

**ENHANCING CAPACITY FOR ORGANISATIONAL
LEARNING; A PERPETUAL SYSTEM FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL
PRACTITIONERS**

by

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ABSTRACT

Although it is widely accepted that an organisation that embraces a system of perpetual learning is likely to reap the rewards, how organisations, especially educational organisations such as schools, develop an approach to organisational learning remains complex. Much has been published in the literature about Professional Learning Communities and Continued Professional Development initiatives but this research is interested in examining organisational learning as a perpetual activity. In a profession characterised by change, as witnessed in the policies and strategies of the new Coalition Government, schools and the people they employ have to learn effectively in what Schein (1992) describes as “a perpetual learning system” (p.372). This research then, considers how head teachers, teachers and teaching assistants learn in schools and identifies those things that aid and hinder the learning process. This study also explores, in the opinions of those interviewed, how organisational learning can be further improved.

The research considers the impact of the schools’ climate (observed attitudes and behaviours of a group) on the success of organisational learning and analyses climate as perceived by the staff in the context of an individuals’ capacity to learn.

Furthermore, the research explores the impact of power on the organisational learning process considering if opportunities to learn are evenly distributed. It draws on the experiences of participants in three primary schools to develop a detailed and comprehensive understanding of how they learn in each of their settings.

The research is informed by a thorough review of the educational and organisational literature as there seems little doubt that lessons learned in the world of business can also be important for schools (Bottery, 1994). The review has drawn on the works of Argyris and Schon (1974; 1978; 1996); Schein (1992); Ortenblad (2002); Lipshitz et al, (2002); Stoll et al (2003, 2006); MacGilchrist et al, (2004); Southworth (2004); West-Burnham and Ireson (2005) Senge (1990; 2006) and Lowe and Pugh (2007).

This is a qualitative study and data is gathered through interviews with head teachers, teachers and teaching assistants between January 2010 and July 2010.

Following an analysis of the findings, a number of preliminary recommendations are made. These recommendations show that organisational learning is multi-faceted and complex, requiring a combination of explicit leadership and individual ownership. It highlights the significance of informal learning with and from colleagues often in school and points to an inequality of access both within and between groups of practitioners. A perpetual learning system emerges in the conclusion and is offered for consideration.

This study captures insights which should inform the future research agenda in primary schools and highlights the need for continued research in the field if schools are really going to enhance their capacity for organisational learning.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

As a relatively new head teacher my over-arching professional aim is to develop a truly effective school where children are cared for, respected, and given the best possible opportunities to succeed socially and academically. In a study of 12 school leaders in England by Day et al (2000) effective heads are seen as those who constantly work at helping individuals develop professionally while enhancing relationships in the school. For Southworth (2004) the single most important task for a school leader is to influence what happens in the classroom through learning-centred leadership. Stoll et al (2003) suggests leading a successful school involves promoting learning through the school culture and for Webb (2005) drawing on research evidence from six case-study schools, the central role of the primary head teacher is to ensure that leadership focuses on continued improvement in teaching and learning through a perpetual system of professional development.

Society is continually changing and as such schools are continually changing as society's requirements of schools evolve (James et al, 2006). The level and frequency of this change means that a set of "effective school characteristics that might have been adequate in the past may not be so now and may not be so in the future" (James et al, 2006, p.1). This suggests James et al (2006) means that school leaders need to focus constantly on exploring what works and why it works so that schools continually reform and reconfigure. To do this head teachers have to invest heavily in continuous and progressive learning systems. As suggested by Stoll and Louis (2007)

the time has rarely been more opportune or more pressing to think more deeply about professional learning.

Setting the Context

I was appointed to my first primary headship in April 2006. The school to which I was appointed had recently amalgamated and so one of my first tasks was to translate the school vision into day-to-day practice, establishing a shared sense of accountability for all. We embarked together on a journey of self-discovery, committed simply to whole school improvement.

My reading of the relevant literature at that time, suggested that if we were to be successful then it was necessary for us not only to develop together as an organisation but also for us to develop individually as effective practitioners in our own right engaging in a cycle of perpetual learning. This view was informed by Schien (1992); Sergiovanni (2001); MacGilchrist et al (2004) and Southworth (2002, 2004) who suggested that learning organisations are built on a climate of inquiry and reflection where individuals' own learning is not only supported but actively encouraged.

Learning is essential in the quest to do the job even better (MacGilchrist et al, 2004). Much of the work on professional learning as a strategy for school improvement has focused on the effectiveness of continued professional development - CPD initiatives (Panayiotis and Leonidas, 2011) or professional learning communities – PLCs (Stoll et al, 2006). However Hargreaves (2007) warns that every so often and with what seems to be increasing frequency, a new buzzword enters the educational lexicon: „total quality management,’ ‘emotional intelligence,’ „learning styles,’ and now

„CPD’ or „PLCs’. With the passage of time suggests Hargreaves (2007) and as policy shifts with successive Governments, practices become discredited, the buzzwords disappear and attention is directed elsewhere.

“If history is a reliable teacher, then professional learning communities will recede from priority, just like most predecessors” (Hargreaves, 2007, p.181).

Professional learning suggests Hargreaves (2007) is not only an essential aspect of school improvement but ensures that schools are able to secure their futures. To succeed in a rapidly changing and increasingly complex world, schools need to grow, develop, adapt and take charge of change so that they can influence and control their school improvement journeys (Sweetland and Hoy, 2000).

This research project is not about how schools can develop professional learning communities where teachers can “critically interrogate their practice” (Bolam et al, 2005) through a system envisioned and directed by the head teacher or senior leaders whilst working within the remits of the Teachers Pay and Conditions Document. Neither is it about how schools organise and structure opportunities for CPD. This thesis, recognising the important work that has been carried out in both these fields, focuses its attention more specifically on the professional learning of head teachers, teachers and teaching assistants as a perpetual activity, recognising that learning is taking place all of the time through social interactions. As identified by Southworth (2004) it is increasingly important and common for leaders to encourage teachers to examine their teaching through the lens of learning as well as through their pedagogical principles, intentions and practices.

The ontological perspective upon which this thesis is built is that a learning climate that functions as “a perpetual learning system” (Schein, 1992, p.372) is essential in 21st Century schools. The reason for this premise is that inevitably the more sophisticated organisations and individuals within them become at learning the more likely it is that they will be able to adapt to change, develop innovative strategies for school improvement and recognise effectively their limitations in regard to both of these (Argyris, 1999).

Easterby-Smith et al (2006), agreeing with Argyris (1999) and Stoll and Louis (2007) state that remaining successful in an environment characterised by change means that organisations must be able to adapt and continue to grow. To do this requires a great deal of reflective practice and a commitment to change and evolve. An important task for a head teacher in a contemporary primary school therefore is to create and sustain a climate that embraces continuous learning. As indicated by Stoll and Louis (2007), “leaving no child behind means leaving no teacher or leader behind either” (p. xvii).

This claim is not exclusive to teachers although Bolam et al (2005) and Spillane et al (2009) argue that support staff have often been the neglected partners in the development of professional learning. As identified by Butt and Lance (2005) teaching assistants are now increasingly involved in teaching and learning and therefore it is essential that they should be invested in too so they can develop a sense of professionalism, career structure and recognition through on-going perpetual learning (Garner 2002; Hammett and Burton 2005). As identified by Bolam et al (2005) their development and involvement as key members of the school’s learning community is essential (Bolam et al, 2005).

Having set the context for this thesis, this chapter will now outline the aim of the research and introduce the research questions. Extensive reading of the literature relating to organisational learning for school improvement led to the formulation of the research questions. Once established the research questions were then instrumental in further framing and directing a continuing critical review of the literature.

Research Aims

This research project is designed to explore, through a phenomenological multiple case-study, perpetual organisational learning practices in three primary schools, drawing on the experiences and perceptions of the head teachers, teachers and teaching assistants working in the schools. All three schools chosen are located in Birmingham, England and are outer-ring urban schools with low levels of deprivation.

The case-study schools have been chosen for two reasons. The first is that the schools are known to the researcher and have a reputation for being at the forefront of innovation and change. The second reason is that they are successful schools, rated good or better by Ofsted. As Schein (1992), Argyris (1999); MacGilchrist et al, 2004; and Easterby-Smith et al (2006); suggest, with on-going and continuous educational change, the rate of learning inside an organisation must be equal to, or greater than, the rate of change in the external environment. As these schools are successful and if the arguments above are to be accepted, then each of these schools is likely to be embracing organisational learning as a perpetual activity with some level of success.

The purpose of this research is to illuminate, through a phenomenological approach, their learning practices drawing on these successes.

