research paper includes series of conclusions similar to those of other research papers previously examined in this review, but again these are in tune with my own experiences as Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2006: 12) state that:

“The consequence is to constrain the curriculum and teaching methods and impair the implementation of Assessment for Learning.”

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. These assumptions will be challenged in more detail throughout the study and in the conclusions section relating to the concepts linked to terminology (Chapter 5.5). This confusion between summative and formative assessment learning approaches can be construed as a major epistemological deficit and a blind spot of policy makers. Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam challenged these ideas as the conclusions again move onto 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 by Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (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 Black et al (2006: 13) suggest:

“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.”

These recommendations are aiming towards an ideal, which did not happen over a period of more than six years and a change of government having taken place. If teachers were to be asked about these ideas presented above they would probably have seen them as an ideal which would be unlikely to be achieved. Given the political climate; despite the efforts of the ARG and other advisory groups these recommendations were not implemented in detail. 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 (2010: 4) describe as:

“this targeting is essential to provide accurate diagnostic information on individual students.”

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

“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.**’ These ideas relating to adaptive testing and AfL will be considered in more depth in Chapter 5.6.

The conclusions which can be drawn from this are that there are a number of missed opportunities to develop the concepts. These have been examined above and my attempt at reconceptualization will be examined in the conclusions section (5.10).

2.14.7: Assessment for learning: why what and how?

The final research paper in this chronological review is that which 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 research papers and indeed was introduced as taking “*the form of an argument*” (Wiliam, 2009: 1). There are statements within the research paper which reflect previous work, given the subject matter and the occasion this is not surprising and 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 defined in the literature.

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

“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 and it could be asserted that a particular intervention had a statistically significant impact... 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 in section 2.14.4. In this lecture Wiliam then goes on to examine the terminology used by the researchers. There have been assumptions made about the terms used and Wiliam (2009: 8) states:

“Paul Black and I have wondered whether the same thing is happening to the idea of AfL, now firmly established as part of the government’s National Strategy for education. While 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. These ideas relating to AfL and formative assessment will form part of the conclusions of this study, but it should be noted that Dylan Wiliam himself only really raises this very pertinent point about terminology in 2009, more than ten years after the original research was undertaken. 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 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.

In this lecture Wiliam also reflects on another salient point that will be examined in greater depth later in this study; why this particular piece of educational research (Wiliam, 2009: 14) "*has so little impact on the classroom practice of teachers.*" This statement has obvious implications for CPD an issue which will be examined in greater depth later in this study (Chapter 5.4). 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, one of which was that of AfL and again Wiliam does not go further to explain exactly what research underpins this particular statement. It could however explain why it was that he did not contribute to the second edition of the National Strategies in the way that some of his colleagues did, 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. In relation to these ideas the rest of the research paper is used to describe rather than analyse the teacher learning communities established to assist in the dissemination of best practice. Teacher learning communities were groups of teachers who joined together within and across schools to develop their practice and review the impact of their work. This links to the idea of teamwork and group learning bene2.15.2fits and in itself can be seen as a type of pedagogical strategy. Dylan Wiliam produced guidance on these teacher learning communities and disseminated it via information from the Specialist Schools Trust. The section on conclusions and future direction is quite limited and focusses on the development of teacher learning communities. Wiliam (2009: 34) does however give a positive outlook and suggest that:

“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 perception as at the beginning of this study where the thinking behind the original limited experiment was somewhat simplistic in its outlook. Since the beginning of the 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.

2.14.8: Embedded formative assessment:

This book was published in 2011 in Bloomington Indiana a fact which could be considered to be significant, as it is an American rather than British (or an English) publication. It is also published after the election when the British government changed; which could be seen as significant, a point which will be discussed in Chapter 5 of this study. This book has a variety of purposes and covers some of the material previously reviewed in chapter 2.13 and 2.14 of this literature review. This book re-iterates ideas relating to the importance of education in general terms, as well as the fact that Wiliam (2011: 13) states:

“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. In the second chapter of the book he again goes over ground, which has been previously examined relating to the case for formative assessment. Wiliam (2011: 29) does however make a point, which will strike a chord with secondary school teachers in England and Wales:

“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. Chapter 2 demonstrates that apparently nothing new can be said on

the assumptions relating to formative assessment, as the subject has been examined in detail previously. However, within the chapter there are still a number of points of note with a variety of definitions for the term ‘formative assessment’ being provided. The conclusion made by Bennett (2009: 8) is significant as he points out that:

“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, which will be examined in more detail in Chapter 5.3. Bennett notably states: (2009: 7):

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

The book then moves on to the practical strategies relating to the implementation of AfL, once again there is not a great deal which is new in these chapters; if the reader is already familiar with the previous works of the author. There is no detailed section on conclusions, a fact which is quite surprising, given the nature of the book and it merely concludes with an epilogue. This takes the form of a short commentary on the nature of employment and the difficulties faced by students in the 21st Century mostly based on the American experience. The concluding statements by Wiliam (2011: 162) reflect on the fact that:

“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, so at first glance the conclusion does not reflect this.

The next section of this chapter will move on from the AfL work produced by the original researchers on to the materials produced to support the ideas of the National Strategy.

2.15: DFES guidance:

2.15.1: Assessment for Learning Whole School training materials:

The whole school materials which will be reviewed here were delivered to schools in a variety of formats and were produced as two editions. The first edition was sent to schools in 2004 and the second edition followed it in April 2005. The editions were sent as hard copy but also as a CD-ROM which allowed the schools to use them in a variety of ways. The introduction in the guidance from the DfES (0443-2004: 5) to senior leaders stresses the importance of the materials as it says:

“AfL is also central to the DfES core principles for teaching and learning. These principles underpin all the strands of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy.”

These materials from the DfES (0443-2004: 6) make it explicit that they are focused on leveraging up standards:

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

To help make explicit good AfL practice and help teachers recognise how this relates to good teaching and learning, the training units focus upon the ‘key characteristics of assessment for learning’ (DfES, 0443-2004). The key characteristics of AfL has already been explored in Section 2.6 of this chapter and in this section there needs to be a re-iteration of the conflict between the original research and its implementation in this form. The research evidence to support the definition of AfL is given in the Appendix for Unit 1 of the training materials. The authors (DfES, 0443-2004: 21) summarise this as: *“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. These works have already been discussed above, and the influence of Sadler is clear as Hargreaves (2005: 3) points out:

“Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, seemed to be drawing on Sadler’s (1989) writing about formative assessment when he defined Assessment for Learning as ...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”*

These clearly come from Sadler’s article Formative Assessment and the design of instructional systems, which appeared in Instructional Science 18:119-144 (1989)

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 7 below:

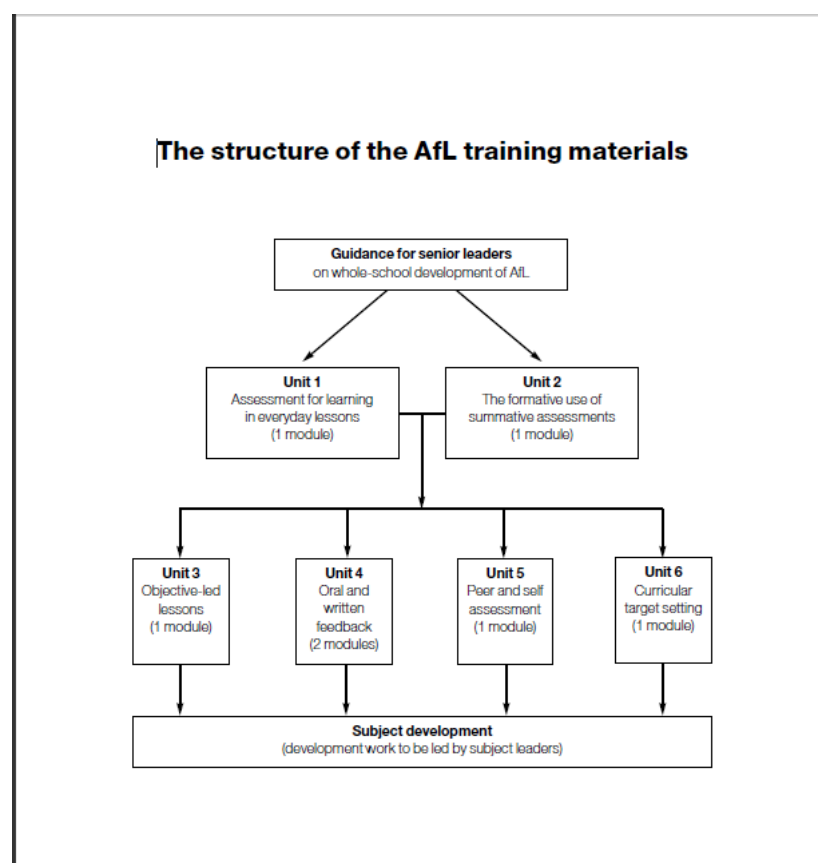


Figure 7: The structure of the AfL training material.

The structure given here is suggesting that schools should follow the advice given by the DfES (0443-2004: 15). The implications for CPD in respect of these suggestions has been considered in chapter 2.4 and will also form part of the conclusions of this study (Chapter 5.4). 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 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. This quote clearly states that if AfL was to be implemented in its entirety it would have had a significant impact on the raising of standards, a claim which will be examined in more detail in the conclusions. In comparison to these assumptions the PowerPoint provided by the DfES as part of the training materials poses the following question, which can be seen in figure 8 below:

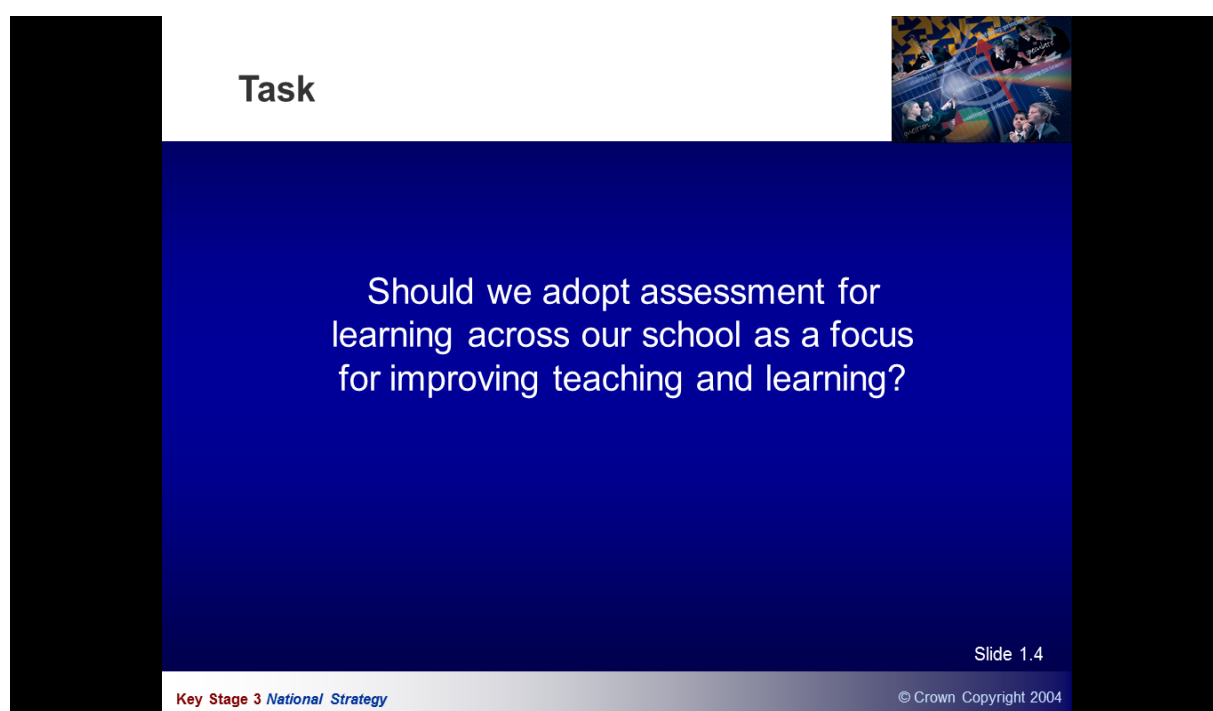


Figure 8: Slide showing the questions posed of the AfL training material.

This question is posed in these training materials despite the fact that AfL is part of the National Strategy, where the assumption would be that all schools were required to implement this. This slide seems to reveal the fact that schools were to be given options about the implementation of the Strategy. These options appear to be 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 given to individual schools?

The second edition of the guidance was published in the same formats of hard copy and CD-ROM just over a year later in April 2005 and comprised of a similar set of information and materials. There were a number of additions with minor changes to the guidance for senior leaders, which included a self-review tool, which appeared as a set of prompts. There are also a number of additional units with Unit 6 now comprising of 2 modules and Unit 7 on Questioning and Dialogue being added. Both of these two additional units 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 in a way, which would require this support. Again there is no empirical research evidence in the training materials made available to support this notion. In this particular edition 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 references or detail from whence this research has been taken and there is a lack of cross referencing with the underpinning pedagogy. The references relating to research on coaching again appears as an Appendix and only references one set of works (those of Joyce and Showers). This work then refers back to *Creating the conditions for teaching and learning* by David Hopkins and Alma Harris (et al), David Fulton Publishers, 2000. The original book by Hopkins and Harris was a handbook for staff development activities, which is where the aspect of coaching was drawn from but no further details are available regarding the methodology or the outcomes of the research 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 a point, which will be discussed further in Chapter 5.3 of this study. There will be consideration given to the key finding that there was a certain naivety on the part of the policy makers as they made an assumption that ad hoc training can shift embedded culture, as well as there being a lack of clarity in regard to the underlying pedagogical paradigms there

was also a tendency for teachers to default to the prior culture unless there had been a genuine shift in thinking.

2.15.2: Assessment for Learning Subject development materials:

This CD-ROM followed on from the previous second edition of the training materials and was sent to schools in 2005. It contained training materials relating to the units in the whole school training materials but in this case they were specifically tailored to each subject. These subjects ranged from Art and Design to Science, taking in twelve subjects in all. The benefits of reviewing the development materials is that they are all slightly different, which will be examined below. They were based on the units which had specific reference to aspects of AfL notably Units 3 to 7 and provided a self-evaluation tool for subject leaders to utilise in order to make the training as relevant as possible. See figure 9 below:

Having completed this review you should read 'making effective use of the subject development material' on the next page.

	Focusing	Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
Teachers	<p>The subject leader has identified where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> planning is mainly task rather than learning objectives focused learning objectives and learning outcomes are not routinely shared with pupils before beginning tasks feedback does not relate directly to learning objectives and learning outcomes. <p>There is no agreed whole-school or departmental approach to sharing objectives in lessons.</p>	<p>Some departmental planning focuses on learning objectives. There is limited exemplification of the learning outcomes. Sometimes there is a lack of distinction between the task and learning objective.</p> <p>Teachers are beginning to share learning objectives and learning outcomes with pupils prior to carrying out the task. Some teachers are explaining the longer-term purposes of the learning. Teacher feedback sometimes relates to learning objectives, though this is not consistent across the department or school.</p>	<p>Departmental planning usually focuses on learning objectives and intended learning outcomes linked to standards in each subject. This approach is becoming consistent across the school.</p> <p>The sharing of learning objectives, intended learning outcomes and the bigger picture with pupils is becoming routine practice within departments and across the school.</p> <p>Teachers' feedback typically relates directly to the learning objectives.</p>	<p>Learning objectives and outcomes are an integral feature of all departmental planning across the school. All teachers respond to the impact these are having on standards in each subject. Objectives and intended outcomes are routinely shared, discussed and understood by pupils in all lessons.</p> <p>Review of learning in relation to objectives is a routine part of lessons and its outcomes inform future planning.</p> <p>Teachers regularly involve pupils in establishing success criteria and actively involve them in determining their progress, through peer and self assessment.</p>
Pupils	<p>The subject leader has identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the lessons in which pupils are not able to explain what they are trying to learn and the purpose of the task. 	<p>Most pupils, in most lessons, understand what they are trying to learn and can explain this with limited use of subject-specific language. Some pupils understand how they can show success, but others are unclear about what is expected of them. Some pupils understand the longer-term purpose (big picture) of what they are learning.</p>	<p>With some prompting, all pupils are able to explain clearly what they are trying to learn, how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.</p> <p>Pupils are increasingly confident in discussing the progress they are making against the learning objectives with each other and with their teacher.</p> <p>Pupils, when supported, are able to recognise and improve their achievements against predetermined criteria and some are beginning to contribute to determining the criteria.</p>	<p>All pupils understand what they are trying to achieve and why, and routinely review their progress against the learning objectives for the lesson.</p> <p>Pupils are aware of a range of possible learning outcomes and are able to determine and improve their achievements in relation to success criteria. Pupils are able to identify independently their achievements against criteria they have collaboratively agreed.</p>
	Start with Task 3A	Start with Task 3A	Start with Task 3B	Start with Task 3C

Figure 9: Document showing a self-evaluation tool created by the CIEA.

This tool was later used interactively on the CIEA website⁵ and from Graham Herbert in private communication 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 this information 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 from the DFES; with the introduction followed by the self-evaluation tool. This is to be used and 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 follow in order to develop the understanding and practice further. These suggestions are given as a series of tasks, which the department chooses from in order to improve their understanding. The suggestion is then that the department takes part in a limited action, which is planned, implemented and evaluated. For individual departments this idea of limited action links to education policy and practice because of the rolling programme implementing the National Strategies. This could be said to reflect the ideas of the original researchers when they suggested that further research should be undertaken.

If the National Strategy had been consistently applied and this format followed in every department in every secondary school, this could be said to be following a limited Action Research framework then the outcomes of this might have had a significant impact on practice across the country. The actual results of implementing this in two schools will be considered in the conclusions chapter of this study but even with someone involved who had a detailed interest in AfL schools still did not adopt these training materials in the way they were designed. Significantly the DfES make the statement (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 for the implementation of AfL because 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.

⁵ CIEA the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors was set up to improve standards in educational assessment from 2004 when work was begun on the then Institutes’ programme. The first members were accepted in 2006 and Chartered Status was granted in April 2008.

In the training materials each of the different curriculum subjects is dealt with in a similar way but with subject specific exemplars being given in order to ensure that the training is relevant to teachers within that subject. The key benefits of reviewing development materials is examining the differences between the subject specific issues and linking this to the overall aims of the work on the Black Box series.

There are no other materials on the CD-ROM so once a department had worked through these there are no pointers for a department if they believe they have achieved enhanced status in all aspects of AfL. However, as most schools appear to have only used these materials in a superficial way there is no demonstrable evidence that anyone achieved this. Having said this the interest in AfL continued and there have been a number of further publications relating to Assessment for Learning since 2005 and these will be considered in the following sections. The first of these is a publication with the apparently inspirational title of *Perfect Assessment for Learning*.

2.16: Perfect Assessment for Learning Claire Gadsby edited by Jackie Beere:

The illustration below of the cover reveals an important fact, that the author of the book or possibly the editors has already made a decision about the position of Assessment for Learning as a concept. They have made their position in regard to where AfL fits clear from the outset with the point it is Perfect Assessment the ‘for learning’ being an addition. This already raises a question as to where the author stands in relation to AfL as well as how closely this book links to the original concepts postulated by Black and Wiliam. The book opens with a truism pointed out by Gadsby, which needs to be examined 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.”

Gadsby suggests that teachers are not putting together the complete AfL package but only choosing to use some aspects which they feel is most appropriate. There is then an expression of intent in which Gadsby (2012: 14) states that the purpose of the book is to:

“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’ again looms large at this point. 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 10).

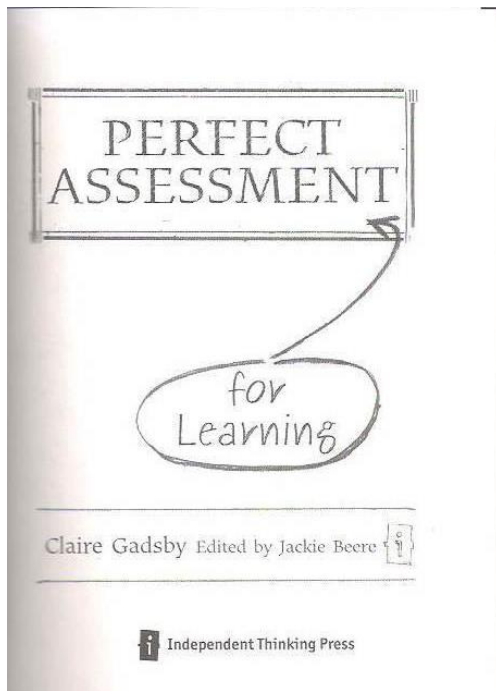


Figure 10: Perfect Assessment for Learning; book by Claire Gadsby.

From this ambiguous opening chapter 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 (2012: 65) begins with a reference from Vygotsky:

“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, as Seely Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989: 34), point out that Vygotsky’s ideas being:

“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. Ofsted was created in 1992 as a national inspectorate to replace the Local Authority inspectors and the HMI service (Her Majesty’s Inspectors). Ofsted’s role is to inspect services and regulate services which that care for children and young people, and services providing education and skills for learners of all ages. Finally, there is the chapter on the key messages and how to move forward in these there appears to be no new thinking and again we are being given a recipe which suggest more of the same, there being no new thinking evidenced here. This book seems to offer a

summary of current thinking at 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 diet cannot be the way forward. It is difficult to see where this book sits, as a handbook of strategies it is a good summary, what 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 and the subsequent closing of the National Strategies website. This point will be examined in more detail in the conclusions (Chapter 5.4 of this study).

2.17: 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 and is part of this literature review as it addresses some of the key issues relating to the impact of formative assessment on ITT.⁶

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 description of phenomenology by Lester as being: (1999: 1)

“concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual, ‘bracketing’ taken-for-granted assumptions and usual ways of perceiving. Epistemologically, phenomenological approaches are based in a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity, and emphasise the importance of personal perspective and interpretation.”

He states that this could be seen as counter-intuitive. The paper by Kidd goes on to state that: (2009: 22):

⁶ ITT Initial Teacher Training undertaken by students as either a Post Graduate Certificate in Education or a Graduate Training Programme (P.G.C.E. or GTP).

“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 questioned on its impact by me. These responses from the private correspondence will be examined in more detail in the conclusions to this thesis in Chapter 5.4.

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 any aspects for ITT in general.

In comparison to this limited evaluation relating to AfL the final article, which will be examined, looks at the International Context.

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

This brief article appears in Research Intelligence news from the British Educational Research Association (BERA) issue 119 Autumn / Winter 2012 which again followed the changes in government in the UK.

It begins with an introduction conceptualising Assessment for Learning and echoes the findings of this thesis when it states the ideas of Black and Wiliam and Sebba (Shaw, Johnson & Warwick, 2012: 14-15) in that:

“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. With 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 article is brief due to the fact it appears in the BERA magazine as a short research article.

The conclusions drawn by Shaw Johnson and Warwick in Research Intelligence 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 current 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. These conclusions will be examined in detail later in this study.

2.19: Action Research Theory:

At this point Action Research theory needs to be briefly examined in order to establish this study in context. Action Research is crucial to this study and the links need to be examined in order to develop coherence. This brief overview of the literature on Action Research begins with a summary from McNiff and Whitehead (2006: 21) who explain the background to the development of the theory.

“A brief history of action research

John Elliott at the University of East Anglia, building on the legacy of Lawrence Stenhouse’s Humanities Curriculum Project developed action research as a form of professional development for teachers. Throughout, this took an interpretive approach, that is, an approach which allows for participation by practitioners, but which nevertheless remains grounded in the social sciences, because an external researcher is seen as the one doing research into other people’s practices.

Jack Whitehead was also developing a new approach to action research.

He took the view that teachers were perfectly capable of generating their personal theories by systematically studying their practice”

This summary equates to my position at the start of this project and linked to my thinking which had been informed throughout my career by developments such as the Humanities Curriculum Project. The influences of these concepts had originally been unwitting and it was only through a detailed examination of the literature in working on this research that the influences on my own practice could be articulated clearly.

The work done by Whitehead and McNiff drew on the work of Carr and Kemmis whose work “Becoming Critical” links together aspects of Action Research with the

development of work by Black and Wiliam in my mind. This is because in the conclusion Carr and Kemmis state: (1986: 224):

“this requires teachers in schools forming critical communities of Action Researchers who progressively incorporate students and other members of school communities into their collaborative enterprise of self-reflection.”

This links with the ideas seen in the conclusions of the original seminal work produced by Black and Wiliam which is discussed in Section 2.12.3 of this study. These ideas were taken on by myself and have resulted in the current thesis.

2.20: Summary of key academic findings from the Chapter 3 literature review on AfL:

There are a number of findings, which can be established from the review of the literature one of which relates to the methodology, which will be examined in Chapter 4. It is crucial to note that the Action Research cycles are central to the design of this research approach, and broached in the literature review in Chapter 2.19 as well as in the methodology Chapter 3.3. In the conclusions chapter there is an example of a unique exhibit which exemplifies the cycle development for this PhD thesis. This exhibit clearly demonstrates the “messiness” of the Action Research cycles.

Linked to this is the importance of the ‘improve’ paradigm, which is discussed in this chapter and how this concept links the literature with the Action Research cycles.

The literature review of the work on Assessment for Learning apparently clearly shows that Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam, as the original researchers on the formative assessment series entitled ...the black box, were involved in the development of the National Strategies. This thesis will go on to examine this idea and in time prove it to be at least an exaggeration of the situation.

Another concept, which will be examined in further depth in Chapter 5.5 is the idea presented in the literature of the terminology related to the subject and the difficulties this created for everyone involved. These issues have been referred to within this chapter; these ideas will be considered in more depth in Chapter 5.6. The key assumptions which can be gained from the literature review is that concerning the terminology 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 enough and the judgements they make about this forms part of the key findings of this thesis.

The other key finding relating to this Literature Review is the fact that 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 and reviewed here, that there was no detailed pedagogical framework underlying the adoption of the original research. These findings will also be discussed in Chapter 5.6 and will form the basis of the conclusions concerning the implementation of future strategies.

Key to the work on AfL was the work which preceded it on the subject of formative assessment. This work 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. This understanding of formative assessment was implied rather than clearly articulated. There was a similar issue in the development of CPD in the development 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 in 2007 (25) he wrote:

“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 (2007; 26) teachers:

“do not struggle directly with existing cultures within which new values and practices may be required. As I have said elsewhere (Fullan, 1993, 1999), 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.”

It is significant to note that Peter Senge's who focusses on Learning organisations states in conversation with John O'Neill (1995) stated:

“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.”

This comment was made before the work on the National Strategies began but could still be described as relevant following all the work I have completed on this thesis.

The following table describes the key concepts and the findings from this study of the literature which will be linked to the research questions posed at the start of this study. The key postulate which arises from this Literature review is the new way of reconceptualising the terminology relating to **assessment** and **test**.

Key concepts	Findings
Involvement of the original researchers in the development of the National Strategies	From examining the National Strategy documentation 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 <i>Inside the Black Box</i> . 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 <i>assessment</i> which has had the most effect on the implementation of the National Strategies and the understanding of everyone involved.
Understanding of previous work of formative assessment	Understanding of the previous work impacted on the original researchers and they made some pedagogical assumptions which were never clarified in the literature.
Use of CPD to lever up standards	The use of the types of CPD involved in the National Strategy has been criticised by the original researchers and one of the key findings from this study is that the use of CPD to lever up standards has to be more complex. CPD needs to be linked to various other concepts including the use of the Action Research framework
Use of Action Research framework	My own understanding of the Action Research framework has developed as a consequence of the literature review. The work has significance in relation to the implementation of the National strategies which if the original researcher had been able to develop using an Action Research framework would have produced more significant and enduring results.

Table 1: Key findings from the literature review.

The research questions at the start of this study were addressed as the most significant key objective of this research project was to consider whether the theoretical framework proposed by the originators of the theory was in fact what was being applied in practice and how Assessment for Learning was viewed by staff, students and other stakeholders. This

question was clearly addressed in the Literature review as seen in the key findings above. The next set of aims were examined in the methodology and findings section of this thesis as this was an examination of how Assessment for Learning was being utilised by different Faculties and Departments within and across the study schools. I also aimed to critically analyse the issues arising in relation to Assessment for Learning and how the theory will impact on teachers' professional practice and development.

Another aspect which will be examined in the findings section is the creation an original toolkit for the dissemination of Assessment for Learning, and when it is in place, to evaluate its effectiveness

Another 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 links to relevant theoretical frameworks. This was examined as part of the Action Research framework in the Literature Review and is returned to throughout this study.

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. As part of this research I was able to establish which type of methodology was most appropriate, although the primary consideration was given to the Action Research paradigm and its methodology. These aims were to be considered in relation to the literature already available on Assessment for Learning and the underlying pedagogical framework articulated by the original researchers is summarised. 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. The methodology used to meet these aims will be examined in more detail in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Methodology:

3.1: Introduction:

This chapter on methodology provides a justification for my approach to the research design which is clearly linked to the choice of Action Research. I will begin by firstly defining the underpinning concept of the methodology and then move on to examining the historical nature of my research experience and the rationale behind the various methodologies related to educational research. The methods used to collect data will be described and analysed as will the methodology used in this study. The description of methodology by Hitchcock and Hughes (1990: 20) is most apposite:

“Methodology is a theory or an analysis of how research should operate.”

This statement from Hitchcock and Hughes provides a clear explanation of how I will be approaching this chapter; by examining the theory of how my research operated. It is however, important to examine the premise behind this thesis within this context. This methodology was chosen as it clearly links to the research questions established at the start of this study. The choice of Action Research was used to meet the questions related to the fact I was undertaking the work within a context of local and national change and wished to improve not only my own practice but also that of others. It was also used to develop my own understanding of the significance of the findings and enhance my understanding as a reflective practitioner.

3.1.1: Action Research background to the study:

The ontological and epistemological assumption of Action Research is an integral part of this study and as such is central to this thesis and is a good choice as it fits the nature of the research inquiry required by the research objectives. Action Research will, consequently, be examined in detail as part of this chapter. This study utilises the concepts expressed by Jack Whitehead and Jean McNiff in their work on Action Research (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006: 12) where they state that:

“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”

As an Action Research theory is generated from real life and emergent data this influences the work of the individual and generates further questions that are then tested and

influence practice. Action Research theories have been examined briefly in the literature review in Chapter 2 and in more detail in this chapter on the methodology sections in Chapter 3.3. The theory of Action Research is absolutely central to this thesis, but firstly the influence on the methodology from previous research needs to be understood. This clearly links to the research questions examined at the end of Chapter 2.

3.1.2: Historical Methodology:

As stated in Chapter 1.1.1 my previous background in research related to historical research, most recently focussed on the eighteenth century Catholic gentry' families. If an examination of historical research is made then the traditional view of it can be articulated by Borg (1963) quoted in Cohen Manion and Morrison (2000: 158). This stated historical research can be described as:

“the systematic and objective location, evaluation and synthesis of evidence in order to establish facts and draw conclusions about past events.”

It could be argued that this is too simplistic a description of the methodology of historical research and that the focus should be placed more firmly on the interpretative nature of the research; although the systematic nature of historical research could be called into question because of the nature of the evidence. The historical researcher faces difficulties with the nature of evidence as it is often incomplete or geographically scattered and the synthesis of these disparate elements is an important technique. This bears some similarity to the nature of evidence generated in educational action research projects which requires synthesising.

It is significant to note that an examination of the nature of evidence and the articulation of methodology was not a required part of the historical researchers' final write up of their work throughout the last century. It has been rare for the historical researcher to extrapolate the nature of the evidence they have used in order to construct the narrative until recently; I can include my own historical research in this category. One historian who tackles these gaps linked to methodology is Ian Mortimer, who in his book on Medieval Intrigues (2012: xv) explains that the lack of analysis has:

“provoked me into thinking about historical methodology and to consider whether the traditional approach to determining historical “facts” is reliable. This has a particular relevance in the wake of postmodernism, for it may be said that many historians (especially medievalists) have failed to answer many of the criticisms of

postmodernism and critical theory, and have continued writing history in spite of the intellectual developments of the rest of the world.”

It must be re-iterated that this idea of Mortimer’s cannot be seen as a standard academic rationale in relation to historical research, but has significantly impacted on my thinking. Whilst reflecting on my methodology as part of this study I was aware that I had previously not clearly articulated the methodology in my historical research, I also classify myself as a medievalist and similar to Mortimer in many ways. Although the current study is based on educational research I have continued to monitor the developments in the nature of historical thinking as it is integral to the development of my own research paradigm; also this reflection is important as the nature of historical research could be positively affected by producing a template for students to use in relation to the methodology of historical research, an idea which will be considered in detail later.

However, as Ellis and Levy (2009: 9) point out:

“The nature of the research problem and the domain from which it is drawn serves as a limiting factor on the type of research that can be conducted.”

Historical research can be described by Mouly (1978) cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000: 158), as being:

“concerned with a broad view of conditions and not necessarily the specifics which bring them about, although such a synthesis is rarely achieved without intense debate or controversy especially on matters of detail. The act of historical research involves the identification and limitation of a problem or area of study; sometimes the formulation of a hypothesis (or a set of questions); the collection, organisation, verification, validation, analysis and selection of data; testing the hypothesis (or answering the questions) where appropriate and writing a research report.”

If the first part of the sentence relating to historical research were removed this statement could describe the methodology of any research and indeed is appropriate to the research undertaken within the educational context, as the identification of the issue is key within this context.

The impact of reconceptualising the nature of historical research has been significant to the development of this study over a period of time. As an historian I have continued to develop my understanding since I completed the research for my MA which was focussed on the Weld and Constable Families in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and which exemplified a number of the ideas described in previous paragraphs. I am more aware of the fact that I have taken the ideas of the post modernists, as the post modernists state that

interpretation is everything and have begun to apply these ideas to the synthesis of information required for this study. At the beginning of the research undertaken for this study I would not have been able to develop a clear articulation of the nature of the methodology I had used previously. It is therefore important to state that these developments in my understanding are key to the use of the methodology of the research and as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000: 22) point out “*Interpretive approaches...focus on action.*”

This study is based on the idea again to be found in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000: 28) who state that:

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

It is obvious from this description of historical methodology that historical researchers are not necessarily able to transform society in the same way as an educational researcher can. Academic historical researchers tend to impact on a limited number of other academics but my background was significant in this study. With my own understanding of historical research developing in line with the Action Research project I came to a deeper understanding of the nature of historical research, There are significant differences between my background as an historian and the way in which the research on Assessment for Learning (AfL) was conducted, however the experiences I had as an individual affected the final synthesised research methods I adopted which will be discussed in the conclusion to this chapter.

3.1.3: Introduction to methodology of the study:

The type of methodology which I was going to use throughout this study was a question which I addressed in a number of ways. I examined a variety of methods and methodologies and decided on the most appropriate ones to be utilised into a final proposed synthesised research methodology unique to this study. These ideas will be presented at the end of Chapter 3. In fact; in this study there was more than one appropriate method utilised, consequently, all of the different types will be examined and explained, as will a number of methods and methodologies which were rejected.

At the commencement of the study, as a piece of educational research, there were a number of methods which suggested themselves as being most appropriate relative to the revised research questions at the end of Chapter 2 in Section 2.20. The first of these which will be investigated is that of Action Research, from there the idea of the case study process

will be considered and the background of the research in ethnography will be established. There are a number of other types of methodology; these will be looked at in varying amounts of detail throughout the chapter, as they were either used in a peripheral way or were considered and discarded.

It should be clearly established that the research approach I used in this study is embedded in the Case Study and Action Research paradigm, and these are the areas, which will be considered in most detail to begin with.

The Case Study methodology can best be explained in a quote from Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 32) where they take Kennedy's 1979 point that:

"The teaching case study. It is used to illustrate a point, a condition, and a category, something important for instruction."

This summarise the original intent and the approach of this particular piece of research at the start of the process, when the original idea was postulated. It is also possible to suggest as a consequence of this type of research methodology that the findings will not necessarily result in an outcome which allows the researcher to generalise about their findings, but will hopefully impact on school improvement.

As a consequence of this focus on school improvement the study is also centred on the 'improve' paradigm of research described in Gardner and Coombs (2010: 53):

"positivism seeks to 'prove' things and therefore generalise findings, whereas the 'interpretivist' research paradigm that relates too much of 'real life' social research seeks instead to 'improve' or understand social events and validates the inclusion of the social researcher as participant."

This concept will be examined in more detail throughout and especially in Chapter 6.3.2 which is concerned with the conclusions which can be drawn from this study. This development in understanding will be achieved by examining the impact of the research on standards across more than one school; utilising the Case Study methodology. The preferred research framework of this study relates to an Action Research model as it is cyclical and allowed me to amend my practice on a regular basis. The Action Research framework also allowed for various methods of data collection as well as allowing me to fulfil the role of 'participant observer' as defined by Junker and Gold quoted in Hammersley and Atkinson (1995). The Action Research methodology which, builds on the work of McNiff (1998) will be examined in depth in this chapter (3.3) as well as in Chapter 3.10.

It is important to note that the research does not work within the Action Research framework alone as it also employs aspects of Case Studies as Nisbet and Watt (1984: 72) state:

“a case study approach 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.”

This point is important for this research as it was conducted over a period of time delineated by the establishment of the National Strategies and concluded with the withdrawal of support for them by the Coalition Government. There are also other influences on the methods I utilised, which will be examined in more detail later in this chapter.

3.2: Aims:

There were a number of aims at the start of this research project, which were being advanced; specifically my aim in this study was to examine whether Assessment for Learning (AfL) in schools was being applied in the way it was envisaged by the originators. It was also to establish whether the use of the AfL strategies impacted on the students and upon the practice of the teachers; as a consequence of this the methodology used to establish this needed to be as wide ranging as possible. 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 (2006: 101) point out the outcomes of *“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.

As previously stated the original aims of the research was to consider how AfL is viewed by staff, students and other stakeholders, moving on from this it was to examine whether AfL can be or has been used by examination boards in the design of their syllabi. Linked to these previous ideas I was also looking to assess whether the theoretical framework proposed by the originators of the theory is in fact what was being applied in practice. Another aim was to explain how the AfL strategies were being utilised by different faculties within and across schools. These conclusions would then be cross-referenced with the original researchers wherever possible, in order to triangulate the evidence.

The second aim is clearly linked to the use of the methodology and this was to use an Action Research framework in a school situation linked to reviewing current pedagogy, policy and practice in relation to AfL. This aim was clarified after peer discussions, with other educational researchers and my supervisor.

Another aim of the research was to place these ideas within an institutional, local and national context (particularly relating to the political context of government policy) and relevant theoretical frameworks; as well as to critically analyse the issues in relation to AfL. This was considering how the strategy impinges on professional practice and is linked to the 'improve' paradigm and Action Research framework. Concurrent with this is the idea whether new strategies for action and change can be applied to a variety of situation including employment training, that is to say whether the theory behind AfL is transferrable from the secondary education sector to other areas.

The final aim of the research was to examine the possibilities for creating an original toolkit for the dissemination of AfL; this was linked to the examination of the types of toolkits already available and once the toolkit was in place to evaluate its effectiveness. All of these ideas impacted on the types of methodology used.

It could be said, however, that this type of research fits within the interpretivist paradigm as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000: 23) put it. This is because:

“the interpretivist paradigm...is characterised by a concern for the individual” but also “interpretivist researchers? They 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 which is part of the research paradigm linked to the methodology will also be examined in Chapter 4.5. This research design was adapted as part of the synthesis and framework 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. The review of methodology will move at this point to examine the central strand in the study by looking at Action Research and its impact on the progress of this study.

3.3 Action Research Methodology: cycle implementation:

In examining Action Research theories it has to be acknowledged that the works of Jack Whitehead and Jean McNiff have been central to developing both the theory and the practice evidenced in this study. The ideas taken from Whitehead and McNiff have been integral to the methodology undertaken in this work. In McNiff's description of the development of the theory she describes the steps involved, which will be considered later in

the chapter, but which resonated deeply with me. The description used by McNiff (1988: 24) of the work of Laurence Stenhouse shows that:

“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, as at the beginning of this project I was looking at the way AfL was affecting my own practice and used this as a starting point. 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 the impact of this was to be an integral part of this study and this reflects the concept articulated by McNiff.

The concepts articulated by McNiff were based on the seminal work of Kurt Lewin (1946), who is described by McNiff (1988: 22) as:

“A social psychologist was keen to study social issues himself, and also to provide people with an instrument to study their own relationships...Lewin described action research as a spiral of steps. Each step has four stages, planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.”

This could be said to accurately describe the cyclical nature of this study, which originally was only intended as one cycle but developed over time to look at number of action research cycles in a variety of situations.

The original idea for this research began as an examination of the strategies suggested by Black, Wiliam et al. (2003: 2) in a real context. As explained in the introduction (Chapter 1.3) I was struck by the comment that:

“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.”

This statement describes the processes my team and I were trying to achieve in the faculty I was managing at that particular time. There are clear links to the idea of Action Research, where I began with an idea, applied it and examined a key feature in Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2003: 14) who stated that:

“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; thus beginning the Action Research cycles. From this beginning as a small-scale project within one classroom the Action Research cycles have developed over a period of time, culminating in the information in this study.

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

“in their efforts to portray a stylised reality; the authors have opted for systems resting on an intellectual basis, and the visual representations reflect this mental reality rather than class reality. The systems of Kemmis, Elliott and Ebbutt simply do not accommodate spontaneous creative episodes. Perhaps the gravest shortcoming in the schemes is that they are not intrinsically educational. 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.

The schemes of Kemmis, Elliott and Ebbutt require teachers only to apply systems to their pupils. In this sense they may be accused of prescriptivism and possibly even of being no further advanced in educational democracy than an interpretive tradition... Jack Whitehead and his notion of a living educational theory. He feels Kemmis, Elliott and Ebbutt are in danger of moving away from the reality of educational practice. He 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.”

On reflection the criticisms of the schemes of Kemmis et al. are significant, as is the development of the theory developed by Jack Whitehead in relation to the current study. 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 way of thinking expressed here by McNiff. My thinking is now more clearly aligned with the articulated thinking of McNiff than the interpretivist tradition.

If we consider the statement from Whitehead & McNiff (2011: 241) that:

“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.”

Then the development of the Action Research model has been significant; it could even be described as central, to this research as it also validates the nature of the desired “improve” paradigm (Gardner & Coombs, 2009) argued earlier.

It is clear as McNiff (1988: 45) states:

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

This point clearly reflects the way I was able to develop this research over a period of time. It is important also to note (McNiff, 1988: 45) that:

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

This draws on the work of Whitehead who reminds us about the messiness of action research, showing a process that becomes spirals on spirals, as exemplified in Figure 11 below which was significant in the methodology choices made as an integral part of this study:

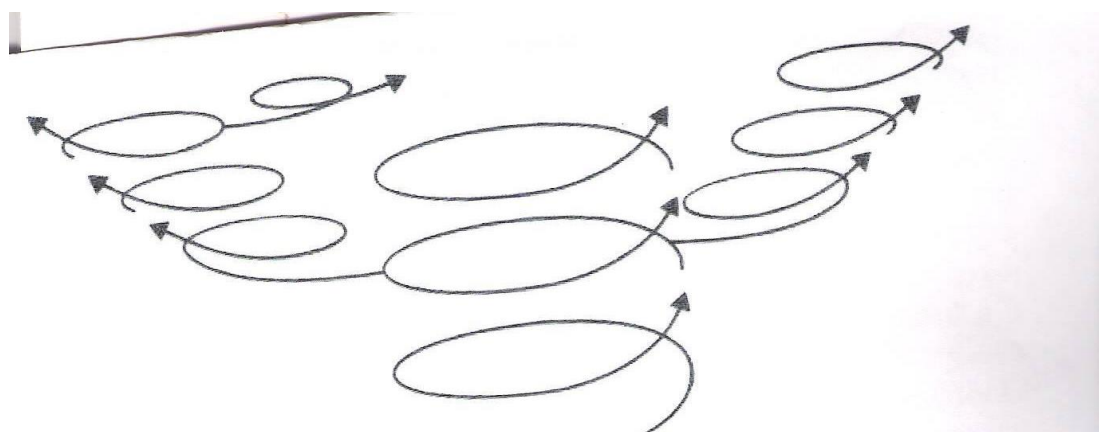


Figure 11: A diagram showing the 'messiness' of action research.

In the introduction to the second edition of their book entitled “All you need to know about Action Research.” McNiff and Whitehead (2011: 1) state that:

“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 idea. 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.”

This paragraph is highly significant in the choice of methodology utilised in this study, because it mirrors my own understanding, it also accurately reflects my own experiences in conducting this study. 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, which will be considered in more detail in the conclusions of this study. There is also some significance in the statement about policy, which can be seen as accurate; the examination of the implementation of the National Strategies later in this study will demonstrate this.

Importantly in relation to this study the task of researching Action Research and curriculum design can prove to be something of a challenge. The scholarly articles, which are available for the area of Action Research and Curriculum design are mostly focussed on international development; such as those from Canada and New Zealand. As well as considering Curriculum design there is also a need to examine the importance of Continued Professional Development (CPD) in relation to the Action Research cycles. As far as the UK is concerned the starting point for the examination of CPD relating to the ideas involved in this study can be found in a statement in the Key Stage 3 Strategy documentation. This is to be considered in relation to the Action Research and Case Study methodologies.

The information from the DfES in Pedagogy and Practice; Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools Leadership guide (DfES, 0444-2004 G.) stated that:

“the Key Stage 3 National Strategies plays a key role in helping teachers to realise the government’s vision of providing high quality continued professional development (CPD) to teachers. It provides well-researched, extensively trialled material, as well as ‘on-the-job’ support from consultants, advanced skills teachers (ASTs) and other leading professional including leading teachers and subject leaders.”

At the start of the process the Strategy document on Pedagogy and Practice (DfES, 0444-2004 G.) also stated:

“the way in which the study units are used in a school will depend on the culture of the school, current and competing priorities, resources and strengths and weaknesses

of teaching and learning. It will depend on the maturity and robustness of schools' CPD provision."

This appears to be something of a statement of the obvious; however, it is important to examine the rationale behind this, in relation to the methodology and to understand why the government of the day decided to take what on first glance seems to be a laissez-faire attitude to the implementation of the National Strategy. An examination of actual practice was conducted by Ofsted and this report from Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) followed up the comments from the National Strategy with evidence from a number of schools. This summary of CPD in practice was published in 2006 (HMI, 2639 2006: 12):

"This report also identifies a number of concerns, based on the visits to survey schools and to the schools visited by subject inspectors. Although senior managers identified their school's needs systematically and accurately, the identification of the individual teachers' needs was not always so rigorous. As a result, planning for the professional development of individuals was often weak. Few schools evaluated the impact of CPD on teaching and learning successfully, largely because they failed to identify, at the planning stage, its intended outcomes and suitable evaluation methods. Head teachers did not know how to assess the value for money of their CPD policy. Although well designed coaching and mentoring arrangements were highly effective in developing staff's competences, there was wide variation in the way schools used these two types of professional development and consequently, in the extent to which staff benefitted from them."

The implications in relation to policy and practice will be examined in depth in the conclusions section of this thesis, but it is crucial to realise this information was linked to decisions made on methodology. The government's leaflet from the DfES (0192-2005: 2) on CPD stated:

"In his book Student achievement through staff development written with Beverley Showers, Bruce Joyce included one of the first attempts to connect in-service education with its impact in classrooms. He demonstrated that traditional components of CPD, such as describing, explaining and demonstrating new approaches, do have some effect on teacher knowledge. However, this only translates into an effect in classrooms when accompanied by opportunities for teachers to experiment and practise, and by opportunities to observe and be observed with appropriate skilled feedback set in the context of sustained coaching. Reviews of research (EPPI reviews

2003, 2004) confirm these positive effects on teachers' development and pupils' learning."