In explaining the perpetual learning practices in each of the case-study schools, the possibility of synthesising findings into a perpetual learning system may prove valuable. If such a system was to emerge then it would need to be framed by the case-study findings and the existing literature on organisational learning presented by Argyris and Schon (1974; 1978; 1996); Lipshitz et al (2002); Ortenblad (2002); MacGilchrist (2004); West–Burnham and Ireson (2005); Stoll et al, (2006); Lowe and Pugh (2007) and Spillane et al (2009). The presentation of a perpetual learning system would inevitably require translating for schools in different contexts and would need on-going evaluation and modification in light of the changing educational climate (James et al, 2006). However the participants’ experiences of organisational learning and the lessons that can be learnt from their experiences may prove valuable to the case-study schools and primary head teachers and senior leaders in similar contexts, enabling them to reflect upon their own organisational learning practices and increase their capacity for professional learning.

Research Questions

There are three research questions that will frame and direct the research. The first will be **what experiences do the participants have of organisational learning?**

This will be determined by examining the diversity of different learning systems operating in each of the schools from the perceptions of those interviewed. This question will identify the way in which these successful primary schools organise professional learning. It will analyse the schools on-going practices from the

viewpoint of the practitioners, in light of their epistemological and ontological perceptions. It will ascertain the views and perceptions of different groups within the schools recognising that multiple realities are likely to exist.

The second question will ask: **In the participants' experience what are the key organisational characteristics that enhance or inhibit organisational learning?**

This will identify, again from the practitioner's perceptions, the conditions and prevailing climate (meaning shared rules or normative behaviours) in each of the case-study schools and how this promotes or inhibits learning for all groups. This question will be concerned with identifying those factors that promote or inhibit professional learning within the school setting.

The final question will ask: **From the participants' experience how can organisational learning be further improved?** This question will ask respondents to consider those aspects of existing practice in relation to organisational learning that can be made better. It will consider the influence of power in each of the schools and try to determine whether organisational learning actually empowers employees or simply socialises them into an existing set of norms and values.

An Overview of the Organisational Learning Literature

Having set the research in context and having outlined the broad aims I will now relate the research questions above to the relevant literature and give a brief overview of the themes that will guide the reader through the research. A review of both the educational and corporate literature has been drawn upon in this thesis. As stated by Flood (1999):

“It is in the interest of all organisational set ups and indeed us as individuals, to seek guidance from contemporary management strategies in the struggle for effective and meaningful practice” (Flood, 1999, p. 1).

The first section of this introduction – an epistemological perspective, sets the research within a wider framework. According to Ortenblad (2002), two main perspectives of organisational learning are widely accepted; a functionalist perspective and an interpretive perspective. Therefore the introduction of this thesis will outline Ortenblad’s (2002) suggestions for a more radical perspective of organisational learning that empowers employees to frame and direct their own learning. The four themes to follow will explore: what organisational learning is; those things that support organisational learning and those that hinder it; encouraging perpetual learning; and the effects of power on the learning process. These four themes will then be revisited and explored in greater detail in the literature review.

An Epistemological Perspective – Setting the Context for the Review of Literature

In 2008, Hartley (then a Professor at the University of Birmingham) presented a paper from the International Journal of Management Reviews entitled Organizational Learning: a radical perspective (Ortenblad, 2002). Although writing from a business and management perspective Ortenblad (2002) suggested that the organisational learning literature made very little effort to show how organisations could improve their organisational learning mechanisms. This view however seems to neglect the significant and longitudinal work that led to contributions to the field of organisational learning presented by Argyris and Schon (1974; 1978; 1996) which will be explored in detail in the next chapter.

Ortenblad (2002) set his argument for a more radical (improved) perspective of organisational learning against Burrell and Morgan's (1979) description of four distinct paradigms (functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist and radical structuralism, see Appendix 1). Ortenblad (2002) suggested that for many years organisational learning theory had been based on a functionalistic paradigm, where individuals learned as agents for the organisation. In this paradigm no real effort is made to change the power conditions in the organisation. Although the school improvement priorities direct the learning of individuals, it is they as individuals who learn. The school in this scenario provides the facilitating climate for individuals' learning but the learning gained by the individual is for the benefit of the school. As the individual learns so the school itself learns as if it were an individual.

The functionalistic paradigm of organisational learning theory, according to Ortenblad (2002), was then consumed by the interpretive perspective. In this paradigm reality is seen as a subjective phenomenon, knowledge is context dependent and learning is situated. The learning entities are not individuals as cognitive individuals; instead learning is seen as a social practice. The learning starts in relationships not in individuals as in the functionalistic paradigm (Oswick et al, 2000):

“Learning takes place in relations between individuals or between the individual and his/her work task” (Ortenblad, 2002, p.90).

Yet this perspective of organisational learning as with the functionalist perspective has been criticised by Ortenblad (2002) for giving too little attention to power. Thus, the other two dimensions of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) matrix remain un-changed as the management still decides what should be learned and the managers still control the knowledge at least as far as the process of knowing can be controlled.

Ortenblad's (2002) argument therefore was, that neither the functionalistic perspective nor the interpretive perspective, presented a very radical approach to organisational learning. This is mainly due to the fact that neither of these perspectives hand ownership of the learning to the individual or collective of individuals. Ortenblad (2002) therefore suggested the development of a more radical perspective of organisational learning where employees took ownership of their learning experiences. Day et al (2004) in support of Ortenblad (2002) puts forward two opposing arguments for consideration and asks whether professional learning is about nurturing inquiry, self-reflection and individual professional identity or is rather a mechanism for ensuring compliance and conformity to specified reform agendas.

Ortenblad's (2002) work was of particular interest even though written outside the field of education. It seemed to suggest that it was not the role of management (in this case the head teacher) to orchestrate the learning for colleagues in schools; instead ownership of the learning needed to be handed back to the individuals so that they were truly empowered. Using the overview of sociological and organisational theory produced by Burrell and Morgan (1979), where they suggest two dimensions and four paradigms, this research is firmly rooted in the interpretive paradigm, as it aims to develop and promote understanding. However, having read the paper by Ortenblad (2002), although still being committed to the interpretive paradigm this thesis will consider whether a perpetual professional learning system in a primary school context can relate to Ortenblad's (2002) learning theory by giving ownership of the learning to the individual.

Overview of the Review of Literature

Having contextualised the literature review with an epistemological perspective presented by Ortenblad (2002), this introductory chapter will now introduce the four themes that will guide the research. Each of these themes relates to one or more of the research questions and will be further critiqued in Chapter 2, the Literature Review.

The first theme will explore what is meant by organisational learning. Stoll et al (2003) point to the fact that there exists many different types of learning, some they suggest are simple and others more complex; some involve the acquisition of new knowledge whereas others systems of learning promote the development of skills; some can be learned from experience whereas others need direct instruction. For Argyris and Schon (1978) learning involves the detection and correction of error. West-Burnham and Ireson (2005) argued that the most successful learning is self-directed learning where individuals are committed to developing themselves both professionally and personally. This supports the work of Ortenblad (2002) and Argyris and Schon (1974; 1978; 1996) who argued convincingly for a model of organisation learning where individuals are empowered to control what is learned.

In order to achieve this however, schools need to consider how they create the conditions to support professional learning and this emerges as the second theme. Hargreaves and Goodson (2005) point to the fact that it is school leaders who create the climate of encouragement and expectation in which teachers do or do not learn how to improve professionally:

“Helping teachers learn well so they can help pupils to learn well is one of the fundamental responsibilities of leadership – and one of the essential elements

of professional learning among leaders themselves” (Hargreaves and Goodson, 2005, p.xiii).

Nias et al (1989) reporting on research into school cultures suggested that head teachers need to articulate and defend their mission. They need to be able to persuade others to share that sense of mission. This involves securing the commitment of other staff to the beliefs and values that the individual head teacher believes to be most important for the school. “In other words heads need both to be certain of their educational philosophy and skilled in negotiation” (Nias et al, 1989, p.256).

Ortenblad (2002) and Coopey (1995) however, in contrast to Nias et al (1989), claimed that practitioners should not be socialised into an existing set of shared mental models, where there is no room for radical change or problematisation instead they should be free to direct and govern their own learning and articulate their own belief systems. This will be explored further in the next chapter.

Professional learning is widely accepted as an inherent part of successful 21st Century schools (Stoll and Louis 2007) and so the third theme explores the importance of this as a perpetual activity. Argyris and Schon (1974; 1978; 1996) describe their inquiry into organisational learning as concerning itself not with static entities called organisations but with an active process of organising which is, at root, a cognitive enterprise. Individual members are continually engaged in attempting to know the organisation, and to know themselves in the context of the organisation. Argyris and Schon’s (1978) focus was much more strongly on individual and group interactions and defences than upon systems and structures. This thesis is also concerned with individual and group interactions and how these interactions best support a perpetual learning system in a primary school context:

“In a fast-changing world, if you can’t learn, unlearn and relearn, you’re lost. Sustainable and continuous learning is a given of the twenty-first Century” (Stoll et al, 2003, p.xv).