At this point the ideas of Action Research as a methodology again needs to be examined as it potentially provided an answer to the problem posed by the type of CPD available, although the CPD itself was apparently only taken on by a limited number of staff, including myself.

It is important too to note the support of the Senior Leadership of the schools in relation to CPD issues and the ability of the staff to conduct in depth Action Research projects. The original researchers (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam) had suggested as part of their recommendations that there should be a rolling programme of in-service development and further work being conducted on the subject of AfL. Although with the National Strategies it appeared that the government was supporting this idea there was no enforcement of this and many schools did not implement this recommendation, as a result of this lack of co-ordination it would appear that I took the idea on, apparently in isolation. The utilisation of an Action Research framework as part of my methodology was crucial to my implementation of the Strategy but this was not replicated by the vast majority of my colleagues.

Once the Action Research cycles were implemented it was vital I examined the ideas relating to reflective practice to be found in an article in the bulletin from the International Professional Development Association (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."

This quote accurately summarises the position I was in, with the methodology for the research being chosen as it was most relevant to apply to the study. It is also important to take into account the fact as Strauss points out in Hopkins, Bollington & Hewett (1989: 78) that:

"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. (Strauss 1987)"

The Action Research methodology was considered the most apposite for this study as a result of these considerations. From here I wish to move on to consider another important

component in the methodology of this study; the Case Study, which was used in conjunction with the Action Research framework.

3.4: Case Study methodology:

The Case Study approach is also a significant part of the methodology used in this study, as it combines with the Action Research aspects in many ways.

The Case Study is best described by Nisbet and Watt (1980: 72) as:

“A case study approach is 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 is particularly appropriate as my study was examining Assessment for Learning (AfL), which is larger than one aspect but can be seen as one ‘problem’ to be studied, and the timescale for the study was defined in some ways by the political change which occurred over time. 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 (1994: 306) where:

“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 as previously described, with the study beginning with the implementation of the National Strategy and concluding with the removal of their importance as a result of changes made by the coalition government, although the review of the impact took place after these later events.

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

“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 will be examined in more detail in Chapter 5.3. The study could be postulated purely as an exercise in Action Research because I was looking at changing practice but the Case Study methodology was incorporated as Nisbet and Watt (1980: 74) note:

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

All of these methods as well as others were utilised in this particular study and will be examined in the subsequent section on methods in Chapter 4.1 and 4.2.

Bell (1984: 94) points out that:

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

It is also important to note the criticisms of this particular methodology as Nisbet and Watt (1980: 76) state:

“results are not easily generalizable”

This factor would need to be taken into account in another type of study. However, for the Action Research project on AfL, which was a small scale project originally the results would be unique to this particular study but the impact could be generalizable. This fact is not problematical as Denzin and Lincoln (1996: 306) point out:

“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 underpinned the methodology this was not as significant.

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

“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.”

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

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

This too is an aspect of the methodology, which is important to this study and will be described in the methods section Chapter 4.1.2 and examined in greater depth in the conclusions section Chapter 5.2.

In support of the utilisation of this methodology McNiff states:

“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 later in this chapter, in section 3.5 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 (1988: 17); in this case describing it as *“being woolly with little scientific rigour”*. However, in this study the idea of a ‘scientific’ methodology was not considered to be appropriate. I understood the nature of the methodology and was aware that there are a number of issues relating to the Case Study methodology as Bell (1994: 99) points out:

“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.”

The issue of validity will be dealt with in relation to the paradigms concerning the terminology relating to assessment.

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

“illustrate a point, a condition, a category, something important for instruction (Kennedy, 1979)”

These methodologies can be seen as being part of the tradition linked to ethnographical research as Hammersley and Atkinson (1992: 2) describe:

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

A statement made about ethnographical research is true about most types of methodologies; in that, depending on the type of research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1992: 112):

“outsiders and insiders are likely to have immediate access to different sorts of information. And they are also exposed to different kind of methodological dangers.”

This link between the Action Research cycle and ethnographical research is demonstrated in the following quotation from Woods (1986: 110), which accurately reflects the methodology underpinning the experiments in this study:

“Analysis in ethnography it goes on simultaneously with data collection. As one observes interviews, makes up field notes and the research diary, one does not simply ‘record’. There is also reflection, which in turn informs subsequent data collection.”

This quote accurately reflects the methodological approach taken by me, with the observations of the initial small-scale experiment informing subsequent ideas. 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.

As McNiff (1988: 15) states this demonstrates a clear:

“debt in this tradition to anthropology and ethnography.”

Cohen Manion and Morrison (2000: 30) define this process as:

“As ideology is not mere theory but impacts directly on practice (Eagleton, 1991) there is a strongly practical methodology implied by critical theory, which articulates with Action Research (Callewaert, 1999). Action Research as its name suggests, is about research that impacts on and focusses on practice.”

This explanation was one, which closely mirrored my own thinking and the way in which the project developed over the period of time of the study. I needed to continually consider 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 (1994: 537) where they saw the:

“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 interpretivism.”

As a result of these points I began re-examining the type of research paradigm I could use and was made 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 (1994: 10) that the:

“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, a point which will be examined in more depth in Chapter 5.3. From this point reflecting on the use of qualitative research I will move on to look at the underpinning theory behind Action Research and Case Studies which therefore underpins this work, that of Grounded Theory.

3.5: Grounded Theory:

Grounded theory is another aspect, which needs to be examined in more detail here, as it impacted significantly on the way the study developed. From the work on Grounded theory examined previously there are a number of aspects which need to be considered in relation to the current methodology. These ideas clearly link to the ideas postulated in Action Research and Case Study methodologies. Other researchers have suggested that grounded theory links to a number of different aspects. The table below by Creswell (2005) in Ellis and Levy (2009) summarises the ideas I had previously considered:

<i>Type of grounded theory design</i>	<i>Definition</i>
<i>Systematic design</i>	<i>“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” (Cresswell, 2005: 397)</i>
<i>Emerging design</i>	<i>“letting the theory emerge from the data rather than using specific pre-set categories (Cresswell, 2005: .401)</i>
<i>Constructivist design</i>	<i>“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” (Cresswell, 2005: 402)</i>

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

This table summarises the ideas relating to the design of the research study as, if a ‘best fit’ type of design methodology were to be articulated, it could best be described as a cross between emerging design and constructivist design. This is because as the time taken by the research for this study progressed; the theories about the concept of AfL and its reconceptualization emerged. These were triangulated, by interviewing a number of significant individuals. This links together with the ideas relating to constructivist design as this study is looking at the views of a variety of individuals, but there was an element of ideas

relating to reconceptualization emerging from the findings. It could be said that there were no pre formulated ideas about how the concept of AfL would be viewed by me and the different stakeholders as the study progressed. The theories about the development are grounded in my own experiences and it can be said, to quote directly from Glaser and Strauss (1976: 6 (2009 printing)) that:

“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 can be said to accurately describe the process I went through. The use of Grounded Theory was not originally a conscious methodological decision but again developed as a result of peer discussion and a more systematic review of the nature of the study as time progressed. This reflects the ideas postulated in Hopkins, Bollinger and Hewett (1989: 75), which states that:

“The way the methodological framework accommodates the necessary self-conscious role of the researcher and/or provides a basis for reconciling the individual working practices of team members.

The way in which this process leads to the generation of grounded theory.”

Once again this is a clear and accurate reflection of the procedures I underwent during the course of this study. McNiff (1988: 15) links the idea of Grounded Theory to the use of Case Study, which again is important to me. I was utilising these ideas in a more conscious way during the later stages of this research. McNiff states:

“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 class practice.”

Although I have used this quote previously I am repeating it here as I consider it to be highly significant. It should be noted that McNiff uses the term 'class practice'. This statement is one which could be contentious in light of this study as it is not based on the classroom, which is one construct of many which could be placed on McNiff's point. This study is grounded in the wider context of the political situation, of which class in all its many forms plays an important part.

Grounded theory can be described as underpinning all the ideas in this study and forms part of the final synthesis given at the end of this chapter; so it is at this point that other influences also need to be examined. These influences can include Ethnography and Critical Theory, which will be examined next.

3.6: Ethnography and Critical Theory:

It can be said that this study can also fit within the ideas relating to ethnography as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 2) point out:

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

This is also reflected in the fact that they state (1995: 2):

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

As this study was looking at 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 taking place over a period of time. Soltis (1989) quoted in Hitchcock and Hughes (1995: 55) reflects on the idea of critical ethnography which links to the current research:

*“He identifies **descriptive qualitative research, qualitative educational evaluation research, and intervention qualitative research** and finally **critique (critical ethnography)**.”*

These could all be described as relevant to the current study. It could be argued, however, that this research more accurately fits into the participant researcher style of ethnographic methodology.

It has been suggested by Woods (1986: 33) that:

“Participant observation, which in practice tends to be a combination of methods, or rather a style of research.”

This somewhat contradicts the idea that the participant observer is part of the ethnographical research tradition. The links between ethnographical research and this study are clear and there is a point made by Woods (1986: 46) which again accurately reflects my experience:

“It is customary for ethnographers to ‘flounder around’ in the data for a while and there are frequent references to ‘muddling through’.”

This is something I can clearly identify with because of the amount and type of data which was generated by this study. As a consequence the ethnographical research methodology can be seen to inform the way this study was put together, in part. There have been suggestions made by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 22) that:

“There is little justification for the view, associated with naturalism, that ethnography represents a superior, alternative paradigm to quantitative research.”

This is a statement I can endorse. The methodology chosen for this study incorporated aspects of ethnographical research but these were chosen as being the most appropriate for the study, not simply because they were part of the ethnographical tradition. The links between the ideas of Action Research and Ethnography are clear with the interpretative tradition being described by McNiff (1988: 15) as:

“essentially sociological.

There is a clear debt in this tradition to anthropology and ethnography.

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 seen in section 4.3 and links these ideas very closely together. These connections between Action Research, Case Study and Grounded Theory also all link to the idea of Critical Theory. This is because Whitehead and McNiff (2011: 47) state:

“Some researchers, however, still link 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 apposite for this study as although my role meant it 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 (2000: 28) do that:

“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.

Others like Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 302) might argue that the importance of critical theory is related to:

“The work of ethnographers, critical theorists, institutional demographers, and many others has conceptual and stylistic patterns that not only amplify the taxonomy but

extend the foundation for case study research in the social sciences and social services.”

This is suggesting the work of critical theorists cannot be judged in isolation but is related to a number of other theorists who ultimately contribute to the Case Study type of methodology. These ideas can also be linked to the ideas postulated by Soltis in relation to critical ethnography and the ethics of qualitative research.

Hammersley (1992: 197) pointed out:

“Researchers necessarily claim some intellectual authority by publishing their findings also carry some important implications for the organisation of research. The other side of the claim to intellectual authority is an obligation on the part of researchers to ensure that, as far as possible, the information is reliable, and this responsibility cannot be shifted onto the people studied.”

These suggestions are supported in Hammersley and Atkinson’s later book (3rd edition, 2007: 21) where they state:

“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. After considering the major influences on the research methodology at this point other factors need to be examined.

3.7: Other factors influencing the methodology; including the Hawthorne Effect:

The methodology of research design has involved a wide range of associated data capture techniques including;

- Observations
- Work scrutiny
- Semi structured and structured interviews

The final methodological model suggests a range of suitable data collection techniques that have generated further questions from within the Action Research cyclical review model, but an attempt has also been made to triangulate the data, wherever possible, from diverse sources. As Hopkins Bollington and Hewitt (1989: 66) point out:

“by employing analytical techniques such as saturation and triangulation on qualitative data, researchers can produce hypotheses and concepts that are valid, methodologically sound and to an extent generalizable.”

The reasons behind this approach are an attempt to increase the validity of their research by attempting to corroborate the findings from one source by substantiating it from elsewhere. As Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 357) say:

“Time honoured procedures such as triangulation...are all utilised by intepretivist evaluators to enhance the credibility of their inferences.”

One of the arguments critical of the Action Researcher is the fact they have an impact on the participants, which if they remained purely as an observer they might not have. The Hawthorne effect has been described as threatening the validity of such studies, however it could be argued as by Adair, Sharp and Huynh in Review of Educational Research (1989: 215) that:

“The Hawthorne Effect has not been satisfactorily defined. Moreover, classification of Hawthorne control procedures by primary source – that is, special attention, awareness or novelty of the experimental activity – has not been examined by methodologists.”

It could also be stated that as an Action Researcher methodology is in use the need for change is inherent in the study and that the Hawthorne Effect, even if it can be proven, is irrelevant in this type of study.

3.8: Methods:

At this point I will move on from methodology to define what is meant by methods, in order to distinguish between the two and also to show how they are linked. This wil be examined in the synthesis at the end of this chapter. It has been said by Hitchcock and Hughes (1994: 20) that:

“Methods in social research are ways of proceeding in the gathering and collection of data, a method is therefore a technique employed to gather data. Methods consist either of listening to subjects, observing what people do or say or collecting and examining documents which human beings construct.”

The methods relating to the dissemination of the training materials for the National Strategy AfL component will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 4.1.2 and 4.2.1.

This study began, as has previously been said in Chapter 1.3 with the small-scale research project described in the previous chapter; then I moved on to working with a single faculty, which I was leading at the time. This work began with the collection of baseline information using the simple questionnaire which can be found in the Appendices as Appendix 2. With the support of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of School A this was then applied to a number of other faculties. Originally these faculties were chosen in conjunction with input from the deputy head responsible for the curriculum. These returns were then collated and the results were examined in conjunction with the Local Authority (LA) consultant/adviser. Further work was done on establishing how the school was implementing the AfL strand of the National Strategy before any CPD inputs were made.

In order to see how the school as a whole was working I worked with the LA adviser and SLT to conduct a series of observations and a number of work scrutinies across a number of departments. The agenda for these different methods can be found in the appendices as Appendix 4 in line with the ethics of this study these have been made anonymous.

The information gathered was then shared with the staff as part of a training day held with the whole staff the following month. On reflection this could be seen as an example of CPD being 'done to' staff, although it is difficult to see how this information could be provided in any other way. This concept of passive CPD will be examined further in Chapter 5.4 and the findings shared with staff are in the appendices as Appendix 3 and will be examined in more detail in the section on data. Subsequent to this the findings were then followed up by meeting with the relevant Heads of Department and discussions were undertaken with targets set.

At the end of the process the findings were reviewed; the work produced by me was reviewed with the deputy head responsible for curriculum. This meeting took place at the end of my period of employment at the school. There is a transcript of the interview where this work was reviewed in the appendices as Appendix 4. The findings will be reviewed in the section on data and conclusions drawn as a result will appear in Chapter 5.

The findings for this cycle of Action Research was then utilised in a different context, as I had moved not only schools but also LA areas. The findings from the first set of cycles informed the planning of the implementation of the work in my new school. This work again began with an attempt to establish baseline data. This was done in conjunction with other staff as my responsibilities had changed and I was now a member of the SLT and had

responsibility for Teaching and Learning as part of the Progress and Standards area of the School Improvement and Development Plan (SIDP).

From the beginning this implementation of the AfL Strategy had a number of strands to it and these were reviewed on a regular basis. One method included examining the responses from Year 7 pupils to the component parts of the AfL strand; this was given to them in the form of a questionnaire, the results of which appear as Appendix 12. These results then informed the next phase of implementation in the Action Research cycle framework. As a result of these cycles the results were examined but it is not possible to quantify the effects in purely numerical terms. The Ofsted report on the National Strategy implementation states:

“the impact of assessment for learning was good or outstanding in 16 of the 43 schools visited. It was inadequate in seven, including four of the sixteen secondary schools visited. It was better developed and more effective in the primary than the secondary schools. Although teachers and senior leaders valued the training and support they had received from the National Strategies, this did not necessarily lead to effective Assessment for Learning in their schools,”

The reasons behind these statements will be considered in greater depth in Chapter 5.3. Intrinsic to the methods used were review points in the cycles, this included semi structured interviews and questionnaire which re-aligned the direction of the Action Research project at various points. There is also the fact that, as Measor (1985: 125) points out:

“The central issue in interviewing is probably that of keeping a critical alertness about the interview, and also about yourself and your own performance.”

This concern was part of my own Action Research methodology, which I had adopted for this project. From this point the study had to move on from what Woods (1986: 125) describes as:

“the mass of data embodied in field notes, transcripts, documents, has to be ordered in some kind of systematic way, usually by classifying and categorising.”

This had to be done in order to draw preliminary conclusions and move on to the next stage of the study, thus implementing a new Action Research cycle.

3.9 The ethics of the research:

As this study is based on personal experience and uses an Action Research framework it is important that ethical guidelines are followed and early in the study I considered the importance of ethics as part of the research project. There is a link between the social ethics

used in this study as I have based my work on the ethical guidelines laid down by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 1992: 4) which states that:

“all educational research should be conducted within the ethic of respect for persons, respect for knowledge, respect for democratic values, and respect for the quality of educational research,” a statement I wholeheartedly subscribe to.

It is important to note that the research should be collected in as transparent a way as possible and should allow access to the results for any interested parties. The researcher has to ensure that the participants are aware of what is happening and should where possible give permission for their involvement to be documented. The researcher has also to ensure (BERA, 1992: 10) that it is important to:

“report research conceptions, procedures, results and analyses accurately and in sufficient detail to allow other researchers to understand and interpret them”

The anonymity of the participants should also be maintained. It is also important to explain that according to the BERA (1992: 10) guidelines:

“Educational researchers should communicate their findings and the practical significance of their research in clear, straightforward and appropriate language to relevant research populations, institutional representatives and other stakeholders”

This statement is a central tenet of my belief as a researcher and is one to which this study will wholeheartedly subscribe. As a result of this the study will describe events and results in a way which wherever possible anonymises the participants. This impacted on the study as I ensured that I was able to obtain the consent of the participants where possible and in designing some of the data capture techniques I needed to ensure I was following the required ethical guidelines. In practice the social ethics of the study were all integral to the research paradigm used and did not restrict the methods used.

3.10: Conclusions and final synthesised methodology adopted:

The research contained within this study could best be described as being based on the interpretivist tradition as it is studying the qualitative analysis of data. It is building on the Grounded Theory approach of Glaser and Strauss (1967) cited in McNiff (1988). The methodology used is a combination of Action Research framework discussed above combined with Case Study methodology. Throughout the study use is made of the ethnographical research techniques with the added influence of Critical Theory. The triangulation of data is important in the study and throughout I was aware of the importance

of the types of both method and methodology used. This understanding developed throughout the extended period of time over which this study was conducted. The next chapter will examine the methods used to collect the data, which was produced as a result of this research and the study will then move on to draw the relevant conclusions from this data.

The methodology is based on the Action Research framework as exemplified in the unique figure in Chapter 5.2. This demonstrates the use of the Action Research framework and the figure below shows the model of the methodology used and its links to the research questions which are the centre of the model. This model can be said to describe the nature of applied research for creating change, in this case AfL but can be transferred to other research scenarios.

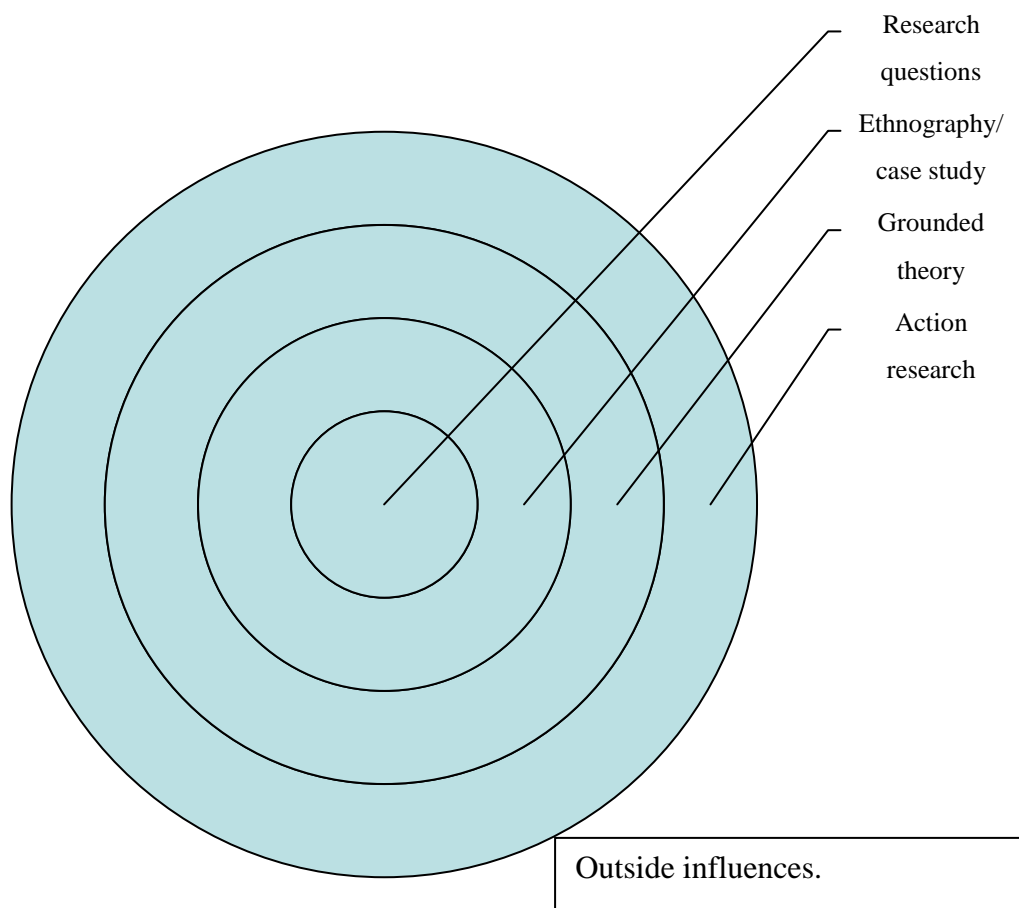


Figure 12: A model of the methodology used in relation to research question.

Chapter 4: Data and data analysis:

4.1: Introduction:

The interest in Assessment for Learning (AfL) as an Action Research project was triggered, as has been previously stated in Chapter 2.7 by the initial training on Assessment for Learning from the Key Stage 3 Strategy in England's Secondary Schools, which was then pursued further by examining the strategies in a real world context. The model in Chapter 3 above demonstrates the ideas of the synthesised methodology and clearly links to the methods used in this study. The methodology was used to examine the research questions which are summarised at the end of Chapter 2 and the methods below exemplify this. This is because the research questions which were generated were central to this study and the Action Research cycles described below can be seen to encompass the methods used to answer them, however there were other influences in the study including those discussed in the literature review which impacted on the methods used.

4.1.1: Reasons for involvement in the project:

The key idea which triggered my interest was that stated by Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2003: 2):

“an assessment activity can help learning if it provides information to be used as feedback... becomes formative assessment when the evidence is used to adapt the teaching work to meet the learning needs”

This statement was particularly significant as it inspired an original Action Research project that enabled me to ground the work in a theoretical framework.

As has been previously stated in Chapter 2.7 I became involved in the Local Authority training for the cross-curricular aspect of the KS3 Strategy when I was sent as the school representative for School A on the training programme. From this initial meeting there was one immediate result; this led to a very limited curriculum experiment within the confines of my classroom with a group of Key Stage 4 History students. My implicit aim for this very small-scale project was for the researcher to assess for myself the usefulness of the supplied National Strategy AfL materials. I was inspired to attempt this limited experiment by the accessibility of the original research and designed some new approaches mirroring these ideas as described in Chapter 2.4 and 2.7. At this point I did not articulate the concept

of embarking on an Action Research project as I was an emergent researcher and as such I was not in the position to clearly articulate my thinking.

4.1.2: Methods utilised in School A and Data from School A:

As an emergent researcher I used a very simplistic method to conduct the initial small scale experiment, having followed the ideas postulated in Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2003: 26) where the:

“teacher was free to choose which class would be the focus for their action plan...there was no possibility of conducting a standard research experiment.”

Having conducted this small scale experiment previously described in Chapter 2.7, I then attended the second day of training on the “Effective Management of the Foundation Strand” where an action plan for the whole school training was formulated. Working with my line manager, the Deputy Head responsible for curriculum, I had already identified the need to focus whole school training on certain aspect of AfL and had made some decisions relating to who should be involved in more intensive work. As a result of discussions with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in the school, it was felt that to begin with there was a need to produce a school wide system for the dissemination of the key messages and to identify which departments could take a lead on the development of the AfL strand of the National Strategies. These decisions were implemented using the information from the AfL training; as exemplified by the slides in Chapter 2 and those below in Figure 13 were used with staff in School A to explain what AfL was and how it should be adopted.

Ready for more?



Next half-term 'have a go'.

- **Step 1**
Focus on one or two 'key characteristics' on handout 1.5 and identify some strategies to trial in a series of lessons
- **Step 2**
After the first few lessons, discuss with a colleague what went well and what did not. Persist for a minimum of 20 hours of trialling
- **Step 3**
Consider what further support or training might help you trial these strategies

Slide 1.5

Key Stage 3 National Strategy

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Figure 13: Slide showing the steps used in order to complete this research.

Having begun by working with my own practice I had to develop a plan, in conjunction with the school SLT to work with other heads of faculties and members of staff in School A. I introduced what Assessment for Learning was to the whole staff, from that point I then worked with selected Heads of Department in order to examine good practice across the school and used these as exemplars of good practice for other staff to exemplify them. The SLT identified that the school assessment and marking policy needed to be amended in light of the work on AfL which was to follow. There was also the need to identify AfL opportunities across all the key stages (3, 4 and 5); as the school leadership agreed with me on the premise that if the work on AfL could significantly raise achievement at KS3, as argued by the fact that the Government was willing to implement the work as part of the Key Stage 3 Strategy, then it could have similar positive results at Key Stages 4 and 5. This follows on from the fact that Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2003: 29) stated that:

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

Following the initial dissemination of the Strategy materials to the whole staff I then continued on the premise that staff at School A were familiar with the principles for Assessment for Learning, as the government's key messages had been shared on a training day and I had presented the ideas to teachers new to the school as part of a CPD event. According to the Key Stage 3 Strategy training materials meant it was possible to establish

where the school was in relation to government guidelines. In order to further establish clarity of thinking about these ideas I worked with a Local Authority (L.A.) Consultant/Adviser which gave the implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy added status, in the eyes of some members of staff.

Working together, the L.A. Consultant/Adviser and I began the initial review of implementation by doing some work sampling on objective led lessons. The document used to capture the data can be found in the appendices as Work Sampling: sample aide memoire for objective led lessons. Below is the rationale and schedule for the work on objective led lessons and other components of AfL (which has been anonymised in line with the ethical guidelines). This shows the support of the schools' leadership team to the work being undertaken and the fact that it was being reported to governors on a regular basis gave the work added impetus. This work became part of the Action Research cycles as at this point I had moved my thinking on from the original position of being an unwitting researcher. I was now beginning to work within the improve paradigm and I was not only looking to simply amend my own practice. 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 aims and methods can be seen in Figure 14 below

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

- [redacted] carry out lesson observations.
 - [redacted] arrange questionnaires
 - [redacted] do student interviews
 - [redacted] do work sampling and scheme of work scrutiny.
- [redacted] is a LA consultant for Afl.

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 [redacted] 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

Figure 14: Audit of AfL provision in School A

This audit was collected as part of my work with the staff in School A and focussed on the written information to be found in Schemes of work produced by the different faculties. The main findings from this exercise are summarised below in table 3 and have been anonymised in line with the ethical guidelines.

	Learning objectives	Learning outcomes	Independent learning
Department A: Subject 1 KS4 Subject 1 KS5	Clear and unambiguous Clear	Linked to objectives and successful	No evidence
Department B Subject 1 KS4 Subject 1 KS5	No evidence Content not skills driven	No marking available Linked to success criteria	No evidence No evidence
Department C Subject 1 KS4 Subject 2 KS4 Subject 2 KS5 Subject 3 KS4	Available Clear Clear Clear	Limited progress Expected outcomes successful Expected outcomes successful Expected outcomes successful	No evidence Supported independent learning Supported independent learning Supported independent learning
Department D Subject 1 KS4 Subject 1 KS5	Clear Good links to teaching strategies	Successful Good	No evidence No evidence
Department E Subject 1 KS4 Subject 1 KS5	Aims not learning objectives Clear	Outcomes linked to activities Clear	Little evidence Some evidence
Department F Subject 1 KS5 Subject 2 KS4 Subject 3 KS4 Subject 3 KS5 Subject 4 KS5 Subject 5 KS5	Not available Not available Not clear Not clear Task based Clear and well defined	Not evident Some evidence Not clear Not clear Not clear Expected outcomes successful	No evidence No evidence Not evident No evidence No evidence No evidence

Table 3: Showing scheme of work.

The data collected was summarised using the qualitative language used above. This was a conscious choice owing to the nature of the material. As can be seen here in the summary of the findings there was a variety in the experience the students received across the subjects in the school; with some subjects in some departments being further advanced in their use of AfL strategies, including those of sharing objectives with pupils, than others. These findings mirrored the comments made by Jones and Tanner (2nd Ed, 2006: 111);

“Stating learning objectives at the start of the lesson is coming to be regarded as good practice.”

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, in a fairly simplistic way, as part of a training day. This was done using the following information produced as a PowerPoint presentation; there are exemplifications of the slides below as Figure 15. The reasons for sharing this information was part of the Action Research cycles although it does exemplify my conceptual naivety at the time, as I was convinced that the concept of sharing good practice would result in other staff changing their practice. As can be seen from the results below despite sharing these ideas initially less than 50% of the lessons observed showed the use of key AfL strategies which I had previously introduced, reinforcing the fact of my conceptual naivety at this point.

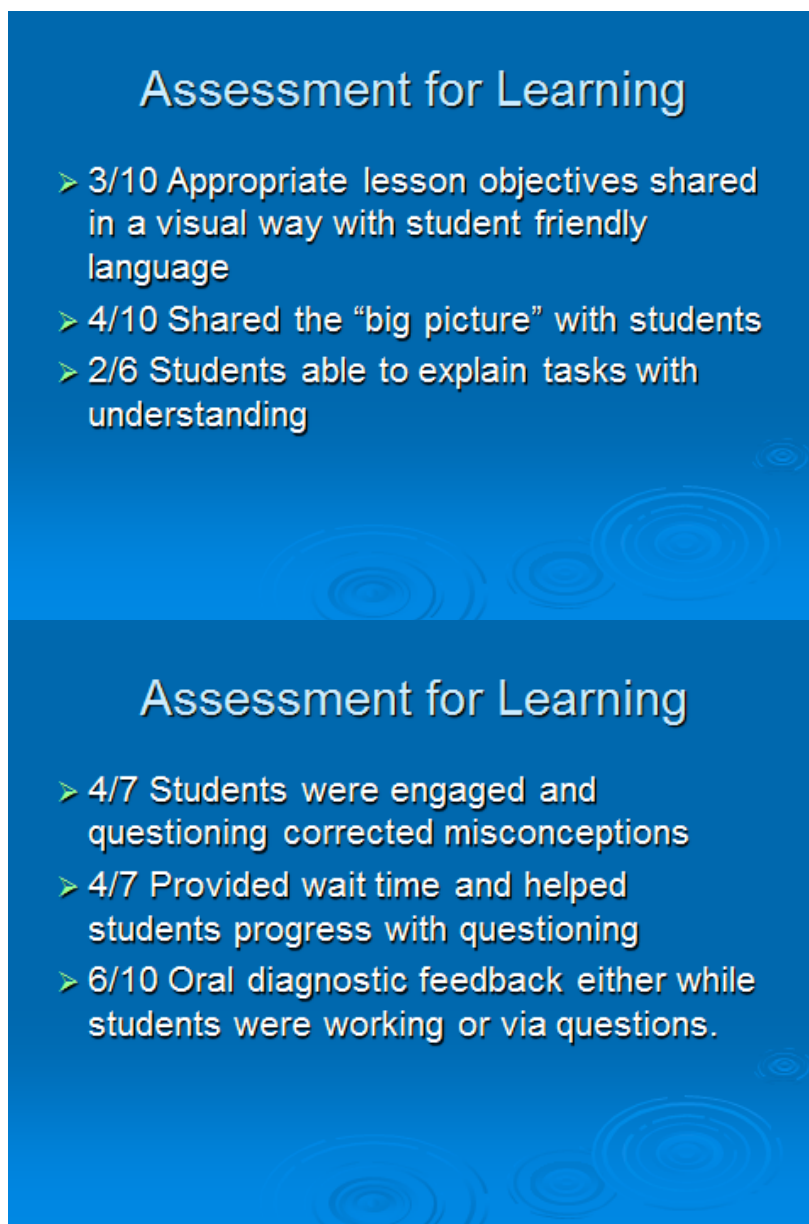


Figure 15:Powerpoint slides from the presentation to staff in School A.

Even from a very cursory examination it can be seen that there could be some initial conclusions drawn from this information. These conclusions will be examined in the conclusions chapter of this thesis; Chapter 5.2. The findings from this baseline audit can be seen as significant in the development of this work and links to the Action Research cycles; although my understanding of the ideas were still conceptually raw at this point.

An action plan was instituted in order to move the school forward in relation to the findings encompassed above. This plan was created with the assistance of the SLT and I was involved in generating the plan, which can be seen as the next move in the Action Research cycle.

As an integral part of the action plan the training needs of the various departments were discussed with them. The plans were then clarified and then produced in detail with an expectation that the departments would engage with them. During the training day, the following requirements were made explicit; that there was to be a subsequent response required from faculties. The faculties were asked to respond to the following:

- How are you going to share learning objectives with students visually?
- What will your milestone tasks with clear success criteria for Years 7 and 9 for term 4 be? To be given to XX by 23rd March
- Completed tasks to be marked and samples provided to XX from all staff by 5th May.
- Faculties to set targets by 23rd March using work from milestone assessments to help with this
- SMART targets to be provided to students for Pupil Development Planning (PDP) day on 30th March.

It was felt, following discussion with SLT that if relatively short deadlines were set then staff would be able to deliver within the timeframe and consequently these targets were considered to be SMART. In conjunction with the SLT, I was looking at developing this school wide initiative and was clear in my own mind about the impact that this could have on the students; however, there was to be an issue regarding the engagement of the “hearts and minds” of the staff which would affect the development of the Strategy within the school. This idea relating to winning over “hearts and minds” had been discussed on day 2 of the “Effective Management of the Foundation Subject Strand Strategy” by the L.A. Consultant/Adviser who suggested starting with a limited group, as it was felt this would

spread the information more effectively as more people “championed” the cause. This again reflected the thinking of one of the writers on AfL; Shirley Clarke (2005: 157):

“it needs a “champion” in a school for the first few years to keep it high profile”

The next stages of developing the strategy involved me, the LA Consultant/Adviser plus the SLT working together to move things forward and it was at this point I was looking at the use of formative assessment within classes. This was another step on my Action Research journey, which allowed me to reflect on what had been achieved to this point and the steps which were going to be needed in order to move the implementation of AfL as well as my own understanding forward. The reflections on the Action Research cycle at this point allowed me to develop my understanding of my own position and reflect on my naivety in making assumptions about the engagement of others, which was to prove increasingly significant throughout the project.

One of the key development areas for the school was to improve what were described at this point “milestone” assessments; which is where departments built in the opportunity for students to receive formative feedback on significant pieces of work. This feedback was to be put in place in order to allow the students to identify areas to improve in order to make progress. This was in line with the thinking expressed in Shalveson in conjunction with Black, Wiliam and Coffey in Education, Evaluation and Policy Analysis (2003: 11) when he states:

“It becomes imperative, then, to align formative and summative assessment.”

As a result of this work on the next steps of this Action Research project, the request below was generated by me in conjunction with the Deputy Head teacher responsible for curriculum.

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 V 8Z3: 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 R 9X2: T W 9Z1: J McD 9Z1

I selected these students in order to ensure a representative 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 from as many of the teaching staff across the school in as efficient a way as possible. It was not possible to sample each individual member of staff as when work was sampled it was not always representative of what was actually happening in the department. By sampling the same students across the school this meant I received a view of the actual experience the students underwent and what they were experiencing in reality. This was an attempt on my part to develop my sampling techniques as my research experience developed.

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.

The results from departments of the sample of tasks are seen below, having been sent to each Head of Faculty separately. It was only me and the SLT working with the LA Consultant/Adviser who were aware of the position across a range of departments.

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 levelling 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

The findings from this review can be seen as significant in the understanding of assessment which forms part of the new findings of this thesis. The clear fact which emerges

from these findings is that for many of the subjects in the school the default setting when asked to provide an assessment was to assume that it meant test.

This review of the “milestone assessment” pieces had followed some work which had been done in the Heads of Faculty meetings held over the previous term. This had resulted in guidance being offered relating to Schemes of Work, for some faculties this was superfluous but was again an attempt to ensure consistency across the school. This work was presented as a series of questions in an attempt to engage the heads of subject more closely in the work. This was an intentional development on my part as I was aware of the fact that I needed to involve more people in the work in order to develop it further, as I reflected on the impact my work was having in relation to the improve paradigm.

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

My research then moved on to look at the impact of these requirements on the student experience across the school using the information gathered.

As previously stated at the start of the process, I had believed that there would be a high level of engagement from Heads of Faculty and teachers as I had been able to demonstrate an impact in my own practice and was developing this within the faculty I was managing at the time. The work of the LA Consultant/ Adviser was used to validate the work that was being done within the school and she was supportive of the programme. However, the data, which was gathered, did not show significant changes or alteration to the previous results, which provided the baseline.

The results of the work being summarised below begin with the semi-structured interviews conducted with students by the LA Consultant/Adviser. These results were gathered as a result of a semi-structured interview process, which could be seen as part of the case study nature of the work using ideas generated by Nisbet and Watt 1984 in Cohen et al., 2000:

“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 first aspect of work on AfL considered was the use of learning objectives which had been on the agenda as a priority within the school. As a part of the review students were questioned about their experiences and their responses proved there was still a varied experience within the school. The following quote from the students exemplify this:

“In some lessons the learning objectives are put on the board and the teacher ticks them off as we go along.”

This was part of the early work I had done on AfL and reflected the previous comments from Jones and Tanner 2006 which was contemporary with the work I was doing in School A. Students gave examples from the following lessons of how teachers help them to understand what they are trying to learn: they talked about how this was done through showing and explaining the learning objectives. The questions then led to the following responses:

“Behaviour is better in the lessons where we know what we are learning”

“When they are presented visually it helps you to focus”

“It kick starts the lesson and gets you ready”

“It takes the pressure off if we know what we are learning”

The students talked about lessons where the sharing of objectives was done less often:

“This is frustrating and makes me angry”; “We are not taught new things”

“There is loads of doing but it is not linked to learning”

“We go straight in to the work, there are no clear objectives”

These examples of quotes from students are important as they not only summarise what was happening in one school at one particular point in time they also give examples of students higher level thinking and metacognitive understanding. Although the teaching Action Research study is about improving rather than proving a point, the evidence collected by Ofsted (2008) reflected this experience:

“Where assessment for learning had had less impact, the teachers had not understood how the approaches were supposed to improve pupils’ achievement. In particular, they used key aspects of assessment for learning, such as identifying and explaining objectives, questioning, reviewing pupils’ progress and providing feedback without enough precision and skill.” DFES 070244 2008

This comment reflected the position I was in as teachers at School A had adopted some of the approaches but on reflection I had a clear view of the importance of AfL in relation to impacting on practice which was related to my developing understanding as a researcher.

The semi-structured interviews moved on to examine the way in which students knew how well they were doing and students were able to articulate how, in some subjects, they were given a sheet to check their progress with coursework

“This made it clear how much progress I was making”

In other subject this was not necessarily the case as:

“In H and P we are given an exam question and it is marked with a GCSE grade and a comment on what to do next, then we do it in the next question set”

Students then gave examples of how they are made aware of how well they are doing in B, H and S. There were also examples of students being less aware of progress as a student in D was less sure how he/she was doing.

“It is all ...ing and I am not sure if I am doing it right”

In B *“The content is huge. I would like it chunked up”*

In E *“Feedback in Year Ten was good but in Year Eleven we have little marked work. Coursework was given in in October and we have not had it back yet. I want to know what I need to do to make it better”*

This again exemplifies the idea of the metacognitive development of the students, although it was not identified as such by the LA Consultant/Adviser and myself in discussions following the interviews.

From this point the semi-structured interviews moved on to examine how the students knew what to standards to aim for and to establish their understanding where their learning fitted in.

The students were able to exemplify where they had been shown exemplar materials produce by other students with grades attached and discuss how they achieved them in T, E and P, (KS4) C, H, B and D

“This is useful and it would be helpful to see other work in more subjects”

“It can be motivating or it can be daunting”.

“It gives me an idea of the quality and quantity needed”

“It is useful to have the mark scheme but it is better if it is in a way that students can understand”

There were also examples of where students do understand standards and these were given as: H, D, M (coursework) and P. In contrast there was one example of where the students did not understand the standards they were given: E. There was also evidence of understanding where the learning fits in to the overall Scheme of Work and good examples of this were mentioned in E, C:

“Helps us to know our deadline”,

P “The work is broken down in to sections”,

S (some lessons) and H, B, L, D, and M

“It helps us to understand where we are going. I would like other teachers to do it”

“It prepares us for future lessons, makes us more independent and means we can read ahead”

Some students have concerns about S where:

“lessons jump around and we are not sure how they link together”

The work of the LA Consultant/ Adviser demonstrated this as she recorded that:

“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.”

This summary was shared with the SLT and I was able to attest for its accuracy; despite the work previously completed on establishing the AfL Strategy there was no consistency in approach being demonstrated. This was despite my review of the impact of AfL and my own emerging theories relating to the improve paradigm. The information gathered as part of this Action Research cycle was fed back to the Heads of Faculty and Subject Leaders by means of the table below; this is only one example of the set completed by me and shared with each Head of Faculty separately.

	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. Markscheme easy to access <i>Teacher comments on what can be improved</i>	Clear overview Good learning objectives Well organised <i>Clear learning objectives</i>	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	Students to	To show links	Develop learning	All task to be linked

Development	review progress against learning objectives	to previous and future learning <i>Produce clear learning objectives and outcomes</i> <i>Provide feedback to students on draft work</i>	objectives and strategies across all schemes <i>Gaps in Schemes of Work</i>	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				

Table 4: Table showing results of AfL review at School A

These findings will be examined in more depth in the conclusions in Chapter 5.2 of this study.

The research at this point was evaluated as part of the first series of Action Research cycles as I was moving to a new position. The Deputy Head responsible for curriculum, who was also my line manager and I evaluated the impact the work had made in School A. He stated that the impact made had been significant particularly in the faculty based systems I had implemented; these conclusions will be examined in greater depth in Chapter 5.2 of this study. From this point, I then moved onto the second stage of the Action Research study that took place in School B.

4.2: Second Series of Action Research Cycles:

4.2.1: Methods and Data from School B:

My ideas at the start of the research cycles in School B were best described by Whitehead and McNiff (2011: 85) as:

“It is always a temporary position, your present best thinking that will probably change in light of further reflection, evaluation and feedback”

This concept of reflection and evaluation was indeed the case; as when I approached the second set of research cycles there was a clearer understanding of what the outcomes were likely to be. The research itself also had a clearer structure as a result of reviewing the data collection methodology and the data recording from the first set of cycles in School A.

There was also a change in context, which needs to be considered, as I had moved from being a faculty leader in School A to being a member of the Senior Leadership Team in School B. The impact of this change of role will be examined in more depth in Chapter 5.2 of this thesis but the change in role could be said to reflect the fact that the government of the day had expressed in the TES of June 2008 had stated their intention to have:

“a senior teacher trained in “assessment for learning” ...to make it a central part of classroom practice to improve pupil achievement.”

This second set of Action Research cycles began in a somewhat more structured manner than the first set of cycles. There had been significant developments in my understanding of methods and methodology as I reviewed what had already been put in place in School B. as a starting point, using the reflections on the findings from School A to inform this. This review was approached in conjunction with other members of the Senior Leadership team as part of my new role.

School B had presented the ideas encompassing the AfL Strategy to staff as part of their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme in the previous academic year and had produced a handbook, which examined the ideas I had been attempting to disseminate in School A. The school had also already produced a monitoring form which was to be used in lesson observations in order to establish the evidence for individual staff's use of AfL and which also allowed feedback to heads of subject.

As School B already had some systems in place when I arrived I was able to gain information in a variety of ways; these included working with the members of staff who had management responsibilities within the school in the School Improvement Group (SIG) forum. This forum mirrored that of the Heads of Subject in School A but in School B this comprised of anyone who held a substantive teaching and learning responsibility post. The SIG group shared good practice and at the start of this particular research cycle this included an explanation of how one subject tracked the implementation of AfL; this meeting was held shortly after I arrived in the school. As a follow up to this meeting subject leaders were sent the following information and a response was requested:

Assessment for Learning

I have photocopied a set of the grids for faculty and subject leaders to assess where their faculty is and these will be in trays by Monday

The URL for the information on subjects is

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/secondary/keystage3/all/respub/afl_ws

If you scroll down to each of the aspects i.e. oral feedback; target setting etc. and open the zip folder link this then takes you to the subject specific sections

Hope this is accessible

If anyone has any questions please come and ask

These tools for reviewing existing practice were used with the subject leaders at this point. These included the tables on objective led lessons, questioning, progression, written feedback, oral feedback, target setting, peer, and self-assessment. These were provided as hard copies printed off from the Assessment for Learning units from the National Strategy information and had been developed as part of the work of the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA) whose contribution will be assessed in Chapter 5.9 of this study. The subject leaders were encouraged to use these tools with their teams in order to develop their understanding of where their subject was in relation to nationally applied standards. They were then able to set appropriate targets in order to move the subject on. This reflected the fact that different subjects were at different points concerning the development of AfL (this could be seen as AfL for subjects) a discussion point that will be examined in Chapter 5.4.

As part of my role and in order to attempt to develop a more corporate approach to AfL at this time, so teaching staff could visualise the whole school approach, there were also a number of publications provided. These publications included suggestions for starters and plenaries; in order to support learning. These starters and plenaries could be used to judge student progress and what students needed to do in order to make further progress; also produced at the time were a series of posters using key AfL phrases. These publications and posters all used a common logo so that members of staff were made visually aware of the connection to AfL. The logo can be seen in Figure 16. The logo itself had been chosen by me following peer discussion to show the ideas integral to AfL; that is the idea of taking the next steps in the progression of learning.

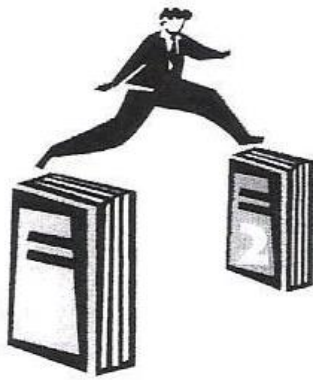


Figure 16: AfL logo used in School B

The posters, which were produced, were themselves quite simplistic as they merely highlighted the key ideas relating to AfL using key terms current at the time. These posters were put up in all classrooms in the school in order to be used by staff and students as an aide memoire in using the language of learning. This concept links to some research used by one of the Vice Principals of the school on metacognitive learning and the impact this had on student progress.

The ideas contained within the different posters were as follows:

“We Are Learning to ... WALT”
“What I’m Looking For ... WILF”
“This Is Because ... TIB”
“What A Good One Looks Like WAGOLL”
“What’s In It For Me WIIFM”

All of these were terms which were current at the time in the language of learning and were clearly related to AfL, it is interesting to point out that some of them have kept their currency in the longer term but others have fallen into abeyance, the reasons for this will again be discussed in Chapter 5.2 of this thesis.

As a consequence of the importance placed by the school on the development of AfL strategies across the school there was also time given over to staff training via the CPD programme. This training took place in order to develop more consistent use of AfL across the school and included twilight sessions; the agenda for a CPD twilight session, which happened early in the second set of Action Research cycles, can be seen below as Exhibit 5.9. There was a deliberate link made between AfL, the training sessions and the Performance Management process for teaching staff, this will be examined in greater depth both later in this chapter and in Chapter 5.4.