One of the key learning challenges to emerge for educational leaders therefore is the ability to truly empower (Vaill, 1997). This involves learning many new actions that are more supportive and facilitative; giving up control by helping staff to develop the skills for individual growth to take a greater responsibility for their own learning. The final theme therefore to be introduced in this first chapter, and to be extended on in the next, is the influence and place of power.

If organisational learning as a perpetual system is to be embraced in the primary school, that hands ownership of the learning to the individual, then power needs careful consideration. Lowe and Pugh (2007) define power as the ability or potential to bring about significant change, usually in people’s lives. Coopey’s (1995) analysis of power in the learning organisation showed that those who had power in traditional bureaucratic organisations acquired more power in the learning organisation. A perpetual learning system, if it were to emerge, would certainly have to consider the influence of power on the learning entities and may even need to try and readdress the suggested in-balance of power evident in schools as described by Bolam (2005) and Spillane et al (2009).

Enhancing Capacity for Organisational Learning - Why?

This research is built on the ontological perspective that schools are truly effective when everyone involved with them is committed to ongoing, perpetual learning (Schein, 1992). Aside from this view however, it is widely accepted that organisational learning, whether functionalist, interpretive or more radical, will

inevitably contribute to whole school improvement (Argyris, 1999). The educational landscape is ever changing and therefore there is evidently a need for on-going individual and collective learning.

Easterby-Smith et al (2006) explain that although organisational learning has been explored by a growing number of researchers given the diversity of approaches, the resulting literature is fragmented, with multiple constructs and little cross-fertilisation. The potential value of this research project therefore is two-fold. Firstly, it is designed to add to the existing organisational learning knowledge base. Although an approach to organisational learning that hands ownership of the learning to the individual has been suggested by Ortenblad (2002) and West-Burnham and Ireson (2005) this study wants to establish if this is evident in practice.

Secondly, by conducting the research into organisational learning in the case-study schools it will be possible to explore, in detail, the operational workings of organisational learning as experienced by the participants first hand and the extent to which this is perpetual. The findings will potentially lead to the generation of new knowledge that may enhance not only the case-study schools' capacity for organisational learning as a perpetual activity but other primary settings too.

Summary

To summarise this introductory chapter therefore, the work of Ortenblad (2002) argues convincingly that organisational learning, has to date, been viewed from a functionalist or interpretive paradigm. However, with the pace of change ever increasing, perhaps the time has come for a more radical approach to organisational

learning that considers empowering employees to direct and govern their own learning.

If the work of Argyris and Schon (1974; 1978; 1996); MacGilchrist (2005) and Stoll et al (2003; 2007) is to be credited, the type of learner needed in a school today is a self-directed perpetual learner who is constantly reinterpreting the things which are already understood, then letting go of these former understandings and techniques in order to develop their practice. To encourage such qualities in learning organisations there is a need to root staff development in personal growth. Practitioners need to be able to continually reflect on their practice moving towards the accomplishment of personal mastery (Senge, 1990), developing the skills to work with and support the development of others (Field, 2011).

In the next chapter the published literature on the four identified themes will be explored in greater detail. Using Ortenblad's (2002) work as a backdrop, the literature review will begin by discussing the organisational learning literature presented by Argyris and Schon (1974; 1978; 1996) and West-Burnham and Ireson (2005). The conditions for organisational learning will be presented so that those things that encourage it and those that inhibit it are fully explored and the work of Senge (1990, 2006) and Lipshitz et al (2002) will be critiqued. The literature review will explore what is meant by perpetual learning (Schein, 1992) and the implications of this for staff in schools before concluding with an analysis of power in the learning organisation and the impact of this on a perpetual learning system (Lowe and Pugh, 2007).

The Structure of the Thesis

The first two chapters of this thesis, the Introduction and Literature Review, will set the research within the context of the published literature. The third chapter will outline the research design in detail, providing justification for the use of a phenomenological research strategy, a multiple case-study approach and semi-structured interviews to collect the data. The third chapter will also describe issues associated with access, ethics, validity and reliability. Ethical considerations are integral to all aspects of the research design and methodological procedures. The British Educational Research Association (BERA 2004) will provide the guiding principles that will be strictly adhered to throughout this research project including obtaining permission for access (see Appendix 2 and 3), maintaining confidentiality and anonymity and building in opportunities for respondent validation (see Appendix 4).

The fourth chapter will report the findings in a discursive style broken down into the four key themes already identified. Tables, charts and quotations will aid the summary of the findings. The purpose of the findings is to illuminate how organisational learning has taken place in the case-study schools and to ascertain how those interviewed think it could be improved in the future. The research questions will drive the analysis and it is intended that the outcomes of this study will further inform the research agenda on organisational learning as well as provide relatable insights into organisational learning for primary school leadership team members and head teachers, both in respect of their own practices and further whole school developments. This research is likely however to raise further questions and prompt extended research in the field.

The final chapters of the research, Chapter 5 and 6 will make preliminary recommendations and identify key findings and contributions to knowledge. They will draw conclusions in light of the findings and link these to the published literature. It is in Chapter 6 that a perpetual learning system may emerge and be presented for consideration. This last chapter will also, in light of the further questions raised, identify clearly, opportunities for extended research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This thesis is concerned with organisational learning as a professional perpetual activity in primary schools, perpetual meaning occurring repeatedly; so frequent as to seem endless and uninterrupted (Oxford Dictionary, 2011). But before presenting a critique of the organisational learning literature that underpins the research, this chapter will begin by explaining how a search of the literature was conducted.

The search of the organisational learning literature has spanned a number of years, since my appointment to headship in 2006 and has increased in momentum during the last three years as I embarked on this thesis. The literature search began with a varied selection of on-line journals which were accessed via Google Scholar, the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) website and University of Birmingham e-library facility; key search words included, schools as learning organisations, organisational learning, lead-learners, CPD and PLCs. This search was limited initially to those papers published within 10 years of the search but was soon extended to include texts published in the last three decades of the previous century.

The reading of articles and journals such as 'Educational Review'; 'School Leadership and Management'; 'Educational Management and Administration' highlighted the significant work undertaken in the field of organisational learning by Argyris and Schon (1974; 1978; 1996); Schein (1992); Nias et al (1989, 1992); MacGilchrist et al, (2004); Southworth (2004); West-Burnham and Ireson (2005) and Easterby-Smith et al (2006) and this provided a broad theoretical base from which to

read more widely. Further reading of the organisational learning literature was complemented by the works of Senge (1990; 2006) and Ortenblad (2002) writing from a business and management perspective and Dewey (1933) and Lipshitz et al, (2002) writing from a psychological perspective.

Reviewing and critiquing a range of literature, including that written outside the field of education potentially adds breadth to the review. Cross fertilisation can often lead to shared understandings or raise important questions in relation to practice in schools:

“The originality of a research topic often depends on a critical reading of a wide-ranging literature” (Hart, 1998).

As identified by Bottery (1994) organisations are increasingly moving towards and borrowing from, organisations in other sectors and “there seems little doubt that schools do have lessons to learn from the business world” (Bottery, 1994, p.1).

It was the breadth of review that led to the emergence of the research questions. Once established the research questions were then instrumental in further framing and directing a continuing critique of literature to ensure relevance and a contemporary review. This included the works of Stoll et al (2003, 2006); Lowe and Pugh (2007); Spillane et al (2009); Antoniou and Leonidas (2011) and Brundrett and Rhodes (2011). This extensive reading, driven by the research questions, led to four overarching themes and it is these four themes that will guide the reader through the research. Each of these themes will be discussed in turn in this chapter building on the précis presented in the introduction.

- 1) What is organisational learning?
- 2) the conditions for learning;
- 3) encouraging perpetual learning;
- 4) power and organisational learning.

Theme one is driven by research question one – the participants’ experiences of organisational learning, and will set the context by exploring the dense literature that attempts to define organisational learning. Once what is meant by organisational learning has been explored the second theme, driven by research question two, will consider what it means to lead an organisation that is perpetually learning and it will interrogate some of the existing organisational learning models available to schools. It is this section of the literature review that considers how a climate for organisational learning can be created so as to engender learning behaviours.

The third theme derived from all of the research questions considers why it is necessary for everyone to perpetually learn and how the literature suggests this can be accomplished. The final theme involves a critique of power and is driven by all the research questions, but especially the third question that asks participants how organisation learning can be improved in their schools. The discussion of power is used to draw together the other three aspects of the review by acknowledging its inherent presence in organisations and discussing how the influence of power impacts on learning environments and learning behaviours.

The literature review will be drawn to a close with a summary of the key themes in the conclusion.

WHAT IS ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING?

Why do people in organisations need to learn?

Prange (2006) examining the history of organisational learning noted that researchers became attracted to the idea of organisational learning in the early 1960s (Argyris, 1964; Cangelosi and Dill, 1965; Cyert and March, 1963). But it was only in the late 1970s that a sparse, but regular stream of articles and books began to emerge (Argyris and Schon, 1978; Duncan and Weiss, 1979; March and Olsen, 1975). During the 1980s some 50 articles were published in academic journals, which can be compared with over 184 papers (written by 149 different authors, or groups of authors) appearing in the 1990s (Prange, 2006). So maybe it is possible to link the growing interest in organisational learning with the heightened awareness of its importance.

Southworth (2000), who was involved in a series of related studies in the 1990s, sometimes with other researchers, came to appreciate that what underscored many schools' success was the way the school as a workplace was also a workshop for teacher and staff learning. Those working in schools have to deal with continuous change both in terms of policy and practice meaning learning is an essential component (Stoll and Bolam, 2005). Researchers in the field of organisational learning acknowledge that the creative input of all employees is necessary (Argyris and Schon, 1996). It is no longer sufficient, suggests Senge (2006), to have one person learning for the organisation. The organisation that will truly excel in the future in the view of Senge (2006) is the organisation that discovers how to tap into people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels. This view is supported by Schein (1992) who argued that perpetual learning would be essential in successful 21st Century schools.

Organisational Learning Defined

The organisational learning literature is abundant yet Prange (2006) suggested that because it has been classified and presented in a multitude of ways it has resulted in an “organisational learning jungle which has become progressively dense and impenetrable” (p.23). Mackenzie (1994) noted:

“The main conclusion is that after 30 years of effort, the scientific community devoted to organisational learning has not produced discernible intellectual progress” (p.251).

This theoretical confusion and disorder suggests Easterby-Smith et al, (1999) is probably because organisational learning is a natural part of the maturation process in a dynamic intellectual field. Consequently there is little agreement on the definition of organisational learning (Chiva and Alegre 2005). As with many issues in the social sciences, the more closely the phenomenon of organisational learning has been observed and studied, the more complex and ambiguous it has become (Lipshitz et al, 2002).

Chris Argyris has made a significant contribution to the organisational learning literature. Working with Donald Schon (1974; 1978; 1996) this collaboration involved teaching, researching and consulting and resulted in three key publications: *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness* (1974), *Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective* (1978), and *Organizational Learning II: Theory, Method, and Practice* (1996). Together they defined learning as a process of identifying and correcting errors and as such said that learning also included the discovery and exploitation of opportunity. This definition of learning is in itself perpetual as it requires individuals to reflect on their past behaviours and actions, identify errors or opportunities for future behaviours and actions and to implement

these successfully before beginning the process again. Prange (2006) suggested simply that organisational learning refers to processes of individual and collective learning.

Generally an organisation may be said to learn when it acquires information of any kind and by whatever means (Argyris and Schon, 1996). In this over-arching sense all organisations learn when a learner to whom the learning process is attributed acquires, processes and stores new information on the organisations behalf.

MacGilchrist et al (2004), having written extensively about school improvement since the late 1990s and more recently about organisational learning in schools used a traditional definition of learning found in the 1991 edition of the Oxford Dictionary: “knowledge acquired by study” yet this definition is possibly too limiting. For Senge (2006) the basic meaning of an organisation that learns is one that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future. For such organisations, it is not enough merely to survive. Survival learning or what is more often termed as adaptive learning is important, even necessary “but for a learning organisation adaptive learning must be joined by generative learning, learning that enhances the capacity to create” (Senge, 2006, p.14).

So it becomes clear that there exist a wide range of organisational learning definitions, all relevant and worthy of consideration in this thesis. One that needs further exploration is learning as a social process.

Learning as a Social Process

Easterby-Smith et al (2006) argue that a clear distinction can be made between authors who write about organisational learning. This distinction depends on whether they describe learning as a technical or a social process. The technical view of learning explains learning as the processing of information. This information may be quantitative or qualitative, but is generally explicit and in the public domain. This view of learning may concur more with a functionalist view of the world where individuals learn as agents for the organisation. Easterby-Smith et al (2006) suggest that the technical perspective has limitations as data has no significance in its own right – not that is, until people determine what the data means. Such a process they suggest is based on social construction.

The social perspective of organisational learning therefore focuses on the way people make sense of their experiences at work and aligns more closely to learning as a perpetual activity. The learning experiences may derive from explicit sources such as financial information, or they may be derived from tacit sources, such as the intuition possessed by a teacher. This perspective sympathises with the interpretive paradigm as learning is seen as something that emerges from social interactions. Dewey (1933) explains that people think and act together in social settings but more fundamentally, the process of inquiry or learning is actually conditioned by their membership in that social setting and therefore significantly influences their behaviours and actions.

Learning in Practice

This debate although providing insight into learning does not explain how „learning’ actually occurs in practice and it is this that research question one will aim to explore

through ascertaining the views and perceptions of the practitioners in the case-study schools.

Many theories about learning appear in the literature and common themes seem to emerge. Carnell and Lodge (2002) identify three different approaches to learning that are widely accepted in school settings; reception (or instruction), construction and co-construction. At one extreme is reception; this is based on a model which views learning as the giving and receiving of knowledge to a learner who is generally passive. The passive learner responds to the information that the teacher provides. Here learning is a simplistic process that is linear and sequential and little account is taken of what the learner may bring to the experience in the way of existing knowledge, reflective capability, previous experiences of learning or preferred approaches.

The construction approach to learning acknowledges and respects learners' engagement in the process of their learning and sees learning as a complex process. Learning happens as individuals and groups gain new understandings in relation to their existing knowledge. The literature suggests that this is an active, collaborative process where learners take responsibility for their learning and also learn about themselves as learners. This approach acknowledges the importance of an interactive social component in learning, in contrast to the reception model that encourages more solitary learning (MacGilchrist et al, 2004). The co-construction model is an extension of the constructivist model. It reflects a view that learning is more likely to occur through social interaction than just in the mind of the individual. It emphasizes the importance of discussion and dialogue between learners. Carnell and Lodge

(2002), agreeing with Senge (1990), see dialogue as more than conversation, “it is the building of learner-centred narrative, (it) is about building and arriving at a point you would not get to alone” (Carnell and Lodge, 2002, p.15).

Effective learning suggests MacGilchrist et al (2004) is an active process where the learners make meaning and come to new understandings by reflecting on their practice, asking questions and making connections between existing knowledge and new information, and, subsequently, being able to use and apply learning in a range of situations. This often involves learning with and from others, which means that learning is not a passive process but rather an interactive social process that individuals participate in perpetually.

Two of the major contributors to the debate on how learning occurs in organisations are Argyris and Schon (1974; 1978; 1996), who have developed a number of important concepts including the distinction between single and double-loop learning. The former of these involves the detection and correction of error within a given set of governing variables, the latter involves changing the governing variables themselves. By single-loop learning Argyris and Schon (1996) mean instrumental learning that changes strategies of action in ways that leave the values of a theory of action unchanged. Thus single-loop learning is linked to incremental change, where an organisation tries out new methods and tactics and attempts to get rapid feedback on their consequences in order to be able to make continuous adjustments and adaptations.

By double-loop learning Argyris and Schon (1996) are referring to learning that results in a change in values and strategies rather than just a change to the strategies being used. The strategies may change with, or as a consequence of a change in values. Double-loop learning therefore is carried out by individuals, when their inquiry leads to a change in the values of their theories-in-use. Double-loop learning is carried out by an organisation, when individuals inquire on behalf of the organisation and that inquiry leads to a change in the values of the organisations theory-in-use.

The work of Argyris and Schon (1974; 1978; 1996) has provided the theoretical framework upon which much of the more recent literature is framed and their model of learning has been extended by Swieringa and Wierdsma (1992) writing from a management perspective and West-Burnham and Ireson (2005) writing from an educationalist perspective. They both refer to a third type of organisational learning, which is referenced in most literature as profound learning (triple-loop). They suggest like Argyris and Schon (1996) that different types of learning each lead to different outputs and the theoretical framework they present provides the basis for meaningful discussion about the learning process and its related outcomes (see Table 1 over leaf).

| | Shallow (what) | Deep (how) | Profound (why) |
|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Means | Memorisation | Reflection | Intuition |
| Outcomes | Information | Knowledge | Wisdom |
| Evidence | Replication | Understanding | Meaning |
| Motivation | Extrinsic | Intrinsic | Authentic |
| Attitudes | Compliance | Interpretation | Creativity |
| Relationships | Dependence | Interdependence | Independence |
| | Single Loop | Double Loop | Triple Loop |

Table 1. Modes of Learning (adapted from West-Burnham and Ireson 2005).