Agenda for Twilight on Assessment for Learning

Objectives

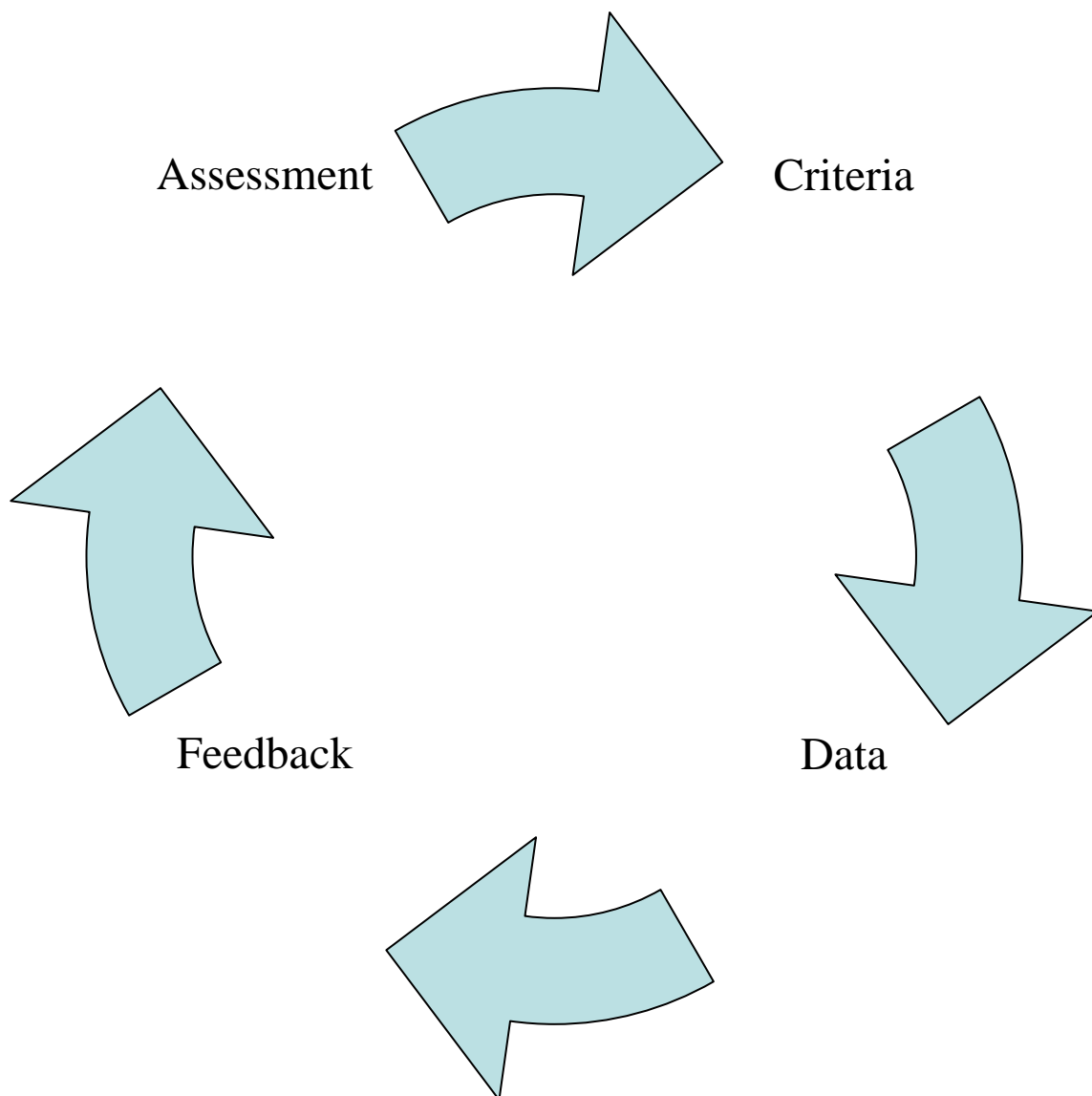
To develop strategies for staff on Assessment for Learning linked to performance management

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



**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.....

The activity which began the whole staff session of the twilight was not led by me but by a Graduate Training Programme (GTP) student who produced an activity which required staff to act as pupils and perform a task which was then marked. The task was a simple one, which was to draw a house, but there were no criteria given for what a good one looked like. The work was then “marked” and it was only at this point that the objectives and the mark scheme shared. This led to a great deal of discussion as some staff felt aggrieved that they were unable to be successful as they didn’t know what was expected of them. This discussion in effect reflected the student voice from School A, which explained that they worked better when they knew what was expected of them. The staff who had been involved in the training felt that the ideas in the starter activity were epitomised below:

“Illustrated key ideas about sharing objectives, criteria awareness, exemplar material, and feedback to learners”

This summed up the impact of the CPD session as there had been a deliberate decision made on my part not to lead this activity myself as I felt that there had been a close identification with AfL and me in School A.

“It’s XX so it must be AfL”

This was a quote overheard during a training session at School A which I didn’t want repeated because the messages needed to be seen to be coming from a range of stakeholders, as a consequence I wanted to use a diverse range of staff in order to develop AfL strategies in School B. This change was as a direct consequence of the reflections on the first set of Action Research cycles, reflecting on what had occurred and the impact that it had.

The staff who were present at the twilight in School B completed a feedback sheet in order to evaluate the session. This can be seen in the Appendices as Feedback 1. Subject staff also felt that the time provided to work in faculties and groups was beneficial and that they were able to achieve a considerable amount linked to the development of formative mark schemes. However one key point was made which will be examined in more depth and also compared to the findings of the original researchers in Chapter 5.2. This was that staff felt that they;

“Need more time to get used to one initiative first – although the whole system is integrated and makes a lot of sense to...?”

This quote is from the evaluation of a CPD session at School B which took place early in the Action Research cycle. Once this introductory work was completed the next phase of this work began with informing parents via a school bulleting about the basic ideas behind AfL. The impact of this information was not evaluated and this fact must be examined in Chapter 5.3. 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) and the following table Figure 17 was filled in for each subject to see if there were any patterns evident.

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					

Figure 17: Work scrutiny proforma from School B.

From this exercise I then took the results and these were then summarised onto the following table for use with the subject leaders in order to establish what the practice was across the school. I then looked at developing practice across the school, as it was acknowledged that there was a lack of consistency within and across subjects and faculties. These areas were summarised in Figure 18:

Examples of Good practice	Areas for DEvelopemnt
Year/ Subject Comments	

Figure 18: Summary of results proforma from the work scrutiny in School B.

The data produced from this exercise can be summarised as follows

Department	Year	Strength	Areas for development
E	7	Green amber smiley faces stamp for Learning Objectives met	
	8	Good targets set, clear easy to understand	Time to respond
T	8	Good self-assessment sheet	Fill in sheets
M	8	Target sheet	Fill in sheets
	9	Assessment grid Homework	
G	9	Good targets set Class and homework guide	
F	9	Good targets set Target stickers	Learning objectives Targets to be acted on Review of learning
H	7	Self-review linked to Learning Objectives	
S	7	Pupil checklist next step targets	

Table 5: Summary of findings from work scrutiny at School B.

From these initial reviews there were a number of conclusions drawn and recommendations made which looked at the positives. These were that many students were writing in Learning Objectives, there were some good examples of review sheets and stickers. However, there was not enough marking towards the objectives that had been set, some staff were setting presentation only targets, there was little opportunity for students to respond to feedback where it was given and there was not enough evidence of peer assessment available. In order to address this suggestions were given such as; a sheet that said, “In this lesson I did well at... I need to be better at...” and also stickers which say “I

can... My next steps are..." the analysis of the impact of these reviews and actions will take place in the Chapter 5.2.

4.2.2: Methods and Data from other sources:

As part of my role in School B there were opportunities for work with other schools within the area and the sharing of information and data with those schools at a series of meetings which was facilitated by the Local Authority. These meetings demonstrated schools in the area were at a variety of stages, which will be discussed in more detail in the conclusions Chapter 5.2. In these meetings there were links made with Assessing Pupil Progress data tracking which again will be discussed in the conclusions section of this thesis. The staff in School C were using what their representative described as:

"AfL 'tracking sheets' which were Excel spreadsheets using Red Amber Green to track progress; these were used over 3 lessons to gather student outcomes. This led to positive feedback from students and staff"

School D shared their point of view which was that

"3 years ago they had Christine Harrison as a guest speaker which led to AfL becoming school policy. The observation structure linked to this was different to management observations and the triangles of staff were non-judgmental.

These observations were deliberately cross department and had lots of spin offs but required investment in time. As a result of this, they have moved the focus on to questioning. 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."

Again, these finding mirror those that have already been established by me during my time at School A and will be examined in greater depth later in this work in Chapter 5.2.

This group facilitated by the Local Authority met again later in the process. Subsequent to these meeting there was a change in policy in the Local Authority and the advisor changed, with the focus shifting to work in individual schools rather than facilitating the meetings between groups of schools, where good practice was shared. The new LA Consultant /Adviser provided some information on the changes. This is evidenced below:

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

Most of these suggestions were not taken up as the Local Authority then withdrew its support, due to changes in statutory requirements and as a result schools once more were reliant on their own in-house expertise.

4.2.3: Training Input on AfL in School B:

This was an issue that was related to the collection of data as part of the Action Research cycle, there was a need identified for training and once this training had been put in place the outcomes were examined. This was linked to the ideas expressed in a paper by Cordingley, Bell and Rundell presented at the BERA conference of 2003 which stated:

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

As a result of this identified need for training one of the Local Authority's Advanced Skills Teachers working with me put together a staff development suggestion to develop the use of AfL in lessons.

The presentation included information on the nature of models of assessment. This looked at summative assessment including the Working At Grade (WAG) as exemplified in figure 19 below:

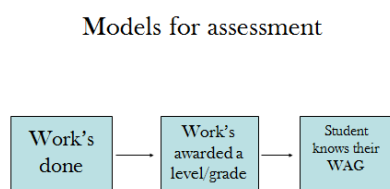


Figure 19: Slide 1 model showing original understanding of the nature of assessment from School B.

The presenter then went on to show what a more complex model would look like. This was then developed using the model of AfL to establish a more complex set of procedures culminating in the link to summative assessment, which is exemplified in figure 20 slide 2 below:

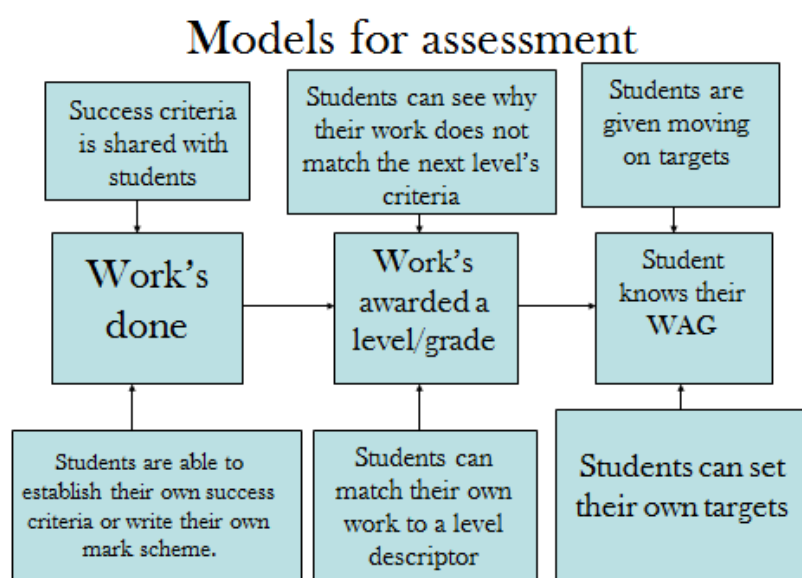
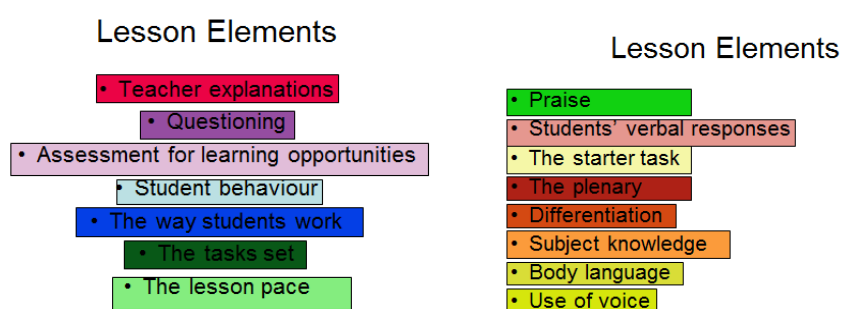


Figure 20: Slide 2 model showing more complex understanding of the nature of assessment in School B.

This is another example of the attempts made by school staff to interpret the Assessment for Learning Strategy in a school setting. In order to develop this further the elements of a lesson were also considered by the presenter, see figure 21 Slides 3 and 4 below



Slide 3

Slide 4

Figure 21: Slides 3 and 4 showing lesson elements including the use of AfL strategies in School B.


These slides were part of the training suggestions and as such were part of a CPD package which aimed to revisit AfL on a regular basis, for all teaching staff in School B. The impact of this was then examined via different methods. This CPD package was once again undifferentiated, in that it was delivered to all the teaching staff in School B in one session, regardless of where they were in their use of AfL. The methods used to examine the impact

of the work included lesson observations as well as the work scrutinies and student voice questionnaires. At this point the grids developed by the CIEA for use with the National Strategies were again used with staff. They had been taken, amended and broken down into individual statements as exemplified below;

Exemplification to support use of the AfL quality standards (Secondary)				
Quality standard	Red = Needs significant development	Amber = Needs further development	Light green = Good and improving	Green = Very strong and secure
1.3 The impact of developing AfL with APP on teaching and learning, motivation and pupil progress is systematically monitored and evaluated. This ongoing process directly informs CPD for all staff.	The designated senior leader is beginning to build the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of developing AfL with APP into the school improvement plan. Some subject leaders, working with core subject experts where appropriate, are beginning to build the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of developing AfL with APP into their subject improvement plans.	The monitoring and evaluation of the impact of developing AfL with APP is built into the school improvement plan and all core subject improvement plans. The roles and responsibilities of senior leaders, middle leaders and all teaching staff in relation to monitoring and evaluating impact is made clear in all improvement plans. Plans make clear how monitoring and evaluation will be used to inform CPD.	A systematic programme of monitoring and evaluating the impact of AfL with APP is in place in all core subjects. The distinction between monitoring teacher behaviours and implementation of processes, and evaluating impact on quality of planning and teaching and on pupils' learning and progress, is understood by all senior and middle leaders. Monitoring and evaluation informs the CPD of all teachers.	A systematic and systemic programme of monitoring and evaluation of the impact of developing AfL with APP is established throughout the school. A wide range of tools are used to gather and triangulate evidence including progression data analysis, peer lesson observations, and pupil and parent voice. Monitoring and evaluation is founded on self-evaluation at all levels and informs CPD of all teaching staff (including TAs).
Possible actions				
Implications				

Figure 22: Exemplification of use of AfL Quality Standards used at School B.

This was extracted from the National Strategy support material (00734-2009PDF-EN-03). This material allowed Heads of Faculty again to work with the teachers in their faculties in order to respond to each of the quality standards. This was to ensure that all the faculty was delivering AfL (in conjunction with Assessing Pupil Progress (APP)) in a consistent way. In order to ensure the fact that all members of the teaching staff included at least one aspect of AfL in their teaching on a regular basis the school leadership had 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 below as Figure 23:

Assessment for Learning Audit October 2009		Staff Initials <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>
--	---	--

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

Figure 23: AfL audit used by staff at School B.

These targets for the PM process were devised by me and continued to be used throughout the duration of this research. The draft versions plus the version currently in use are to be found in the Appendices as Appendix 9 Performance Management Draft 1, Draft 2 and Final. The draft version of the targets had extra information incorporated in order to support the staff through the process, this advice said that the staff should:

“Demonstrate that they genuinely believe that all learners can learn and improve against their own previous performance, not that of others and then went on to explain

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 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.”

In order to move the process on the second draft of the targets explained that:

“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.”

This was followed up by another set of teacher CPD sessions, although there was something of a conflict of interest at this point as the training was “done to” the staff rather than them being able to choose the most appropriate training for them, which contradicted my philosophy of using AfL for all. However, this use of CPD developed over a period of time and changes were made, which will be discussed in the conclusion and next steps sections of this thesis Chapter 5.2.

The next steps in the training was based on the following points

- Why raising achievement is important
- Why investing in teachers is the answer
- Why formative assessment should be the focus
- Practical strategies to be shared

This was linked to the ideas of formative assessment and different training groups followed slightly different strands, with Heads of Subjects being given different training in order to lead the work on AfL with their departments. This was based on the idea that:

“The influence has shifted from what am I going to teach and what are the pupils going to do?” towards “How am I going to teach this and what are the pupils going to learn?”

This was then examined again by the reviews of pupil perceptions which can be found in the Appendices as Appendix 10.

The training was followed up by a review using de Bono’s thinking hats technique. This was where each department in the school reviewed their work using the different hats (see figure 24 below). This training focussed on the attempt to develop oral feedback to students and to examine how it was used as part of AfL; it was used in different ways by different departments. The attempt to develop this was because oral feedback is often the most difficult type of data to capture. Each of the departments reflected on their own use of oral feedback and then using the prompts designed by me and another AST, this was then used to develop the specific prompts below. (Figure 24) which could then be adapted according to individual subject needs in order to capture oral feedback.

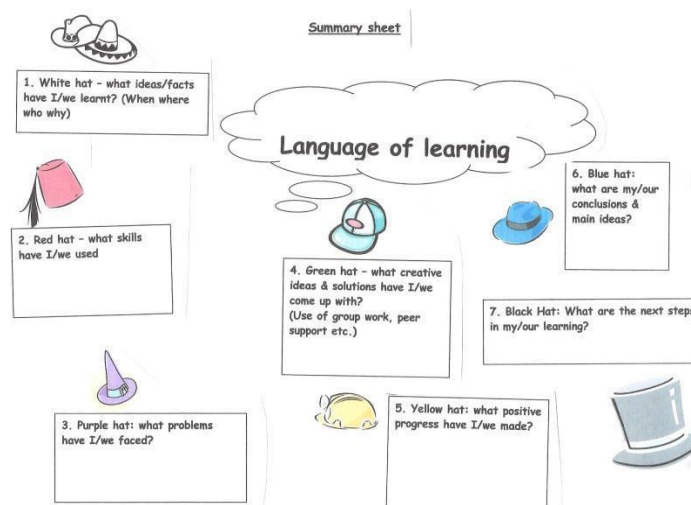


Figure 24: Subject specific De Bono’s thinking hat prompts to generate oral feedback used at School B.

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...

As a result of this collaborative work the faculties or subjects put together the following ideas to use with students. These were recorded on large sheets of paper by the members of the faculties present at the after school training session and then fed back to each Subject Leader by me. The results of these ideas can be seen below. These ideas were then incorporated into the lesson observations conducted by the Subject Leader over a period of time during the following term. The ideas put together by the faculties are recorded below

and provide a good summary of the types of ideas which could be used as a subject specific toolkit for oral feedback. This idea will be examined in further detail in the conclusions section of this thesis Chapter 5.8.

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...

I have included the complete version of the responses into the text above as I feel this is an important aspect generated by my work on AfL and as such will be examined in greater depth in Chapter 5.2. These ideas concerning oral feedback were reviewed; combined with ideas related to written feedback at the end of the term 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. (see table 6 below)

My teacher always shares the learning objective	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 I am working at level	I know what my target level for the future is	I know what to improve
---	--	--	---	-----------------------------------	---	------------------------

Table 6: Questionnaire applied to year 7 pupils at School B.

Each student was asked the same questions relating to each subject they studied and the results tabulated by myself. These results can be seen in the appendices as Year progress in Appendix 11.

The summary of these results can be described as follows; 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 in the school for some time, 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. This conclusion is however not as simple as that, as some subjects which rely on written feedback were not informing students of where the student were starting from and going to. This lack of basic understanding of the principles of AfL again will be examined in more depth in the conclusions section Chapter 5.6. The next expectation of the school that of the use of comment based marking was less widely followed across the range of subjects. There were also few opportunities apparently being given to improve the work in light of the comments, an aspect of AfL which is crucial to the concept of progress. As part of the summary it would appear that students were more confident in knowing what level they were at, what level they were aiming for and how they could improve. This was linked to the fact that the school had a school based system in place, which had a target setting element. This system recorded the levels students were working at, plus their target levels; this information appeared in the personal organiser on a termly basis. Linked to this were target stickers which were available to all faculties in a variety of formats, so students could refer to them on a regular basis.

The same questionnaire was applied to another year group this time Year 12 in Key Stage 5 and the results are in the Appendices as Appendix 12. The results in general were similar to Year 7 although in some cases the levels the students were working at were not as clearly understood, as a slightly different system of recording and reporting worked at Post 16.

Again the results of this analysis was shared with the subject leaders as a part of School Improvement Group (SIG) meetings and the PowerPoint describing this is part of the Appendices as Appendix 13. At each stage the impact of these developments was examined by me and the subject leaders were made accountable for further developing the ideas in their faculties. The subject leaders were asked to develop an action plan and share this with their line manager in their regular meetings. The same 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 observations of parts of lessons and focussed on AfL strategies. 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. The Learning Walk observation analysis gives a sample of this information and in this particular research cycle this activity took place on 3 occasions. The results can be seen below.

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 English Psychology Geography History

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

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 and then be used to revisit the teacher again later. An example of the proforma can be seen below as table 7:

Teacher..... Observer.....

	Yes	No	Comment
Evidence of skills based, effective learning objectives			
Evidence students are making progress			
Evidence of high quality questioning			
Evidence of self/ peer assessment/feedback			
Evidence of high quality feedback			

Table 7: Learning Walk proforma used in School B.

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. This second amendment was made after a discussion at the Senior Leadership Team meeting using the input of the Learning Support Co-ordinator (LSCo) and relates to the Ofsted criteria.

The conclusions which again can be drawn from the analysis of this quite basic data is really that there was still a lack of consistency across the school, a fact which will be examined in more detail later in the conclusions chapter, (Chapter 5.2).

Across the period of this Action Research project the data which had been collected has been used to inform different groups across individual schools; it has also been used by groups of schools across a number of different areas.

One aspect of the work on AfL was the use made of the AfL “toolkit” idea. I examined all the ideas relating to AfL and gathered them into a lesson observation proforma which was used in the Ofsted criteria for all lesson observations in School B.

The actual proforma is below in its entirety as Table 8; the impact of this will be discussed in detail later in Chapter 5.2.

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:	

Table 8: AfL lesson observation proforma/ toolkit used in School B.

It will be useful at this point to define the concept in relation to the understanding of what a toolkit actually is. There are a number of models relating to the concept of toolkits but for teachers the most common design are a series of prompts which address the issues raised by the original researchers as evidenced above. The concept of toolkits will be examined in more detail in Chapter 5.8.

Within School B as well as the above data collection devices, there were also reminders given to teaching staff on a regular basis, these went into the weekly school bulletin about teaching and learning using an AfL focus. Two examples of this are shown below as Table 9.

Check that you are using your skills based objectives using the display in the staffroom. Try to make sure that your objectives are differentiated.
Be efficient with your marking. Use peer and self-assessment within the classroom. It helps pupils to become familiar with the assessment process and criteria.

Table 9: Examples of AfL teaching reminders from the bulletin in School B.