Having identified three distinct types of organisational learning, they explain how these forms of learning each lead to different outputs. Deep learning, as opposed to shallow learning, creates critical reflection that leads to understanding and interdependence. Profound learning however strengthens the core of an individual and can lead to the re-definition of a problem and its related solutions. Profound learning therefore is about the creation of personal meaning and so enhances wisdom and creativity and it could be argued aligns with Ortenblad's (2002) radical learning where individuals own and govern their learning.

Although shallow (single-loop), receptive learning has been adequate for a world that has operated on high levels of strategic compliance and dependence in the past, perhaps deep/construction or profound/co-construction as a model of learning becomes more appropriate in the 21st Century schools, delineating a shift within the interpretive paradigm towards empowering the learner so that learning is owned by individuals and seen as a perpetual activity.

Summary

From the review of the organisational learning literatures, the following issues emerge. The first issue centres on the problem of defining organisational learning and what it means to learn. A second issue relates to the ontological assumptions theorists hold about the learning process. Learning can be seen as an individual, interpersonal, group, intergroup, whole organisational process or even a combination of these.

Argyris and Schon (1996) distinguish between single and double-loop learning, a distinction that has been rather widely adopted, in one form or another, by a number of authors including West-Burnham and Ireson (2005). Some of the literature focuses on the importance of instrumental, single-loop learning whereas other sources speak of the importance of double or even triple-loop learning. Research question one will explore the participants' experiences of organisational learning and try to elicit how they engage in the learning process and whether this engagement can be aligned to West-Burnham and Ireson's (2005) school-based modes of learning.

THE CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

Research question two will explore those things that inhibit organisational learning as a perpetual activity and those things that actively encourage it. This leads to a critique of literature that discusses the conditions for learning.

Leading Organisational Learning

“The idea that schools should aspire to be learning organisations has received considerable attention in recent years. However, the gap between aspiration and practice remains wide” (Southworth, 2000, p.275).

Drawing on research conducted in the 1990s Southworth (2000) identifies a number of obstacles that need to be addressed if primary schools truly want to embrace a model of perpetual professional learning. One of these obstacles is creating the right culture/climate. For the purpose of this study the word culture and climate are used interchangeably (Davies, 1971; Owens, 1981 and Glover and Coleman, 2005 Stoll and Louis, 2007).

MacBeath (2008) explains the term culture has passed seamlessly into the lexicon of schools. Smircich (1983) refers to it as the “social or normative glue that holds an organisation together...” (p.344) and Kunda (1992) explains it as the “shared rules governing cognitive and affective aspects of membership in an organisation” (p.8). Climate on the other hand suggests Lipshitz et al, (2002) can be taken to mean the observed manifestations of a set of shared values.

Schein (1992) using the word culture, defines leadership as “the attitude and motivation to examine and manage culture” (p.374). Schein (1992) regards the organisation as the group, and analyses organisational culture as a pattern of basic assumptions shared by the group. These basic assumptions then become embedded in the organisation and are taught to any new members joining the group (Schein, 1992). When organisations learn, basic assumptions shift in the heads of the group members. The job of a learning leader is to promote such shifts by helping the organisation’s members to “achieve some degree of insight and develop motivation to change” (Schein, 1992, p.390).

Argyris and Schon (1996), using the word climate, suggest that a learning leader must assess the adequacy of the organisation's climate, detect its weaknesses, and promote its transformation, first by exploring the ontological perspectives on which their judgements are made and then by fostering the learning assumptions in the climate of the organisation. Among the most important learning assumptions suggest Argyris and Schon (1996) are that people want to contribute and should be trusted to do so; that leaders should advocate their own not-knowing, becoming a learner, thereby getting others to do likewise. Leaders can foster a learning climate by making learning an inherent part of their vision, by communicating their vision to all members of the organisation and by rewarding those people in the organisation who embrace the vision and engage in learning practices.

Arbuckle (2000) said that as educators we have come to understand that some school cultures stimulate and promote learning. Others stifle it. Leadership vision, commitment and support are essential therefore if cultural change is to succeed:

“...bringing about the sorts of changes needed in the creation of learning organisations is enormously challenging work and requires real leadership (Senge, 2006, p.317).

Head teachers set the vision for their schools and so it is not surprising that a head teacher's commitment to learning is essential if a school wants to become a successful learning organisation. To promote learning and support others' learning suggests Stoll et al (2003), leaders need to have a deep, current and critical understanding of the learning process. Moreover, leaders require a deep understanding of how adults learn to enable them to provide support for teachers' learning to support pupils' learning.

Becoming a learning organisation therefore would seem to be a strategic decision that head teacher's should express in policy and practice. The policy outlines the belief that learning is essential for the success of the organisation. The practice demonstrates a commitment to learning and includes a range of learning models and approaches including investing in education and training, being committed to changes in culture, supporting experimentation and the dissemination of information and recognising and rewarding actions and behaviours that embrace a generative approach to learning (Lipshitz et al 2000).

It is clear that there are no magic formulas to help leaders or head teachers build learning organisations (Senge, 2006). Building learning orientated cultures is hard work and can take months and years suggests Senge (2006); indeed it is a never-ending journey:

“The likelihood of teachers choosing to engage in continuous learning will be much greater in a school where conditions are in place to support teacher learning” (Stoll et al, 2003, p.87).

Research question two is designed to elicit the organisational learning conditions prevailing in the case-study schools acknowledging that just as conditions in classrooms affect the ability of teachers to provide the best learning opportunities for students, so the school culture provides positive or negative support for its teachers' learning (Day et al, 2004).

Installing and Institutionalising Organisational Learning

Just as there have emerged many theories about the nature of learning so too have there been many different positions taken about the most appropriate ways of improving organisational learning capabilities (Easterby-Smith et al, 1998).

Hodkinson et al (2005) having focused their research on the workplace learning of English secondary school teachers reported on three ways they believed teachers learned at work; individually, collaboratively and as a result of planned activities.

Bubb et al (2009) identify four successful aspects of professional learning in school; individual thinking; within school learning; cross school networks and other external expertise. However in the study by Bubb et al (2009) staff in schools, including support staff, identified in-school support for professional learning as most effective.

The work of Argyris and Schon (1978); West-Burnham and Ireson (2005) suggest that because organisations normally operate on shallow/single-loop learning principles, it is more important for them to develop the capability of deep/double-loop learning.

Senge (2006) however argues that five disciplines underpin the learning organisation – personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning, and systems thinking. Personal mastery means developing one's own proficiency, vision or intrinsic desire. Senge (2006) argues that people who achieve high levels of personal mastery tend to be highly committed to their work, they tend to be able to work from their own initiative and as a result they tend to learn faster. Mental models are explained as “conceptual structures in the mind that drive cognitive processes of understanding” (Senge, 2006). As such they influence people's actions because they mould people's appreciation of what they see.

For Senge (2006) shared vision provides a focus and energy for learning. Here, Senge (2006) means generative learning rather than adaptive learning; where an organisation is looking to the future. Senge (2006) believes that it is not possible to have a learning organisation without a shared vision. Team-learning aims to achieve alignment in people's thoughts and energies. Growing a common direction creates resonance so that the whole team achieves more than the sum of the team members. Systems thinking then is about the whole with life events only being made sense of in a meaningful way in the knowledge that individual's actions contribute to patterns of interrelated actions. Systems thinking is about recognising that one person's actions are interrelated with another person's actions and are not merely isolated events.

Senge (2006) suggests that leader's who want to create successful learning organisation need to work tirelessly to foster a climate in which the principles of personal mastery are practiced in daily life. That means the organisation needs to have a climate where people feel safe creating their own visions, where inquiry and commitment to the truth are the norm, and where challenging existing patterns of behaviour and action is expected especially when the behaviours or actions includes obscuring aspects of current reality that people seek to avoid.

On reflection Senge (2006) identifies personal mastery as the most radical of the five disciplines; the idea that an organisational environment can be created in which people can truly grow as human beings. Most organisations, suggests Senge (2006), espouse some variation on the philosophy that people are their most important asset and invest considerable sums in work force development, largely through training programmes. But truly committing to helping people grow perpetually suggests

Senge (2006) requires much more than this with most practicing managers trying to discover how to do it.

Lipshitz et al (2002), like Senge (2006) stated that effective organisational learning requires a climate that fosters inquiry, openness, and trust. This is also true in the development of personal mastery (Senge, 2006). Lipshitz et al (2002) identified five cultural norms conducive to organisational learning: transparency, integrity, issue orientation, inquiry and accountability.

For Lipshitz et al (2002) transparency is exposing one's thoughts and actions to others in order to receive feedback whereas integrity is about collecting and presenting information accurately regardless of the implications. In schools this might mean giving other teachers feedback as fully and as accurately as possible and being willing to accept this feedback from others too. Acting with integrity means that individuals would need to accept their own errors and encourage others to do the same. Issue orientation refers to the need to focus on the relevance of information being provided or found and ensuring that this is not influenced by the recipient or the source.

Inquiry is defined as investigating a matter relentlessly until full understanding is achieved. This means that individuals should persist with their inquiry, suspending judgement until a conclusion can be drawn. Accountability finally is defined as taking responsibility not only for learning but also subsequently changing practice in light of what has been learnt. Implicit in Senge (2006) and Lipshitz et al (2002) norms is the notion of trust.

Trust

Bottery (2003) suggests that trust originates at a deep, basic and unthinking primordial level and is critically linked with the evolution of cooperative behaviour. As identified by Stoll and Bolam (2005) if we expect teachers to participate in activities such as mutual inquiry, classroom observation and feedback, mentoring, coaching and discussion about pedagogical issues and innovation, they will need to feel safe and confident. Trust helps develop social capital (Nias et al, 1989; Hargreaves, 2001; Stoll et al, 2007) and without social capital the intellectual capital – the pedagogical understanding of head teachers, teachers and teaching assistants in schools is extremely difficult to develop. Bottery (2003) argues that trust should be central to a schools climate as trust and being trusted are central issues in the recognition of a person's integrity and humanity.

Bottery (2003) describes seven different forms of trust (see Appendix 5) although not all are necessarily needed at the highest level to ensure successful learning.

“Relationships with developed trust are qualitatively better, more meaningful, more caring, more respectful and have more integrity” suggest Bottery (2003, p.254).

Easterby-Smith et al (2006) also discuss the notion of trust as central to the core of managers' willingness to ensure highly effective professional learning. Trust, as a cognitive state, is the willingness to place resources at others' disposal. Leaders and teachers must establish considerable levels of trust to set aside traditional protective behaviours in order to work together to build towards alternatives. Organisational learning, by its nature, is called for in situations in which much is unknown and uncertain (Senge, 1990), creating a need for trust to enable experimentation, reflection, or action. Research question two will explore issues of trust in the case-

study schools using the 5 relatable norms identified by Lipshitz et al (2002) as a theoretical framework to underpin the discussion.

Organisational Learning Behaviours

Argyris and Schon (1996) as main contributors to the organisational learning debate suggest that because an organisation's learning system is made up of the structures that channel organisational inquiry it is the behavioural world of the organisation, draped over these structures, that facilitates or inhibits organisational inquiry.

Together, the culture and behavioural features of an organisation learning system create the conditions under which individuals interact in organisational inquiry. By the behavioural world Argyris and Schon (1996) mean the qualities, meanings, and feelings that habitually condition patterns of interaction among individuals within the organisation in such a way as to affect organisational inquiry – for example, the degree to which patterns of interaction are friendly or hostile, intimate or distant, open or closed, flexible or rigid, competitive or cooperative, risk-seeking or risk-averse, error-embracing or error-avoiding, productive or defensive.

Argyris and Schon (1974) believe that people have mental maps with regard to how to act in any given situation, be it as a leader, as a follower, or as a peer. These assumptions are referred to by Argyris (1999) as their theories of action. These theories of action are, in effect, causal theories of how to act effectively. Individuals tend to hold two types of theories of action. There is the theory of action that they espouse which is usually expressed in the beliefs and values they talk about to others. Then there is the theory that they use; their actual behaviour. The distinction made

between the two contrasting theories of action is between those theories that are implicit in what is done and those theories which are spoken of to others:

“When someone is asked how he would behave under certain circumstances, the answer he usually gives is his espoused theory of action for that situation. This is the theory of action to which he gives allegiance, and which upon request, he communicates to others. However, the theory that actually governs his actions is his theory-in-use” (Argyris and Schon, 1974, p.6-7).

Yet individuals’ reasoning processes create organisational failure to learn according to Argyris and Schon (1978) who observed that individuals confronted with interpersonally threatening situations rely on theories in use for how to be effective, which have the unintended consequence of preventing them from learning. This is in part because of a gap – of which the individuals themselves are unaware – between how they believe they behave (their espoused theory) and how they actually behave (driven by their theory-in-use). The problem is compounded by the fact that observers are often aware of that gap in others’ behaviour and blissfully unaware that they too have a gap between espoused and in-use action strategies. According to the theory, all people utilise a common theory-in-use in difficult interactions, which Argyris and Schon (1978) have called „Model I’.

Model I theories-in-use are shaped by a set of implicit values, including the desire to retain unilateral control over a situation, to maximise winning and minimise losing, and to avoid embarrassment. Model I behaviour is inherently driven by a defensive mindset, of which the individual is typically unaware, which gives rise to defensive routines in the organisation. These routines are implicitly designed to prevent individuals and organisations from experiencing embarrassment or threat, but they have the unintended consequence of avoiding changing the root causes of problems.

Argyris (1986) has claimed that just about all the participants in his studies operated from theories-in-use or values consistent with Model I. This leads to deeply entrenched defensive routines (Argyris 1990) and the need to move individuals from a Model I to a Model II orientation in order to engage in double-loop learning. In the study of Welsh schools with high attainment in disadvantaged settings carried out and reported on by James et al (2006) “the congruence between the espoused theory and the in-use actions contributed to the schools’ effectiveness” (p.155). Therefore until there is congruence between their stated values and beliefs and their actual behaviours (espoused theory and theory-in-use) a perpetual learning system where learning is situated and sustained may be difficult to implement in practice.

Defensive Routines versus Psychological Safety

When an individual feels psychological safe it is easier for them to inquire, be transparent and accept accountability without becoming overly concerned with facing disturbing or embarrassing outcomes (Lipshitz, 2002). In a number of studies Edmondson (1997, 1999a, 1999b) found empirical evidence for the relationship between psychological safety and the trust it engenders and team learning. In particular, Edmondson’s (1997, 1999a, 1999b) studies showed that high learning teams felt a greater sense of psychological safety than lower learning teams (Edmondson, 1999b). Psychological safety appeared to increase people’s capacity to admit their mistakes.

James (2009) discusses system psychodynamics which interprets individual and group behaviours in social settings:

“The foundational axiom of system psychodynamics is that feelings powerfully influence individual and collective organisational practice and changes to those practices. So, regardless of any intentions to retain a cognitive rationale for practice and a cognitive perspective on educational change, feelings dominate. Systems psychodynamics enable that affective influence to be understood” (James, 2009, p.48).

James (2009) argues that for a variety of reasons, schools have high levels of affective intensity especially as many teachers really do view their work as a vocation and therefore have very powerful attachments to it. In agreement with Argyris (1999), James (2009) suggests that defensive behaviours in organisations are intended to protect individuals from difficult or hurtful experiences. Therefore much of the educational practice developed in schools is actually designed to defend against the prospect of experiencing difficult feelings and to optimise the probability of experiencing positive ones and this makes organising learning extremely difficult. “Defensive behaviours can be difficult to change and can inhibit learning and limit creativity” (James et al, 2006, p.47).

As identified by Argyris and Schon (1996) and West-Burnham and Ireson (2005) if we are interested in overcoming the defensive forces that inhibit deep/double-loop learning then it is necessary to seek an alternative learning system. If it is right to assert that most organisations contain Model I learning systems and that these learning systems actually prevent deep or profound learning, it may be necessary to create a new learning system (Argyris and Schon, 1996) where individuals can embrace new models of learning.

In Argyris’ (1978) model, the only way to improve this self-sealing non-learning system is to change the way in which individuals think and behave, by adopting a Model II theory-in-use. The core aim in Argyris’ (1978) intervention strategy is to

develop an organisation's capacity to engage in Model II learning. Model II involves extensive inquiry into the views and experiences of others. When employing Model II, advocacy of views must be supported by explanation and illustration of one's reasoning (Argyris, 1982). While it is not difficult to agree with these premises, employing Model II in difficult interpersonal interactions requires profound attentiveness and skill for human beings socialised in a Model I world. The emotional labour and the emotional work of teaching may result in teachers – indeed all those who work in schools – defending themselves from the emotional experience of their work (James et al, 2006).