There were also examples in School B of different subjects adapting ideas in different ways; this very much depended on where they were in the development stages of AfL. Some subjects used the summative statements from their Assessing Pupil Progress (APP) grids in a formative way; as seen in this exemplar from one department which can be seen in table 10:

Which levels have you achieved?	What is your target level?
---------------------------------	----------------------------

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. <input type="text"/> I can explain how different bits of evidence support a scientific idea. <input type="text"/>			I can list the moral, ethical, social arguments for and against a scientific development, e.g. genetic engineering <input type="text"/>		
6	I can identify the strengths and weaknesses of a model. <input type="text"/> ~~~~~ I can use evidence to support a scientific idea, e.g. pressure increases as temperature increases supporting the particle model. <input type="text"/>			I can describe how the uses of science or technology may be different in different societies. <input type="text"/>		
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	<p>I can describe a scientific idea using a simple model, e.g. drawing a force as an arrow. <input type="text"/></p> <p>~~~~~</p> <p>I can identify scientific evidence that is used to support an argument. <input type="text"/></p>	<p>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. <input type="text"/></p>
3	<p>I can Use a scientific idea that has been given to me to answer a question. <input type="text"/></p> <p>~~~~~</p> <p>I can make of suggest simple models to show how things are in the world. <input type="text"/></p>	<p>I can explain the purposes of some scientific processes. <input type="text"/></p> <p>~~~~~</p> <p>I can say how scientific ideas affect our lives. <input type="text"/></p>

Table 10: Use of AfL target setting sheet from School B.

Other subjects used the work on AfL in a different way; with the day to day look of lessons being changed to reflect the ideas involved. This is possibly closer to what was envisaged by the original researchers, given the impact which will be examined in Chapter 5.6. This utilisation of the work on AfL is shown below with the use of the PowerPoint slides from one lesson from one department; this is one example demonstrating the continuous use of skills based learning, self and peer marking using criteria and students being reminded what they are learning (not doing).

Writing about War **01.03.2010** **PHOT**

Learning objectives:

- To explore how we use emotive language effectively (WAF7)
- To independently produce an imaginative and thoughtful text (WAF1)

Underline the SKILLS words in your learning objectives. Do you know what they mean?

Choose one and explain it to your partner.

"To explore means to..."
"I have be... when I write imaginatively"

Where are these writing foci on our APP grids?
Have you used these before?

Key word check: emotive language...

...words designed to create an emotional response in a reader

You can use the skills ladder in the room to help you.

Starter

Remember your P.A.L.

What makes a successful diary entry?

Refer to the word bank that you created to help you demonstrate your varied vocabulary.

You are now going to prepare to write the first paragraph of your diary...

Spend the first two minutes discussing your ideas with your partner

- Imagine/Explore/Entertain
- Purpose - Writing to (why am I writing?)
- Audience - Yourself (who am I writing to)
- Language - _____ ?

Let's create our class criteria:

- ✓ Voice?
- ✓ Language?
- ✓ Tone?
- ✓ Description of setting and action
- ✓ Spelling
- ✓ Variety of sentences
- ✓ Punctuation?

Peer assessment

Remember, marking each others work helps to develop your own skills... we can self correct and learn from positive peer examples!

What colour do we peer assess in?

- ✓ Refer to our marking code when marking the paragraph.
- ✓ Remember one WWW comment.
- ✓ Set one CONSTRUCTIVE target.

Let's remind ourselves of our class criteria:

- ✓ Voice - first person
- ✓ Language - emotive
- ✓ Tone - informal
- ✓ Description of setting and action
- ✓ Spelling
- ✓ Variety of sentences
- ✓ Punctuation (at least 1 semi colon)

Plenary

- Plenary Cube → pairs

Complete the plenary sentence

- Return to your objectives, have YOU met them?
- How did you work as a pair?

Figure 25: PowerPoint slides from one lesson in School B.

In another department the subject leader was constantly refining the way in which AfL was used in lessons and designed a common lesson plan using a series of PowerPoint slides which all staff were expected to follow. This was not a “one off” as over the period of years it has been further refined and developed, examples of which can be found in the Appendices with the early one being labelled M ppt1 and a later version being labelled M ppt 2.

Linked to the development of AfL School B then developed a teacher improvement CPD programme, where staff would opt into different training sessions depending on need. These needs had been identified via a skills grid which was filled out by the member of staff and verified by their subject leader, a copy of this grid can be found in the Appendices as Appendix 14. As part of this training programme different members of staff delivered sessions called Learning Hubs and one of these was linked to the self and peer assessment strand of AfL. I was not involved in the design or delivery of this session but I have been

given permission to use the training PowerPoint to demonstrate the impact the work I had already completed on AfL had had on other staff.

Slide 1 of this presentation demonstrates how the understanding of AfL had developed with a simplified definition provided by members of staff who were not intimately involved in this Action Research project.

Slide 2 gives exemplars of how the work had developed in one faculty over a period of time. These slides can be seen below as figure 26 and the entire presentation is in the Appendices as AfL KC as Appendix 15.

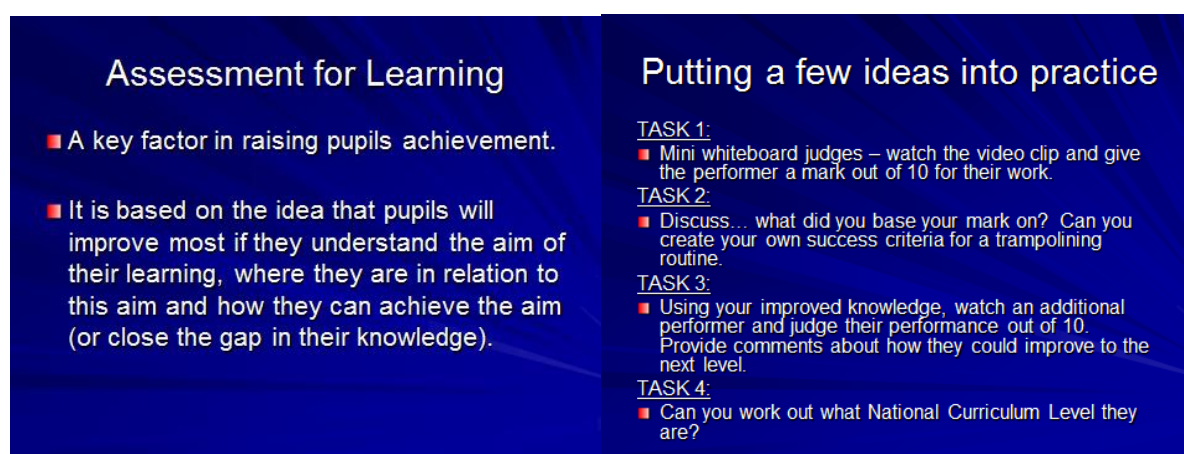


Figure 26: Slide 1 and slide 2 AfL presentation in School B.

The Learning Hubs where this presentation was delivered used an ‘opt in’ system where staff looked at their own training needs and had to find relevant sessions to attend. There was a requirement for each staff member to attend a certain number of sessions. From this there the CPD of School B has moved on and will be discussed as part of the conclusions in Chapter 5.2.

Further developments were also made to the teaching and learning methods and consistency across School B with a skills triangle being introduced to the PowerPoint presentations students were learning from. The use of this skills triangle again varied depending on the staff but the reasoning behind it is explained in the slide below Figure 27.

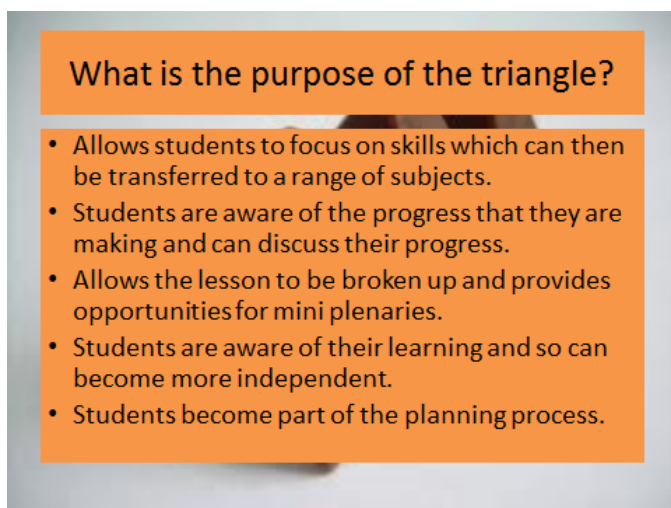


Figure 27: Rationale for skills triangle.

This training was again introduced to all staff in School B as a further refinement to the ideas relating to AfL and the student voice was evidenced as follows in Figure 28.

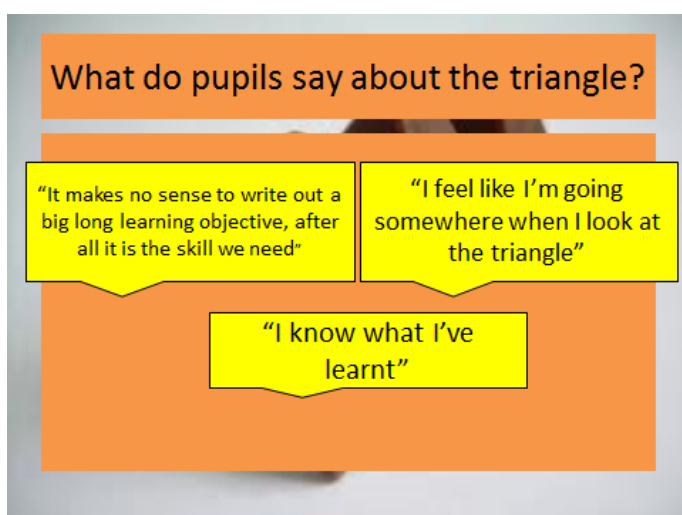


Figure 28: Student responses to the use of the skills triangle in School B.

This triangle has proved to be more consistently applied as part of the school's planning requirements and the linking of skills to tasks and outcomes has shown to improve the quality of lessons delivered.

The percentage of lessons which have been moved on the Ofsted framework from Satisfactory (as it was; it is now "Requiring improvement") to Good or Outstanding has been significant as over a two and a half year period the school moved from the overall judgment of Satisfactory to one of Outstanding. This move in the grading of teaching and learning will be examined as part of the conclusions in Chapter 5.3. This review of learning is crucial to the concept of AfL and the conclusions drawn from the work in both School A and School B,

along with all the other data will be summarised in the following chapter and will inform the final conclusions in this thesis.

4.3: Overall summary of findings from data:

Key concepts	Findings
How the original ideas of AfL were adopted and have the intentions of the original researchers been fulfilled?	The National Strategy documentation did not fulfil the intentions of the original researchers, although it is clear to see that there was some involvement of the original researchers in formative assessment in the materials produced. Both Schools reviewed did not demonstrate consistent implementation of the National Strategy, even less the original intentions of the researchers.
How was AfL viewed by staff, students and other stakeholders?	In School A as has been exemplified it was viewed as the remit of individuals and identified with me. In School B AfL was more widely accepted but was not seen in isolation but linked to other developments in teaching and learning. In general other schools exhibited similar responses.
How was AfL used within and across Faculties in schools?	As can be seen above there were variations within and across faculties and this lack of consistency of application was one of the most significant findings of this study
How did AfL impact on teacher's professional practice?	AfL was highly significant in changing my own practice. It was also impacting on School B in particular as can be seen for the data collection above.
Could an original toolkit for AfL be created in order to develop its implementation in the curriculum?	This question has clearly been exemplified above, although the concept proved to be a more complex one than previously envisaged.
How has AfL been used in high stakes assessment	This was not examined in depth as an individual set of data collection but was to be found within some of the results.
Use of CPD to lever up standards How could new strategies for educational change can be adapted and applied to a variety of situations?	The use of the types of CPD involved in the National Strategy has been criticised by the original researchers but was examined as part of the data collection of this study. One of the key findings from this study is that the use of CPD to lever up standards has to be more complex. CPD needs to be linked to various other concepts including the use of the Action Research framework
Use of Action Research framework	My own understanding of the Action

	<p>Research framework has developed throughout the data collection for this study. The work has significance in relation to the implementation of the National Strategies which if the original researcher had been able to develop using an Action Research framework would have produced more significant and enduring results.</p>
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Table 11: Summary of the data analysis.

Chapter 5: Conclusions:

5.1: Introduction:

This chapter aims to draw together the conclusions summarised and referred to throughout the chapters in this thesis and will examine both my findings synthesising those in previous chapters and the new ideas postulated as a result of this. There will also be a section on the next steps, as envisaged by myself. This reflects the ideas described by McNiff and Whitehead (2011: 13) where:

“Epistemology is to do with how we understand knowledge, and how we come to acquire and create knowledge”

Throughout the work for this thesis I have developing my understanding both of research and the way in which my own knowledge has developed. These conclusions will examine both my findings in the Action Research cycles in the different schools and roles, but will also position this research in the local and national context, using information obtained from the original researchers’ into Assessment for Learning (AfL); in order to make sense of the results. Inherent in this is the clarification of thinking and indeed articulating the epistemology of AfL, and the extrapolation of the results from the macro to the micro level 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. One of the key aspects here is the examination of the concept of an AfL “toolkit” which is described in Chapter 4.2.3 and whether it was possible to produce a toolkit or whether this was an oversimplification of the problem, this will be considered in more detail in this chapter (Chapter 5.8). Linked to this is an examination as to whether it is possible to develop toolkits for different purposes; one of the toolkits I designed was for developing oral feedback which will also be evaluated at this point in Chapter 5.8.

The conclusions chapter will also focus on the improve paradigm, examined in the Literature Review in Chapter 3.4 and in Chapter 4.1.2 examining the methodology involved in the research. There will be an examination of the utilisation of the Action Research framework, as well as the utilisation of the Case Study methodology and the underpinning theories; including those which were examined and discarded. This section will examine the impact I had in the roles I held over the course of this research and the impact of these changes for my own and others professional practice. Some of this will focus on the work

reflecting the importance of sharing learning objectives with students and how the detailed examination of AfL in this thesis developed from this starting point. 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.

As part of these conclusions I will also examine the role of organisations including Ofsted and the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA) in the development of the National Strategies and of AfL in particular. As part of this I will also examine the attitude of the original researchers towards these bodies and the involvement of the original researchers in the Strategy implementation. Another aspect, which will be reviewed in the conclusions are the concepts linked to common usage terminology; most particularly the concept invoked by the term “assessment”, an epistemological assumption which is key to the findings of this project. Another educational issue, which will be considered in this section is that of the development of ‘Assessing Pupil Progress’ (APP) and the link that was made between the APP developments and the AfL strategy.

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 Continued Professional Development (CPD) of teachers. This section will examine 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. 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 CPD approach inappropriate, it utilised a different 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 processes available both for the CPD of teachers and the implementation of the National Strategies within schools. This section 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.

All of these issues are significant findings and they will be examined in detail in the subsequent sections of this chapter and will inform the suggestions for future research. The

conclusions section of this chapter will begin by looking at the findings from the Action Research cycles.

5.2 Findings from the Action Research Cycles

The original research which has ultimately resulted in this thesis began as a result of the work on the UK Key Stage 3 National Strategies training in England, 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 (1998) where the idea of assessment is “*stressing measurement against objectives.*”

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

“As Chung (1991) described, a constructivist learning environment is characterized by (1) shared knowledge among teachers and students; (2) shared authority and responsibility among teachers and students; (3) the teacher’s new role as guide in instruction; and (4) heterogeneous and small groupings of students. 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) in which teachers participate with students in the solution of meaningful and realistic problems. Here, the teachers serve as models and guides, showing students how to reflect on their evolving knowledge and providing direction when the students are having difficulty. Learning is shared and responsibility for the instruction is shared. The amount of guidance provided by the teacher will depend on the knowledge level and experience of the students (Newby et al., 1996)”

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 of AfL, this inspired my interest and began the original research this thesis is based on. 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 later in this chapter. There was no link made at this point in either my mind or that of the SLT link 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 later in this chapter, as this section will focus on the findings obtained from the Action Research cycles.

At the beginning of this process there was an attempt made to put in place a small-scale experiment which was described in Chapter 2.7, and that this small scale experiment resulted in the students taking responsibility for their own development in other learning situations as previously described. This reflects the ideas expressed by Nehring, Laboy and Catarius in the Journal Professional Development in Education (2010: 401):

“Reflective dialogue, which traces its origin to educational philosopher John Dewey, has re-emerged within the field of education by way of business management theory (Senge, 2000; Hord, 1997)”

The responses; which were mostly oral; were noteworthy at the end of this limited experiment as one particular pupil requested that his coursework be returned in order to apply what he had learned from the exam feedback. The development of reflective dialogue with students was significant; as has previously been stated this was a significant local development as this particular pupil was not, at that point, generally noted for his deep reflection on his own learning and it was as a result of this conversation that my interest in developing this examination of practice further was piqued. I was convinced by this response of the usefulness of the developments and consequently it was this limited experiment, which inspired me to continue the research, which eventually developed into this thesis. 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 (1995: 306) in his work from the University of Bath where he states that:

“This research was based on a constructivist view of learning. 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 (2006: 44) where they maintain that:

“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 making their claims that they have realized their values and their social purposes are to do with developing ethical educational cultures.”

This quote is key to my development as a researcher as it accurately describes how I approached my engagement with this project. The development of my understanding of the improve paradigm was key to the processes involved in this project. As a result of this engagement with the ideas relating to Action Research the ‘living’ cycles were developed as described in Chapter 4.2 which allowed the next set of data collection strategies to be developed. In this conclusions section it is crucial to note that the Action Research cycles are central to the design of this research approach, and broached in the literature review in Chapter 2.7, as well as in the methodology Chapter 3.3 and that the findings from the work at School A was significant in informing the research which took place subsequently in School B. The living theory action research was at the heart of this approach adopted for this thesis and the findings from this examination of practice are described in Chapter 4.2 with the developments which took place and the rationale behind them is grounded in Action Research thinking. There are a number of conclusions, which can be drawn from these cycles beginning with those from School A.

From School A the major finding from the application of the first research cycle was that there was no consistency in the application of the work that I was involved with 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 as part of the Action Research framework my understanding developed during the cycles.

I had believed in the idea of championing (described by Shirley Clarke previously quoted) the work on AfL by Black and Wiliam in School A and made the assumption that this would have a major impact on the work across the school, which in turn would improve the outcomes for the students. This idea of championing is referred to in Chapter 2.7 and

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. As part of this Action Research cycle this idea was reflected on after the work had been shared in a variety of ways and forums across the school. The first conclusion, which could be drawn, was that despite all the efforts made the impact was not consistent across the school. The department I was leading at the time had embraced the ideas, but even here the impact was not consistent over all the subjects. There were significant differences in the uptake of the ideas between different departments and faculties as demonstrated in the summary relating to the schemes of work provided by table 5.1 with some subjects having 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.

As a result of this reflection on the first attempts at intervention plus my reflection on the concept of Action Research as described in Carr and Kemmis (1986: 185) where they state that:

“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”

I then put together a more structured approach to the work in School A, as my findings were that if I continued with a broad approach which could be looked at as a “scatter gun” policy 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 identification of training needs within subjects and departments and also led to the feedback being targeted in a Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant and Time bound way (SMART). This idea, of SMART targets, was first mooted by George Doran in 1981 in Management Review and adopted by educationalists. The structured approach was put in place so that 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, which was more consistent with my developing understanding of research methodology. As a consequence of reviewing the scope of the project with senior managers and the Local Authority (LA) adviser it was decided to focus on milestone assessment pieces to begin with. This was due to the fact that focussing on the

milestone assessment pieces gave concrete results drawn over a relatively short timeframe, which then 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. This 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 in the process of being an emergent researcher.

The use of milestone assessment pieces linked the concepts of formative and summative assessment and the use of the same students as a sample was one of the results of my developing understanding from the previous research cycle where there had been a broad range of classes and students examined. The conclusions, 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; 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. The data, which was gathered in this cycle, did not show significant changes from the previous data although there was a conscious decision made at this point to include semi-structured interviews as a technique to ensure that the observational data was triangulated. The semi structured interviews were 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 (2000: 269) where they state:

“The research interview has been defined as “a two person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining researcher relevant information, and focused by him (sic) on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation” (cited from Cannell and Kahn, 1968; 527).”

Linked to this is the description of the interviews as defined by Lincoln and Guba in Cohen Manion and Morrison (2000: 270) as they point out that:

“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 decided as a conscious decision 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 (1995: 18) who state:

“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 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.”

Following discussions between the LA Consultant/ Adviser, myself and the SLT 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 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.”

There are a number of conclusions, which can be drawn from this, the first of which is that despite all the work I had undertaken, the impact was 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 Quality Assurance (QA) process was postulated. This was a significant learning point and one of the key findings from this study is that there is a requirement for good Quality Assurance processes to be embedded in a school's practice. Linked to this was the need to develop a high quality Continued Professional Development (CPD) programme, the impact of which will subsequently be

discussed. 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 will be examined in more depth later in this chapter as a result of the Action Research cycles conducted in School B and the conclusions, which can be drawn from them.

The impact the work I had initiated on AfL had on different subjects and faculties within the school was variable, as has previously been stated, 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. As part of the review of the work I had undertaken the deputy head responsible for Key Stage 3 at School A summarised the impact that I had had. His description of the various types of impact 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. One aspect of developing the use of AFL techniques was focussed on quality feedback to students and this was also disseminated to a number of departments and Faculties. The work on feedback in the faculty I was leading at the time also saw an impact on students as they had a better idea of learning targets at the end of the cycle. There was also a noticeable increase within the faculty in the number of lessons where teachers shared learning objectives when this was reviewed by myself and the subject leaders. This can be seen as 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 by the learning objectives being skills based rather than content based, an idea I had also worked on with staff in School A. The notion of formative assessment which underpinned the concept of AfL 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 skills based learning and 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. Although the parents were not familiar with the terminology; they saw a change in the understanding of how students had progressed over the period of this research; information to parents had also developed and had clarified the experiences of the students. 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, which was shared with the teaching and learning committee as I updated them on a regular basis.

The work on AfL although originally targeted at Key Stage 3 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 Table 11, 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.

The overall conclusions, which were drawn here are mostly referring 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. the impact of this change in role will be examined separately later in the chapter.

One of the conclusions which can be drawn from the implementation of the Action Research Cycle was that the organisation and structure of the work undertaken at School B was more systematic as a result of the work previously concluded in School A.

Before I arrived School B had also already implemented some of the ideas I had implemented 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 should not be seen as surprising as the UK government had disseminated training materials in the same format to all schools; although there had been no coherent development of the CPD strategy for implementing these, the significance of which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The first point in the second 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. I suggested that an interactive version would be more useful for the end user. Any interactive facility would have to go on the

CIEA website since QCDA, DfE and NS do not have interactive facilities on their website.” (Private Communication)

These grids will form part of the discussions about the CIEA later in this chapter but at this point it should be noted that they were used as a tool to differentiate what was required in terms of training and CPD for subjects and Faculties by me at School B. This significant decision had been reached as a result of the work in School A and could be described as allowing for 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, an issue which will be considered in more depth later in this chapter. This linking of AfL CPD and the implementation of Quality Assurance systems is one of the additions to knowledge demonstrated by my findings for this thesis.

Following on from this 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. The use of these badged identities was as a result of utilising the research by management companies, which suggested that a corporate image enhances the understanding of the product and improves perceptions. 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. 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. The conclusions that can be drawn from this aspect thus far are tenuous but the idea of badging the work on AfL did provide a visual coherence at least for stakeholders. These can be seen in the appendix as part of Appendix 9.

Included in the developments of this work were a number of different publications including a series of posters, which included various key terms from the AfL repertoire. These can be found in a variety of places including from Leahy, Lyon, Thompson and Wiliam (2005: 8) in *Educational Leadership* where they include the ideas below:

“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, this was the case in School B particularly when used across the school in a range of departments. The relevance of the different mnemonics will be considered further later in this chapter as part of the conclusions relating to the terminology.

The developments relating to the CPD programmes and the links to Performance Management (PM) at School B will also be examined separately. However, a further conclusion which can be drawn at this point was that when staff experienced the same frustrations as students; the context for which is described in section 5.2.1; they were more likely to implement the ideas shared with them as McNiff and Whitehead (2011: 37) point out:

“knowledge creation is a collaborative process.”