The Models alone are not sufficient to give the guidance necessary argued Argyris and Schon (1996). There was also a need for rules in the form of maxims to help invent and produce Model II processes, such as advocating a position and coupling it with inquiry, making private dilemmas public, and framing attributions so that they can be disconfirmed. Such heuristics provided operational definitions for actions.

If Model II governing values and behavioural strategies are used, the degree of defensiveness in individuals, within groups, and among groups will tend to decrease suggests Argyris (1999). This supports the view of Ferdinand (2004) and Williams' (2001) who adopted the term „primitive freedom', as the idea of being unobstructed in doing what you want. The consequence of Model II behavioural strategies and values should be an emphasis on deep/double-loop learning where individuals are free to confront each other and the basic assumptions they hold in order to affect individual and organisational change.

Since Model II learning systems are rare phenomena, Argyris and Schon (1996) were not be able to provide rich description of actual examples as at the time of writing, neither of the authors knew of an organisation that had fully developed a Model II learning system, nor were they aware of any literature that offered a full description of such a system. They acknowledged that their invention theory for the transition from Model I to Model II learning system was extremely primitive. The best that they were able to do was to present cases of the beginnings of Model II learning systems in various settings in which they had worked. The key then is to find ways in which to reduce the defensive routines by creating a feeling of psychological safety for all staff. Finally, only by reflecting on, and changing where necessary, the values governing actions and behaviours is it truly possible to embrace a successful model of perpetual learning.

Summary

When organisations scan their environments suggest Watkins and Marsick (1993) they attend to certain phenomenon and not to others. Values and beliefs define what is considered to be important, and hence, becomes the focus of organisations' attention. The climate and behaviours grow from these beliefs. Structures are designed that act in concert with this belief system. Climate, behaviours and structure influence the way an organisation defines a challenge and responds to it. Therefore head teachers and leaders in school have to assess the adequacy of the schools climate, detect its strengths and weaknesses and promote its transformation, ensuring the climate fosters inquiry, openness and trust (Lipshitz, 2002). As identified by McCharen et al (2011) the apparent relationship between a supportive learning culture

and knowledge creation is consistent with many findings related to the important role of the school leader in establishing a positive and supportive culture in a school.

A school is a social learning context. This provides a backdrop suggests Stoll et al (2003) for the learning that takes place and influences the nature of that learning. In short, if the context isn't favourable, collective professional learning will be inhibited, but if the influences are favourable, professional learning will be enhanced. The common assumption is that people will generally learn if they are motivated to do so. Consequently organisations focus on creating motivational tools and strategies that are designed to create committed, reflective learners. Yet this does not tackle one of the key mistakes that organisations make about learning, the propensity among professionals to behave defensively (Argyris, 1999; James, 2009). Changing defensive behaviour involves changing those behaviours that are designed to protect against difficult feelings and anxieties (James et al, 2006). The core aim of a learning organisation as viewed by Argyris' (1978); Lipshitz (2002) and West-Burnham and Ireson (2005) is to promote extensive inquiry to allow individuals to develop a „personal mastery' (Senge, 2006).

Southworth (2000) describes the existing literature on how primary schools learn as not much more than an “anatomical sketch”. In Southworth's view (2002) schools that learn are underpinned by a philosophy that expresses the explicit intent to learn and by staff who take responsibility not only for their own learning but also for the professional leaning of other adults. Moreover, Southworth (2000) suggests that if schools wish to learn, the creation of knowledge needs to be carefully managed.

In the introduction of this thesis Ortenblad (2002) proposed a radical perspective of organisational learning where employees are emancipated and empowered. This view has been developed by Lipshitz (2002); West-Burnham and Ireson (2005) and Senge (2006) and seems to have been underpinned by the work of Argyris and Schon (1996). Ortenblad (2002) suggested that workers should no longer be socialised into an existing set of shared mental models, where there was no room for radical change. Instead, different opinions in any matter should be welcomed and even encouraged and defensive routines should be reduced so that a perpetual system of learning could be truly embraced. Research question two is designed to elicit how successful the case-study schools have been in embracing a model of perpetual learning by limiting defensive routines and increasing psychological safety.

ENCOURAGING PERPETUAL LEARNING IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL

PLCs and CPD

Although this research is focusing on professional learning as a perpetual activity in schools the work on PLCs and CPD is too prolific to be ignored. In recent years there has been intense activity and implementation efforts surrounding PLCs. Foundational work on PLCs by Hord (1997); Stoll et al (2003) and others highlighted how schools could achieve better results in student learning if the adults in the school were learning and working well together for students' benefits. As the results of this pioneering work proliferated, professional learning communities became a subject of energetic advocacy by high profile consultants, and a central feature of administrative policy in many nations (Stoll and Louis, 2007).

Finding a universal definition of a PLC in the literature is almost impossible. There seemed to be consensus however that PLCs are made up of groups of teachers sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive way (Mitchell and Sackney, 2000). Effective PLCs in all school phases suggests Stoll and Louis (2007) have a number of key characteristics: shared values and vision; collective responsibility for pupils' learning, collaboration focused on learning; individual and collective professional learning; reflective professional enquiry; openness, networks and partnerships; inclusive membership; and mutual trust, respect and support. This thesis, in the pursuit of a system of perpetual practitioner learning in schools, will inevitably touch on some of the fundamental characteristics of PLCs but it will not concern itself with learning beyond the school. As identified by Mitchell and Sackney (2000) a professional learning community extends well beyond the professional cadre, and this is beyond the scope of this thesis.

This thesis will however concern itself with the perpetual learning of teaching assistants. PLCs suggests Stoll and Louis (2007) have largely focused on the professional development of groups of teachers supported by leaders. This explanation obviously takes little account of teaching assistants professional learning, ignoring "critical resources that lie fallow in most schools" (Louis and Gordon, 2006, p.2).

Yet more recently, particularly since the introduction of the national workforce agreement, it has been acknowledged that support staff are employed to advance pupil progress and contribute to whole school effectiveness. Their development and involvement in a school's learning community is therefore essential (Bolam et al,

2005). In 2000 three Foundation degrees for teaching assistants were piloted in England, followed in 2004 after initial consultation in 2002, with the launch of the HLTA qualification by the Teacher Training Agency (Butt and Lance, 2008). Then the Government's focus turned to the improvement of training, qualifications and career progression opportunities. Yet even with this growing focus Milner (2008) suggests that teaching assistants remain an under-researched group.

Similarly there has been much attention focused on the CPD of teachers and senior leaders. Day et al (2004) draws together essays on professional development nationally and internationally. All of the research Day et al (2004) reviews describes the professional development of teachers as complex and multi-faceted. Much of the focus is on deepening teachers' knowledge and understanding to strengthen individual practice and build collective capacity for improvement through cultures of inquiry.

CPD has been referred to in the literature through a plethora of different terms including teacher development, in-service education and training (INSET), staff development, career development, continuing education and lifelong learning. Yet there exists some confusion in relation to the overlapping meanings and conflicting definitions (Bolam et al, 2004). This view is supported by Kelchtermans (2004) who suggests the term CPD is frequently used in very different contexts, referring to different practices and with more or less different meanings. These different meanings often reflect different theoretical approaches and assumptions.

However, broadly speaking, the function of CPD may be seen to be one of three imperatives suggests Day et al (2004): to align teachers' practice with educational

policies; to improve the learning outcomes of students by improving the performance of teachers; or to enhance the status and profile of the teaching profession.

Day et al (2004) says that CPD is a term used to describe all those activities designed to contribute to the learning and development of teachers in schools which in turn improves their work and the progress of their pupils. Yet this is perhaps an over-simplified definition of a varied range of activities that call for complex intellectual and emotional endeavour underpinned by the need to raise the standards of teaching, learning and achievement in a range of schools. Kelchtermans (2004) suggests that:

“Professional development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom” (p. 218)

PLCs and CPD are by their very nature, overarching terms to describe a complex set of activities that more often than not reach out beyond the boundaries of individual school settings. As research topics, both exceed the limits of this 50,000 word thesis. Instead, this research project focuses closely on identifying aspects of perpetual learning in three case-study primary schools and anticipates synthesising the findings into a system for perpetual learning that may support the case-study schools to increase their capacity for organisational learning in the future.

Why Should Everyone Learn Perpetually?

As Claxton (1999, p.6) points out “learning is not something we do sometimes in special places or at certain periods of our lives. It is part of our nature. We are born learners”. As such adults are constantly learning and therefore one of the challenges for school leaders is to capitalise on this intrinsic behaviour for the benefit of the individual and the organisation as a whole.

Southworth (2000) drawing together empirical evidence from several projects spanning a number of years concluded that persistent self-renewal, a necessity for school success in the 21st Century, has to be built on developing the capacity for staff to learn with and from one another generatively:

“Primary schools which have generated the capacity for work-based learning not only help us to see how schools learn, but also show what are some, probably many, of the conditions and characteristics of learning schools” (Southworth, 2002, p.282).