This can be seen in the responses to the work in Figure 5.9, where the concepts of AfL were shared by a GTP student in the whole staff training session and it was clear that when the knowledge was shared new knowledge was created. This was a significant learning point for me and my reflections on the Action Research process was important for my development as a researcher. Reflecting on the Action Research cycles another conclusion which was drawn from the work in 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. I therefore took a conscious decision in School B as part of my leadership role to utilise as many different people from as many different faculties as possible in order to disseminate these key messages, this reflects the point made by Senge in (1990: 9) that:

“it’s the capacity to hold a share picture of the future we seek to create”

It is significant to note that the findings from the initial sampling of students at School B showed a similar pattern to the point at which School A had been when I left. That is to say that there was a lack of consistency within and across subjects and faculties in relation to the implementation of AfL. This did not come as a great surprise as there had been discussion around the fact that at that point in time teachers were inundated with initiatives nationally, locally and school based and these considerations will be examined in the section relating to

the political situation; they will also be reviewed in conjunction with the conclusions reached by the original researchers when interviewed as part of this study.

There is also evidence in the appendix 7 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 quote, from the meeting in appendix 7, made by the representative of School C again show the willingness of some staff to engage with the process, but again 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.”

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 do this School B took the step of incorporating the work on AfL into the Performance Management (PM) system for teachers, this was linked to my role in the school and will be reviewed subsequently. 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 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. Further discussion of the conclusions reached as a result of the link between PM and other teaching and learning initiatives will be examined later in this chapter.

Throughout the period of this research further developmental work on AfL was undertaken as part of the CPD process; with faculties taking ownership of the ideas generated; this was a deliberate policy as has been stated previously, with Cordingley, Bell and Rundell (2003: 6) maintaining that:

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

As a result of one particular piece of CPD work generated as part of this Action research project all the faculties in School B produced a set of oral feedback prompts, which could be used as an oral feedback toolkit, the conclusions about this notion of toolkits will be examined in detail later in this chapter.

Significantly the review conducted as part of the Action Research cycle produced the following conclusions; that is to say 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. This conclusion, however, does not prove to be as simple as it appears, as some subjects which rely on written feedback were not informing students of where the student were starting from and going to. 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 suggestions relating to comment based marking were less widely followed across the range of subjects, than those relating to the sharing lesson objectives and 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, in School b than they had been in School A, which compared favourably compared to other aspects linked to AfL. 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 although the importance of this to AfL will be discussed in Chapter 5.3 as Dylan Wiliam has a very clear view on this point.

In reviewing the position 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 clarified 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. This training took place over an extended period of time.

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. Mulford (2003: 7) points out:

“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 although 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.

As a reflective practitioner one of the conclusions I have to draw from this second cycle is that the role I am in has had an impact not only on my own individual practice but that of others. It could be argued that this is linked to the role I held in both schools. 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.

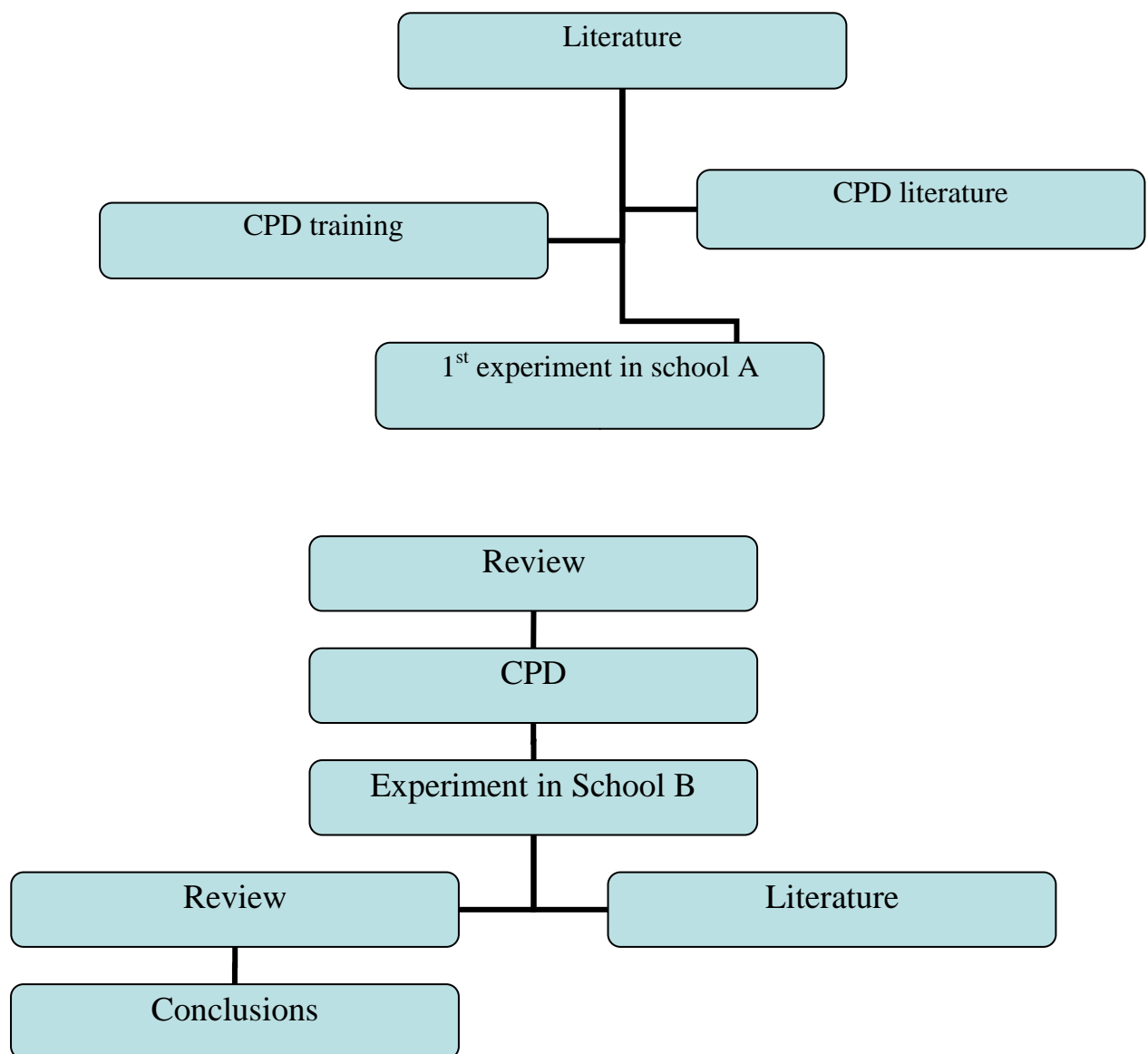


Figure 29: Unique figure outlining the 'messiness' of action research.

This exhibit demonstrates the messiness of the Action Research cycles in this PhD project. It would be inaccurate to describe this as cycles in their purest form. Each of the stages proved to be one of a series of reflections which then allowed the project to progress. 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 (2006: 44) exemplify when they state that:

“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 findings in relation to my own practice, which has been a result of the journey through this research. 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. 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 in which the research was taking place needs to be considered next, as it was highly significant.

5.3: The impact of the political situation on the research:

5.3.1: Conclusions relating to national political changes:

The conclusions from this particular piece of research has to be considered in the light of numerous political changes at the time, but the impact can also be said to have implications for the way in which policy is turned into practice in the future. It is very difficult to extrapolate from small scale research and generalise about the situation in a country and I am not attempting to do this at this point. However, the reflections on the research do highlight significant findings which could inform policy makers and practitioners if they are taken into consideration.

There are a number of points which need to be made before the conclusions can be drawn, the first of which is the context in which this research took place. The context of the seminal text has already been discussed in the Literature Review in Chapter 2.1. The political context when the research was reported was that at that time there was a (then) new Labour government; who had made education a central plank of their election promises. The Key Stage 3 Strategy from which the research in this thesis grew was a part of this policy. As has been pointed out in Chapter 2.6, the National Strategies were prompted originally 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 beginnings of the development of the National Strategies in Literacy and Numeracy, which began as a support project, but were then developed subsequently by the next government. These National Strategies developments also included the Assessment for Learning strand, which is the focus of this study. In a private communication with Dylan Wiliam, conducted as part of this thesis, I asked him if the National Strategy policy makers understood the concept of Assessment for Learning, he was categorical in stating that they did not. He felt that the concept was misunderstood and that when asked, head teachers felt they had embedded AfL, but that for many schools it was

difficult to find one teacher doing good AfL. This comment can be seen as highly critical and has been made with the benefit of hindsight; however these comments from the original researchers are crucial in the understanding of the implementation of the AfL Strategy which was reflected in my own Action Research findings.

Paul Black in private communication was equally condemnatory of the Strategy and in a reply to whether the National Strategy reflected the original research, he maintained that:

“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 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.”

I then asked him:

“Do you believe policy makers understood the concept of AfL?”

Once again the response was quite categorical:

“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.”

This is a highly significant finding of this project in that both the key originators of the concept are clear that they did not have any detailed input into the development of the National Strategy which was apparently based on their original research and which signposted interested parties, such as myself, to their research. This contradicts their ideas articulated about CPD and its implantation suggested in the Literature Review in Chapter 2.12. As a result of the implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategies various training materials were prepared which, as Black pointed out, simply utilised one day of training and a ring binder with a CD-ROM. However, if the tools provided had been utilised consistently and the format been followed by every department in every secondary school then the outcomes of this might have had a significant impact. The significance of these comment are that originators of the idea of AfL believe this impact would still not have been achieved, as Dylan Wiliam, in a training session at School D described changing teachers practice is like turning a super tanker. The techniques described by Paul Black regarding their work on AfL in Scotland appeared to have more of an impact, but in order to replicate this what would have been required was a more detailed approach with accountability built in.

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 00067-2007BKY-EN). The project report stated that:

“The initial audit of AfL completed at the start of the project in all schools 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 (lesson observations followed by discussions with teachers), 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. Related to this research from the Eight School Project was the fact that subsequently there was an examination of the implementation of the National Strategies by Ofsted (2008, Reference no: 070244) quoted in Chapter 3.8. which said that:

“The impact of Assessment for Learning was good or outstanding in 16 of the 43 schools visited. It was inadequate in seven, including four of the 16 secondary schools visited. It was better developed and more effective in the primary than the secondary schools. Although teachers and senior leaders valued the training and support they had received from the National Strategies, this did not necessarily lead to effective Assessment for Learning in their schools”

These conclusions evidenced by the Ofsted report supported the conclusions seen in both School A and School B and both Ofsted and this research chimed with the information

gathered in the Eight School project. These two official reports came about between 2007 and 2008 when the political landscape had seen a change with the UK Prime Minister in 2007 replacing Tony Blair with Gordon Brown. These political changes resulted in a change at the education department with a new Secretary of State being installed and a new name for the department as the Department for Education and Skills (DES) became the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). This name change was apparently due to the fact that the impetus was driven by the Every Child Matters agenda, which wanted the integration of children's services, including education, health and social services to be at the forefront of the political agenda. Some people in the media commented that it was odd that England no longer had a Department of Education! It is important for subsequent developments that the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual) was launched on 16 May 2008. Its head, Kathleen Tattersall, promised to investigate the 'reliability' of exams (*The Guardian* 16 May 2008).

This particular development was significant in relation to AfL as the development of high stakes testing generally did not incorporate the ideas postulated by Black and Wiliam in the first instance. This relationship between AfL and high stakes summative assessment will be examined in a later section of this chapter. The problems faced by teachers at this point in time are exemplified by the following quote:

“Schools in England had been besieged by 79 policy consultations and at least 300 announcements from the DCSF in 2008 and expected an even greater number in 2009 (The Guardian 13 March 2009).”

This again reflects the comments made by members of staff at School B in response to the attempts by me to implement the work on AfL when I arrived. It is clear from these comments how the situation in both Schools A and B, despite the differences in their circumstances and geographical locations, reflected the national picture of policy weariness very accurately. This again is an opportunity for further research to examine the impact if there is the introduction of numerous policy changes in a short period of time.

The next move in the political change during the course of this research, which was conducted from the implementation of the National Strategies to the point of the time when the website was closed in 2011, was the arrival of the UK's Coalition government elected in 2010. This brought yet another change of name for the DCSF back to the Department for Education (DfE) and the arrival of a new secretary of state; Michael Gove. His review of the provision resulted in the following development which closed down the National Strategies website.



Figure 30: Screenshot of the National Strategies website after May 2010.

Despite the work which had been developed throughout the years of the National Strategies there was no consultation on how effective the Strategies had been before the new government simply closed the website down and de facto closed the policies down too. School leaders were not officially informed of the closure by the department (DfE), rather they found out in an ad-hoc way depending on how frequently they utilised the support from the National Strategies website.

For the purpose of this thesis the closure of the website was apposite as it gave me an end point for my research, which began with the implementation of the AfL strand of the National Strategies and ended with the coalition governments' closure of the Strategy website. The lack of consultation regarding the closure of the National Strategy website was symptomatic of the treatment of school staff throughout the period of this research. There had been a lack of consultation even with the original researchers into AfL and as a result of this lack of consultation school staff felt that initiatives were done to them.

The next section in this chapter will examine the conclusions reached as part of the Action Research cycles and will reflect on the links between CPD and the implementation of the National Strategies which was not as fully developed as the government could have ensured. This section will also examine the reasons for this failure. There will also be recommendations for future educational policy, planning and practice and the vital linkage between these three inter-related components

5.3.2: The conclusions relating to the local situation:

It is not always feasible to expand the conclusions drawn from the local situation to a macro level in most cases. This thesis began life as a small scale Action Research project; as such it was originally designed to examine my own practice and that of others with whom I came into close contact. As has been explained previously in Chapter 2.7 it was designed to incorporate the ‘improve’ paradigm and detailed conclusions relating to this aspect will be examined later in this chapter (Chapter 5.6). However, once I began to examine the findings of Ofsted and communicated with the original researchers I believe that my findings replicate a similar pattern to those of the National bodies responsible for examining the impact of the AfL strand of the National Strategy.

The conclusions I drew from the first set of Action Research cycles in School A bore out the findings in the Eight Schools Project of 2006 which stated that:

“The initial audit of AfL completed at the start of the project in all schools 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.

However, it quickly emerged, through pupil interviews and lesson reviews (lesson observations followed by discussions with teachers), 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. This caused schools to focus even more strongly on objective led learning and the importance of clear learning outcomes as the main driving force for improving learning in lessons. As a result, attention shifted more towards the learning issues and the teaching response. When the schools came to analyse how well pupils understood what they were learning in individual lessons and, even more importantly, understood what ‘good’ looks like (the intended outcomes and associated success criteria), they realised that often objectives were focusing the teaching but not driving the learning. The sharing of learning objectives in lessons, successful in terms of ‘happening’ in all lessons, was often a surface response to implementing an agreed whole school policy. The AfL principles and purpose underpinning the approach were not always understood or ‘believed in’ by teachers and, where this was the case, did not inform the teaching and learning

throughout the lesson (sometimes the ‘routine’ had a negative impact on engagement.)”

It could be argued that this fairly substantial extract could actually have been written about the work I had undertaken over a period in School A so in this case it is not extrapolating from the micro to the macro but rather my findings mirror those of other researchers, who although they have a vested interest in the outcomes are somewhat less intimately involved than I was. The conclusions which were drawn from the Eight Schools Project were markedly similar to those from School A but were not published until I had changed roles and was in post at School B. This impacted on my research design for School B as I had reviewed the impact of my less structured implementation of the AfL Strategy in School A.

From this extract there is another conclusion from the work I carried out in Schools A and B to be drawn and that is the relationship between the work I did on implementing the AfL strand of the National Strategy and the development of teaching and learning. The next section in this chapter (Chapter 5.4) will examine the conclusions reached as part of the Action Research cycles and will reflect more fully on the links between CPD and the implementation of the National Strategies which was not fully developed as the government could have ensured.

5.4: Continued Professional Development; its implementation and impact:

One of the most significant conclusions in this thesis which can be drawn from the various Action Research cycles (see the unique exhibit in Chapter 5.2) is the importance of the link between high quality CPD and the development of the implementation of AfL; as well as other aspects of the National Strategies.

2004	2006		2007	2008	2008-2010		2012	2013
CPD	Initial small scale research	Literature review	Data collection school A	Literature review 2	Data collection school B	Closing of national strategy website	Review	Final write up

Figure 31: Timeline showing processes of action research.

As has been seen in Chapter 2.3 the original research developed by Black and Wiliam (1998: 15) was based on the premise that there needed to be “*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 have already been noted previously in this chapter (Chapter 5.3) with a very clear view on the issue of the one-day training and the use of the ring binder/CD-ROM.

The original researchers Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (1999: 12) wanted to develop:

“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 the idea that following on from their original research Inside the black box (1998: 15-16) there should be developed through CPD work which was:

“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 Black et als’ point of view 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 which needs to be considered is that it would be interesting to speculate if 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 have been exemplified in Chapter 2.6 and the materials 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 (PDD) programme. The report on this provision in from CUREE in 2007 stated:

“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 Kings Medway Oxfordshire formative assessment project (KMOFAP). The KMOFAP was the engagement project led by Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam, which worked with 48 teachers and resulted in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. There is a plea made in the final lines of the original research by Black et al (1998: 19) which requested that:

“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. In response to this request for implementation 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 in Chapter 5.2. 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 rest of this section will look at the Quality Assurance procedures and the use of CPD in developing the work of AfL in School B.

As I stated in Chapter 2.6 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. This reflects the ideas described in Coombs and Smith (2003) where they state that:

“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.”

This action research paradigm provides a work-based experimental rationale that generally seeks qualitative evidences that demonstrate an improvement in one's own professional development and working situation, i.e. a social manifesto (Coombs, 1995) praxis objective as opposed to the more traditional positivist experimental paradigm that seeks generalisable laws via hypothesis testing"

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. My practice has been informed in that I have improved my understanding of the impact my work has had on those around me. The development 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. In the book 'Assessment for Learning: Putting it into Practice' there were clear explanations that the need for coherent differentiated CPD was crucial as 'One size fits all' was not acceptable and there needed to be a sustainable strategy. This concept can be linked to the Jack Whitehead and Jean McNiff's (2006: 33) living educational theory as they state:

"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 (2010: 132) who point out that:

"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 considering this idea we need to examine CPD in relation to School B as a clear link was made here between CPD, PM and the training on AfL as I was able to scaffold the ideas for staff. This approach contrasted to the methodology suggested by the DfES in the National Strategies (0443-2004) as stated in Chapter 2.15 where it 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."

This method of dissemination was more proscriptive than the opportunities I was given using the critical thinking scaffolds. In School B the developments in 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 32) which was created for one of these sessions.

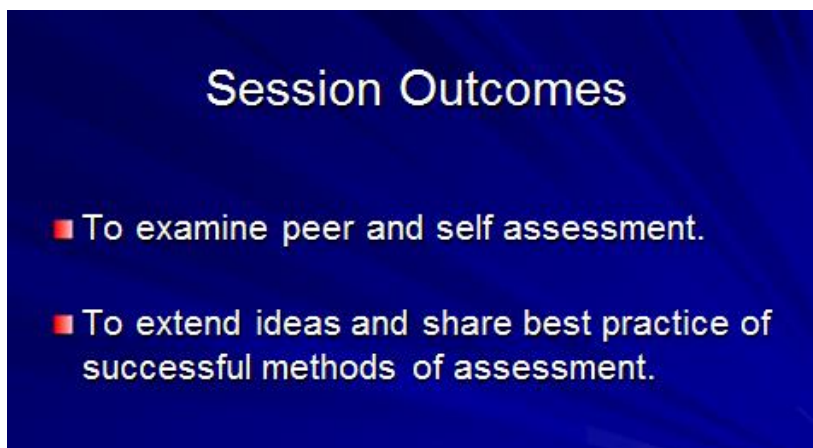


Figure 32: Example of slide from “learning hub” at School B.

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 6.3 below were made by the members of staff delivering this learning hub, which was a testament to my work on AfL.

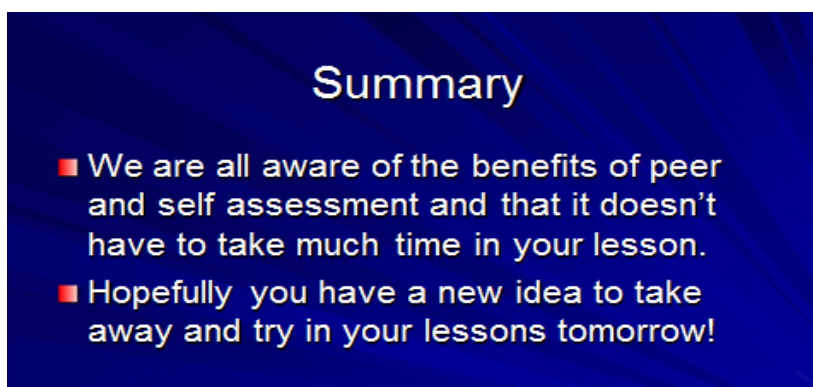


Figure 33: Example of slide from “learning hub” at School B.

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 they 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. The satisfactory grade found in the Ofsted handbook for inspection has subsequently been amended to “Requires improvement” and now reads:

“The teaching requires improvement as it is not good”

There is a question here as to what exactly this phrase really means and moving forward there are questions as to what impact this will have for schools and for Ofsted. This is a question for future research. 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, which will be reflected on later in this chapter.

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

“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. Although good practice is 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 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 Higher Education 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. 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. In extrapolating ideas from the local situation in School B a key learning point which was developed from the work in School A was the problem relating to the use of terminology which is under discussion in the next section.

5.5: Conclusions relating to the concepts linked to terminology:

This section must be considered as the key one terms of findings in relation to this thesis 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 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 and indeed was adopted as a strand of the National Strategies in its own right 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 the individual components of the phrase, Assessment for Learning, beginning with the one that causes the greatest difficulty.

The ideas linked to the concept of assessment have, for most people, what could be described as a default setting. For the majority of people when they hear the word “assessment” they automatically link it to the idea of testing and for people in the educational

field 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 suggests that at the start of the process linked to the National Strategies educationalists have a behaviourist default setting. Swaffield (2009: 5) suggests that:

“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”. 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 in Chapter 2.3.

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 ‘re-appropriate 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 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. There was a feeling present at the start of this research, which suggested 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 Assessment for Learning but again 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.

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

“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. Or, to put it another way, 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.”

It could be postulated that this 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.

5.6: Conclusions linked to epistemology relating to Afl:

It can be argued that this concept is clearly linked to that of Black and Wiliam in Chapter 5.5 where discussions 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. 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. In order to make sense of this I have provided postulates in Chapters 2.20 (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) and Chapter 4 which will 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 (2011: 162) where he point out that:

“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”

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 (2011: 101) describes as:

“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 there would not really be a sufficient alteration in the epistemological understanding of the concept. In the next section I will examine ideas relating to the change in my own thinking in relation to the work on AfL, which was grounded in Action Research and the ‘Improve’ paradigm.

The concept of ‘assessment’ requires a major cultural shift in any society, let alone the teaching profession. 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. This includes the summaries of Student Achievement used by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation 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.

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. This idea will be explored further in the final conclusions of this chapter.

5.7: Explanation of the conclusions 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 developing as an emergent researcher, as supported by the Grounded Theory approach linked to my own social evolution as also understood by Whitehead's Living Educationla theory. These concepts were linked to personal and professional change (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006) and the fact that my aims were clarified in my own mind by utilising peer discussion.

The concept of the 'improve' paradigm is discussed in Chapter 2.12 where I state that the theory 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. It could be argued, however, that unless all staff undertook their own Action Research type projects the impact I had in my role cannot be viewed as significant for all. 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.

It could be argued that the improvements in teaching and learning particularly in School B have been impacted on by the implementation of the National Strategies. In fact the implementation of the National Strategies was only one in a series of CPD initiatives, which were put into place across the period of this research in School B. 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. Linked to this work and involved with the ‘improve’ paradigm was the concept of the ‘toolkit’ for AfL which I was looking to develop the impact of which will be considered in the next section.

5.8: The development and impact of the AfL toolkit:

It will be useful at this point to define the concept in relation to the understanding of what a toolkit actually is. There are a number of models relating to the concept of toolkits but for teachers the most common design are a series of prompts which address the issues raised by the original researchers. This can be seen in PowerPoint presentations available to share on forums like those of the TES resources (formerly Times Educational Supplement) <https://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/Assessment-For-Learning-Toolkit-6020165/> which were available from 2009 onwards. 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. The conclusion which I have drawn from my own research is that although these methods are useful, making the suggestion that they comprise a comprehensive toolkit is not helpful in this context.

One aim of this research was to attempt to develop an AfL toolkit and so there is an example of the toolkit I developed in School B in Chapter 4.2.3 as exhibit 5.28 Assessment for Learning Observation Proforma. This observation proforma was developed as a consequence of the work on AfL, which I had undertaken in School A, as in my new role in School B I was given responsibility for implementing the AfL Strategy. The 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. The toolkit, however, needs to be more than a simple tick list, as described in Chapter 2.7 and this proforma needs to be used in conjunction with the other techniques supplied for AfL. 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 recent Assessing Pupils’ Progress initiative, in England, risks encouraging this constant monitoring of pupils’ levels and

sub-levels although it claims to be promoting assessment for learning as part of pedagogy.

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. 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. This idea of developing the CPD in conjunction with the toolkit is again supported, by Paul Black in personal communication where he states that:

“The London government seems to have the view that a one day course and a ring-binder of recommendations are all that is required.”

The comments made in the TES article by John Bangs is apposite here:

“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," Professor Bangs said" TES 2010

This is significant as it is condemning the bureaucracy of ticklists so compares to the concept of a toolkit. The toolkit is one of the key developments which resulted from this research but it is not possible to view this 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. 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 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 in Chapter 4.2.3. 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.

This point regarding the development of AfL for schools, departments and teachers is one of the most important points made 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 ticklist the assessment tool developed by the CIEA appears to meet this requirement more fully than the original training for the National Strategy. As a result this assessment tool will considered in more detail in the next section.

5.9: The use and impact of the CIEA tools and conclusions relating to OFSTED inspections:

It can be argued that if AfL was to be successfully implemented at the start of the National Strategy, there should have been some form of self-assessment of the department as part of the process. This assessment tool on the CIEA website was developed as described below by Graham Herbert in personal communication:

“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. I suggested that an interactive version would be more useful for the end user. Any interactive facility would have to go on the CIEA website since QCDA, DfE and NS do not have interactive facilities on their website.”

This assessment tool was an important point for the development of the implementation of the AfL strand of the National Strategy. In School A the use of these tools did not occur until at least two years into the process and as a result previous to their use I had developed an individual approach in order to review where each department was. The use of these assessment tools was one of the first actions taken in School B in order to establish a

baseline and they proved to be useful. In order to check the impact of this particular tool I asked Graham Herbert:

“As the CIEA has disseminated the quality standards review tool, what is the feedback like from schools that have used it?”

“Feedback about the tool has been very positive. Where Local Authority staff have encouraged schools to use the tool there has been a wide ranging use of the tool. The Local Authority staff that have done this have tended to be members of the CIEA and can see the benefit to them personally and to their schools generally in using the range of tools provided by the CIEA. The most enterprising of the LA officers have used the tool to help head teachers write their SEF. When this has happened it has proved to be a very useful addition to both the head teacher's armoury as well as that of the LA officers. Feedback about the tool used in this way has been the most complimentary.”

Once again a familiar theme is developing with the point that the tool was not applied consistently across the country. In this case the National Strategy developed the original tool but the dissemination of it was haphazard, the CIEA version was mainly used by people who were CIEA members which meant there was a limited uptake across the country.

The use of the assessment tool and AfL in general were assessed using the OFSTED framework. In the quote above Graham Herbert mentions the fact that the tool was used by a number of schools in order to create the School Evaluation Form (SEF). This was one of the required pieces of evidence used during the OFSTED inspections throughout the period of this research. Graham Herbert, again in private communication, also evaluated the impact of AfL and his evaluation echoes the conclusions that I had come to independently.

“In your opinion how deeply embedded is AfL in English Secondary Schools?”

“The evidence on which I can base an answer to this question lies in the evidence that emanates from Ofsted and the evidence gathered from the AfL board chaired by the DfE and on which I sit. The latter form of evidence is only a reflection of case studies that have been gathered and recounted by DfE officers and consultants visiting schools and reporting back to the board, albeit in a systematic way. This evidence can be supplemented by data from the CIEA quality standards tool.

Evidence from Ofqual suggests that AfL is embedded in only a small number of English secondary schools. Their findings are listed in the annual report delivered every November to parliament by the senior HMI. Over the last four years, the evidence has shown that assessment is the one major area of concern in English

schools, with over 40% classified as satisfactory or worse. Where it is good it is outstanding, but this is in less than 10% of English schools. The overwhelming evidence is that practices are patchy at best, with inconsistencies regularly noted between schools in the same Local Authority, across individual schools and even within individual departments.

The evidence available to the AfL board suggests similar findings. There are some pockets of excellence, but these are rare and have been written up as case studies, both by the DfE and by CIEA and disseminated. This is corroborated by the CIEA standards tool which finds that few secondary schools bother to use the tool and where they do, the results do not show significant numbers of secondary schools embedding this practice.

There are probably very good reasons for this; teachers in secondary schools are set targets relating to examination success as part of their appraisal system. In some cases their pay depends entirely on the examination success of their students. As noted above, the accountability culture militates against the widespread development of AfL in schools and teachers feel safer using tried and tested techniques of drilling students in how to pass external examinations without necessarily understanding the concepts that lie behind their answers. Sadly, all too often for senior pupils in schools their curriculum is narrow, mechanically taught and pupils respond mechanically to the questions they are set. This is understandable, but not desirable.

AfL is not embedded in many English secondary schools.”

This series of conclusions drawn by Graham Hebert reflects the conclusion I have been able to synthesise from my own experience and will be discussed in more depth in the final section of this chapter.

5.10: Final Conclusions:

5.10.1: Overall Conclusion:

This section will examine the overall conclusions, which can be drawn as a result of the research conducted as part of the process of authoring this thesis. The implications for future research will be dealt with in a separate subsection of this final chapter. The overall conclusions, which have come about from the research I have conducted can be said to have implications both for individual schools and also for the implementation of future government strategies. This extrapolation from the micro to the macro was not part of the

original intentions of this research but came about as a result of being in communication with various members of the educational community, including the originators of the original research.

My thinking has developed in line with Whitehead and McNiff's ideas (2006: 2):

"The whole idea of Action Research is that the kind of theory that is most appropriate for explaining its processes is already within the practice, and emerges from the practice as the research develops."

I have developed my own living educational theory in line with this idea and my research has impacted not only on my own practice, but as a result of my role as an Assistant Principal I have also been able to impact on the practice of others.

The findings which have been most significant for me is that relating to the implementation of the National Strategy on AfL and the ideas linked to the terminology, which could be described as adversely affecting this. The implementation of the National Strategy lacked coherence in the way in which the CPD was developed and this is highly significant in relation to this thesis. School B has developed a more coherent policy of CPD linked to PM and the development of lessons graded by Ofsted as good or outstanding, which could be described as contributing to the raising of standards. This methodology of implementing a coherent structured CPD strategy, was not employed by the National Strategy and its implementation could be described as ad-hoc at best and could be seen to be a weak response which was doomed to failure. The work of Black and Wiliam was further developed in Scotland and in this case Paul Black stated in his personal communication:

"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."

It is clear that the government in England did not replicate this model and as a result in England the implementation was left to a few interested parties, like me, to develop these ideas. There are obvious implications in relation to this point linked to the idea of what kind of CPD is needed to embed strategies in real peoples' lives and to change national practice which has potential for further research which will be examined in more detail in Chapter 5.10.2.

My conclusions on the subject of the National Strategies have been reinforced by my communication with Paul Black, Dylan Wiliam and Graham Herbert amongst others, as their responses have supported my findings. The imposition of the National Strategies did not demonstrate deep understanding of the concept of AfL by the policy makers. My understanding of the subject of AfL developed over a period of time as part of this Action Research project but as Paul Black pointed out in private communication for most Local Authorities, schools and teachers:

“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”

This can be seen as one of the key findings from this research as it can be seen that the intention of the original research, was not carried through by the policy makers across the country, despite individuals like myself developing their own practice. I developed my own practice in relation to AfL as a result of the implementation of the KS3 Strategy but I also developed my practice as a researcher in line with the Action Research paradigm, which is significant for this study.

The second important conclusion from the work on this thesis, which can be linked to the implementation of the National Strategy concerns the use of terminology, notably the fact that the word ‘assessment’ was included in the term “Assessment for Learning”. Having reviewed the literature on the subject the conclusions which can be drawn is that most educationalists appear to have had the behaviourist ‘default setting’ where assessment means testing.

The major finding from this thesis, therefore, is related to the concept of ‘assessment’. The original work from “Inside the black box” referred to the idea of Assessment for Learning (AfL) which has also been called ‘formative assessment’; this concept was frequently misunderstood by a range of education professionals. The major finding of this thesis is related to the term ‘assessment’ and the fact that the ‘default’ setting for most people involved in education is still that of the behaviourist concept that assessment means testing.

Paul Black in private communication agreed with this point as when questioned about the confusion concerning the term “Assessment for Learning” he said:

“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."

Dylan Wiliam was possibly even more forthright in his opinion as in personal communication he said:

"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."

This finding about the terminology is highly significant in understanding the work of this thesis; the concept of formative assessment is central to my own learning journey. My understanding of AfL is taking the idea that we need to assess the starting point of each individual and move them on from there which links very closely to the Action Research learning journey researchers undertake. The concept is applicable across a range of different situations. Had the concept of examining starting points and moving people on been applied as the original researchers intended then the first people to have benefitted should have been the teachers who were undergoing the CPD on the KS3 Strategy. The concept of AfL for teachers would have led to the development of a personalised CPD programme which some schools have made tentative steps towards but which lacks consistency. Future research could build on this idea and examine the possibility of personalisation of teacher CPD as well as examining the appropriate Quality Assurance processes.

As has been noted previously Dylan Wiliam admits that the use of this terminology was possibly their biggest mistake. My own thinking is that even if Assessment for Learning had been described as Formative Assessment then the same problems would have occurred. Paul Black in his personal communication, as quoted above, said that the word assessment led to confusion. He then continues:

"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."

This personal comment does clarify the point but is obviously too late for the understanding linked to the implementation of AfL in most schools as this comment has not

been widely disseminated. Indeed although the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) courses still include a section on AfL there is concern in my mind whether the trainers fully understand the ideas encompassed by AfL. If there is a lack of understanding in the trainers then the next generation of teachers will not fully develop AfL in their own teaching which would be detrimental to their students. This comment amongst others impacts on the recommendations for future practice relating to educational policy implementation. A key finding from this thesis makes clear that the pedagogical reasoning behind the policies and the implementation of policy should be clarified and made explicit in order to allow teachers to have clarity in thinking.

There were also conclusions relating to the use of the CIEA assessment tools discussed above, these tools were developed to allow managers in schools to develop their own practice and proved to be useful as part of my own work in schools. The tools, were seen by Graham Herbert in private communication as creating:

“a monitoring facility that allows all LAs to see the areas of strength and those areas that need developing across those areas for which they are responsible.”

This proved to be useful but again the lack of consistency of implementation was a significant feature.

A further conclusion was that the development of a toolkit for AfL proved to be more complex than it first appeared. The development of a lesson observation proforma was the basis for the toolkit but there were other elements, which could at best be described as being less tangible. The most useful developments of the toolkit was the self-assessment aspect which were linked to the CPD programme put in place as part of the PM process adopted by all members of the teaching staff at School B. Both Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam were dismissive of the idea of a ‘tick list’ and I agree with the comment made by Paul Black in personal communication where he describes AfL as *“making difficult changes in their classroom practice”*. The links of my toolkit to the CPD programme has moved it away from being a simple ticklist. As far as my own conclusions are concerned I believe there is the need for a series of different types of toolkits of the types exemplified in Chapter 4.2.3 and discussed in Chapter 5.2.

There are a number of other key postulates in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 which I have discovered through the work on this thesis. In Chapter 2 I stated that 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. In Chapter 3.24 I explained that the study could be postulated purely as an

exercise in Action Research because I was looking at changing practice but the Case Study methodology was incorporated. The diagram in Chapter 3.10 demonstrates the changes to this postulate. In Chapter 5.2 I stated the idea that lack of consistency could be related to a poor Quality Assurance (QA) process was postulated. This was a significant learning point and one of the key findings from this study is that there is a requirement for good Quality Assurance processes to be embedded in a school's practice. Linked to this was the need to develop a high quality Continued Professional Development (CPD) programme. 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 the findings from this study.

Another point, which needs to be developed and examined further is the link between CPD and Quality Assurance (QA) processes. In order to develop a consistent CPD QA policy there needs to be detailed consideration to how this can be implemented. Schools currently have developed an ad-hoc approach to CPD with each school setting up their own methodology. Again these approaches do not have a clear research paradigm as their background and one of the key findings from this thesis should reflect this fact, in order to develop a more coherent strategy it is important that schools have a more consistent research approach developed. Despite the fact that there are accredited programmes available from universities, which are available in a variety of formats, the CPD available in schools does not have a robust QA process in place. Linked to this point is the fact that national CPD, such as the National Strategies, also does not have a robust quality assurance system in place for schools to utilise.

Overall this thesis has led to my personal understanding of my own pedagogy being developed and the impact I have had on the understanding of pedagogy for others can be seen to be significant. The development of CPD in relation to teaching and learning in School B has also been significant but here there have been a number of developments working together, so it is not possible to say which of these has been most effective. The use of Action Research is the most important aspect of this thesis as the link to the 'improve' paradigm is key to the movement forward in my own understanding.

5.10.2: Implications for future research:

There are a number of implications for future research so one of the aspects of this thesis which should be examined in more detail is linked to the political issues. The types of educational theories underpinning the implementation of National Strategies were not always

clear. Given the current political intervention in education the research paradigms these developments are underpinned by should be examined in depth.

Another aspect which, should be examined further is the development of improved strategies relating to teaching and learning and the importance of CPD in developing this. School B has developed a set of CPD interventions which has been instrumental in improving the outcomes for students; this is another aspect which would bear serious consideration in future research using the “improve paradigm”. The importance of high quality CPD linked to QA processes and a regular review process would be another aspect which would be useful to consider as a future project, this should be linked to the development of different QA models for schools relating to their CPD provision. These projects could benefit from the use of Action Research methodology in order to ground them in peoples developing practice. This link between CPD and Quality Assurance processes needs to be further researched. In order to develop a consistent CPD QA policy there needs to detailed consideration to how this can be implemented. Schools currently have developed an ad-hoc approach to CPD with each school setting up their own methodology. Again these approaches do not have a clear research paradigm as their background and one of the key findings from this thesis should reflect this fact, in order to develop a more coherent strategy it is important that schools have a more consistent research approach developed. The nature of CPD also needs to be examined further as the power of as well as the weakness of CPD is its ability to embed a culture of change. Linked to this point is the fact that CPD also does not have a robust quality assurance system in place for schools to utilise. Despite the fact that there are accredited programmes available from universities, which are available in a variety of formats, the CPD available in schools does not appear have a robust QA process in place.

The difficulties in terminology relating to ‘assessment’ is central to this thesis and the educational paradigms behind the terminology of education need to be examined further in order to clarify the reasons behind the political developments.

5.11: Final conclusions:

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. 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. This project has been a longitudinal Action Research project, which has sought evidence of cultural change within the establishments and can be said to have given pointers for the redefinition of the culture of teaching and learning through embedded AfL. For myself the Action Research process has authenticated my own beliefs and understanding and has served the purpose of exploring the idea of embeddedness. If this methodology had not been adopted I would not have achieved the results and viewpoint I currently hold.

The true intellectual epiphany of this project came with the realisation that the problem was greater than the implementation of one strategy. 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 what is currently happening is that the culture in education is fossilising and there is a lack of dynamism. The Living Action Research theory embeds its values in shifting cultural practice and cultural change but currently in education teachers are living in a summative culture. This has resulted in the formative culture being an alien concept and the observed variable performance is as a result of the actions taken by the National Strategies which were not a serious attempt to change the culture. The key recommendation, therefore, for future practice is to carefully examine the starting points of the cultural background and use Action Research as the process to move the concept forward. This idea become the use of Action Research for cultural change but if this is to be developed there should not be an underestimation of the power of cultural inertia.

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<http://www.nsf.gov/about/>

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

<http://www.aaia.org.uk/afl/assessment-reform-group>

Appendix 1:

Assessment for Learning

Lesson Objectives

- Something new
- Helpful if visual (English Music Citizenship History)
- Can look back in notes and find out what we did last lesson
- Don't have to keep asking what we are doing/learning

Assessment for Learning

Cathy McKenna
Nicola Renshaw
Progress and Feedback

Assessment for Learning

Lesson Objectives

- Keeps lessons focussed
- Know where you are going
- Good if you walk into a lesson and they're on the board
- Only alright if explained otherwise can be confusing

Assessment for Learning

How students progress positives

- Good feedback "Constructive criticism" (English)
- Comments not just ticks
- One to one oral feedback (Maths)
- Skill list : tick sheet (PE)
- Levels every term **most** subjects

Assessment for Learning

How students progress positives

- Peer assessment (English Drama)
- Letters/ Postcards home (Science Art Music)
- Record levels in planners
- Milestone tasks grids
- PDP day useful

Assessment for Learning

How students progress negatives

- Lack of consistency between staff (English)
- Books not marked makes students feel what is the point
- Ticks, good, well done
- Tick sheet PE some students cheat: teachers to complete

Assessment for Learning

What helps learning

- Practical (Science)
- Laptops/ICT (Science Citizenship)
- Sitting next to peers (History/ICT)
- Card Sorts
- Projects
- One to one (French)

Assessment for Learning

What hinders learning

- Poor behaviour
- Whole class punishment
- Copying (used as a punishment)
- Repetition
- Teachers going off subject
- Too much teacher talk
- Milestone task grids without explanation
- BATs Science random ticks

Appendix 2:

Questionnaire

Subject Humanities

Name.....

Year.....

Aims and Objectives

Do staff write up aims and objectives Always Sometimes Never

Do you have to write down aims and objectives Always Sometimes Never

Do staff come back to aims and objectives during the lesson Always Sometimes
Never

Do staff come back to aims and objectives at the end of the lesson

Always Sometimes Never

Do staff come back to aims and objectives at the start of the next lesson

Always Sometimes Never

Marking

How is your work marked? Circle all that happens in this subject

- Marks e.g. 7/10
- Grades e.g. A B
- Levels e.g. 4 5 6
- Levels e.g. 4a 4b 4c
- Ticks/ Date/ Initials
- Comments
- Oral feedback
- Self marking
- No marking

Peer/Self Assessment

Do you mark other peoples work Yes No

Do you mark your own work Yes No

Do you give other people a level Yes No

Do you give yourself a level Yes No

National Curriculum Levels

Do you know your level in this subject Yes No

Do you know how to improve Yes No

Targets

Do you have targets set by the teacher Yes No

Do you have targets set by yourself Yes No

Appendix 3:

Milestone Assessments

Cathy McKenna

Milestone Assessments

- Marking and Assessment Policy
- Milestone pieces to be in place for each term (per year)
- Steps for faculties to follow
- Scheme of Work
 - Skills based task
 - Student friendly mark scheme
 - Feedback Comments/Self/Peer evaluation
 - Setting goals

Milestone Assessments

- Feedback
- Comment based marking
- e.g. You have achieved Level 3 as you have used a range of equipment to measure pH.
- To achieve a Level 4 you would need to get a series of results.

Milestone Assessments

- Work with Nicola Renshaw and consultants
- Feedback to HOFs
- INSET February 2007

Appendix 4:

Suggested timetable for AfL day 26th January 2007

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

Appendix 5:

“We Are Learning to ... WALT”

“What I’m Looking For ... WILF”

“This Is Because ... TIB”

“What A Good One Looks Like... WAGOLL”

“What’s In It For Me... WIIFM”

Appendix 6:

Feedback from Twilight

Assessment for Learning

Thursday 8th January 2009

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

Feedback from Twilight

Assessment for Learning

Thursday 8th January 2009

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
Assessment for Learning

Thursday 8th January 2009

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

ICTHave 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

Assessment for Learning

Thursday 8th January 2009

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...?

Appendix 7:

Meeting with Rachel Fossey AfL

May 15th 2010

There are some AST's for AfL one from Debden Park, a new one a Chelmsford and some more to be appointed

Do we have anyone?

Will be appointing lead schools next year. Would be happy to help so long as it doesn't impinge too much

National Strategy website (no longer government policy)

Suggestion for SIG conference subject leaders having worked on new curriculum workshop on what their new assessments look like and how they are moderating monitoring them.

Foundation subjects to create a standards file for moderation e.g. level 5 from year 7, 8 and 9

Possibly Colchester Royal Grammar school might be running an AfL day with guru

Recommended person for science Jill Readings currently at St Peter's but moving to the Gilberd in September

Suggestion link AHE to MME re APP

Appendix 8:

Assessment for learning

Whole Staff Meeting

2nd March 2009

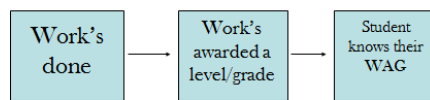
Matt Cooke



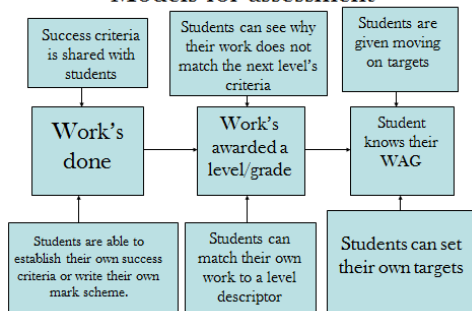
How might the people in the pictures use assessment for learning?



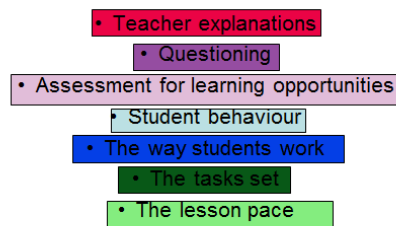
Models for assessment



Models for assessment



Lesson Elements



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

Appendix 9:



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.

Appendix 10:

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					

Examples of Good practice	Areas for Development
Year/ Subject Comments	

Appendix 11:

	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 12:

	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

Appendix 13:

Framework focus: Using and Applying/
Number/Algebra/Geometry//Calculating/Data Handling

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*

1

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, dojagrams, 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.		R A G R A G R A G R A G R A G R A G	Clip 86 Page 26
Tasks 1. Warm up 2. Discussion 3. Quick Progress Check 4. Independent Learning 5. Plenary/Review Learning		A2L 1 2 3 4 5 6	Key words Sector
		Homework Task: Due in: Date here...	



A worksheet template for a 'Wagoll' activity. The top section has a green background with the word 'WAGOLL' in large, bold, blue letters. Below this, the text 'Wagoll here...' is written in blue. The main body of the worksheet is white with horizontal lines. On the left side, there is a vertical spiral binding. At the bottom, there is a red banner with the text 'Misconception here..'. In the bottom left corner of the red banner is a yellow circle with a black 'M' inside. In the bottom right corner of the red banner is a red exclamation mark inside a white circle.

Appendix 14:



Individual Assessment of Teaching and Learning

Outstanding
1

Good
2

Quality of Learning and Progress	Quality of Teaching	Assessment	Behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Learners' consistently thoughtful behaviour is an outstanding factor in their successful learning. •Learners are highly considerate and supportive of each other in lessons.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The teaching is consistently effective in ensuring learners are motivated and engaged. •A 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •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.



Satisfactory
3

Inadequate
4

Quality of Learning and Progress	Quality of Teaching	Assessment	Behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Expectations are inappropriate. •Too many lessons are barely satisfactory or are inadequate and teaching fails to promote the learners' learning, progress or enjoyment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Assessment takes too little account of the learners' prior learning or their understanding of tasks and is not used effectively to help them improve. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Learners' poor behaviour and inattention 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.

Appendix 15:

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!