Nias et al (1992) identified the key ingredient for school development as teacher learning. Nias et al (1992) acknowledges the importance of a collaborative culture on whole school development but suggested that this alone would not be sufficient for a school to continually grow and develop. “For growth to take place at the level of either the individual or the school, teachers must also be constantly learning” (p.247).

Senge (2006) in the revised and updated Fifth Discipline said we can:

“...build learning organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together” (Senge, 2006. p. 3).

MacGilchrist et al (2004) suggests that there are many benefits for school based staff associated with continuous learning and successful collaborative professional development programmes. Cordingley et al (2003) agreed with this view suggesting that the benefits include: greater confidence; heightened belief in one’s own abilities; an increased enthusiasm for collaborative working including overcoming anxiety about being observed; and greater commitment to changing practice with increased willingness to try out new things.

Furthermore, MacGilchrist et al (2004) argued that teachers who participate in collaborative learning practices share a stronger belief in their power to make a difference at the end of the collaboration. Over half the studies into organisational learning researched by MacGilchrist et al (2004) specifically reported an increase in teachers' willingness to take risks, try new things or try things they had previously thought impossible. In many cases the initial anxiety about the learning process was overcome and positive outcomes emerged only after a period of relative anxiety.

Collaborative learning practices are not exclusive to teachers either. A significant outcome of the research by Butt and Lance (2008) was that continued professional development was necessary if teaching assistants were to successfully accept greater responsibility for pupil progress and achievement. Many teaching assistants requested more training and professional development especially as they were now being called upon to take on para-professional responsibilities in schools (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011).

The review of the studies by MacGilchrist et al (2004) suggests that collaborative learning practices enable teachers not only to extend their teaching and learning strategies but also meet the needs of students more successfully as well as build on their self-esteem, confidence and commitment to continuing learning and development. There is also evidence that adult learning can be linked with a positive impact upon student learning processes, motivation and outcomes (Cordingley et al, 2003, p.8).

A climate of professional learning brings together the knowledge, skills and dispositions of teachers and teaching assistants in a school to promote shared learning and improvement. The learning is a social process for turning information into knowledge. As Fullan (2001) suggests new ideas, the creation of knowledge through inquiry and the sharing of ideas are essential in order to solve problems and continue to learn in a rapidly changing society:

“Unlike regimes of competitive and corrosive individualism, which use data for inflicting embarrassment on underperforming teachers, professional communities use data to support and promote joint improvements among them” (Hargreaves, 2003, p.134).

Cordingley et al (2003); MacGilchrist et al (2004) and Butt and Lance (2008) paint a very clear picture of the benefits of learning for practitioners in schools. Now it is necessary to explore how in fact learning can be promoted perpetually and be central to an organisation’s vision.

Organisational Learning Models in Practice

Research questions three and four are concerned with identifying the organisational learning aids and barriers experienced by the respondents in the case-study schools.

Nias et al (1992, p.93) reported that teachers “appeared to make particularly productive use of four types of activity: talk, observation, practice and reflection”.

The work of Stoll et al (2002) outlined in Table 2 below identifies seven ways that teachers learn productively with reflection being drawn to the readers’ attention first as an inquiry minded approach to learning.

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Reflecting | reflecting on experience; an inquiry-minded approach; meta learning (i.e. learning about their own learning); making a link between own learning and pupils’ learning |
| Rehearsing | Practising and refining teaching skills |
| Reading | as an individual or group activity |

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| | |
| Writing | Keeping journals/logs of experiences in the classroom |
| Researching | Researching aspects of classroom and school practice |
| Relating | emphasising mutual sharing and assistance, e.g. team teaching, mentoring, collaborative action research, peer coaching, joint planning and mutual observation and feedback |
| Risking | trying out new ideas and taking risks |

Table 2. Productive Learning for Teachers (adapted from Stoll et al, 2002).

Cordingley et al (2003) suggested that there were six key features of successful collaborative professional learning: observation, feedback, external - agencies, professional dialogue, ownership of the learning; and peer support rather than leadership by supervision. MacGilchrist et al (2004) building on the work of Nias et al (1992) and Cordingley et al (2003) presents an argument for evaluation practice within organisations to be reconceptualised as „evaluative inquiry’ for organisational learning. Unlike Lipshitz et al (2002) who was writing from a psychological perspective and advocating the norms of transparency, integrity, issue orientation, inquiry and accountability MacGilchrist et al (2004) with a research background in education introduces evaluative inquiry.

The processes MacGilchrist et al (2004) identified as the core of evaluative inquiry were: asking questions; identifying and challenging values, beliefs and assumptions; reflection; dialogue; collecting, analysing and interpreting data; action-planning and implementation. These seven evaluative inquiry processes, not too far removed from Lipshitz et al (2002) five cultural norms, facilitate learning by helping individuals and teams develop new knowledge, insight, skills and appreciation. This, of course, is in

direct contrast to the views of Senge (1990; 2000) who advocates shaping workers attitudes and actions to fit organisational purposes.

Asking questions

Asking questions suggests MacGilchrist et al (2004) helps individuals and teams seek clarification and understand any misconceptions. Through questioning teams can identify and challenge values, beliefs and assumptions and reflect on this in light of the organisation. At an organisational level, identifying the assumptions under which the organisation operates creates opportunities to change old routines and structures. Asking questions is a fundamental characteristic of organisations that learn suggests MacGilchrist et al (2004). It is also one of the first tasks evaluators engage in when beginning an evaluation project. Yet, asking questions has not been highly valued in many organisations' cultures. Too often, asking questions has been seen as challenging authority, a means of evading someone else's question, or as a way to place blame, test someone, or make judgements. However when people in organisations stop asking questions they are no longer able to gain information, insight, clarity and direction. In short, they are unable to access learning at the deep or profound levels (MacGilchrist et al, 2004; Argyris 1978).

Ultimately, the kinds of questions that should be asked in organisations, suggests MacGilchrist et al (2004), are empirical questions that bring individuals closer to achieving the organisation's mission, goals and contributing to the supportive learning climate. As "inquiry practitioners" (Argyris and Schon, 1996) and "communities of enquirers" (Ryan, 1995), asking questions develops a spirit of curiosity which serves as a catalyst for learning. Evaluative inquiry requires that people carefully consider

their current level of knowledge and understanding about the problem or issue at hand and determine what other information is needed similar to issue orientation (Lipshitz, 2002). The consistent and ongoing questioning about the practices, processes and outcomes of the work stimulates continuous learning, a sense of connectedness and improved individual, team and organisational performance.

Reflection

Field (2011), in support of Stoll et al (2002) and MacGilchrist (2004), argues convincingly for reflective practice suggesting that without a process of reflection, the wider impact of professional learning is not fully achieved:

“The emulation of ideas and the use of materials developed without reflection do not empower the teacher, but can make them over-reliant on the use of the products of others’ learning. Reflection helps teachers to address planning and to assess the outcomes of teaching for themselves” (Field, 2011, p.171).

Reflection and reflective practice crosses academic disciplines and has been the subject of much research. The literature suggests that reflection is the close examination of thoughts and behaviours leading subsequently to a change in practice (Nehring et al, 2010). John Dewey wrote:

“... to reflect is to look back over what has been done so as to extract the next meanings which are the capital stock for intelligent dealings with further experiences. It is the heart of intellectual organisation and of the disciplined mind” (Dewey, 1938, p.87).

Dewey (1938) thought reflection was a process that is engaged in by individuals following some form of perplexity, confusion, or doubt. This view was supported almost a century later by Freed (2003) who explained reflection as “a rethinking of experience so that perspectives change and practice (action) is improved” (Freed, 2003, p.44).

Engaging in reflection creates the freedom for members of the organisation to consider the impact of theirs and others' behaviours with the hope of creating deeper understanding about an issue and each other. "Reflection is central to understanding and development (Stoll et al, 2003, p.88). Over the past 60 years, many writers have offered definitions of what it means to engage in reflection (for example, Brookfield, 1995, Dewey, 1933; Moon, 2005). Most agree that reflection is a process that encourages individuals to consider carefully the knowledge, beliefs, assumptions, actions and processes that influence their behaviour in order to understand themselves and their experiences.

When practitioners reflect on their beliefs and the actions that lead from these beliefs, they begin to understand how and why things happen the way they do in organisations. This can be very powerful when a team of people begin to reflect together. Reflection enables practitioners to interpret individual behaviour within a holistic framework – seeing how one member's behaviour affects other members. Engaging in critical reflection as a group accomplishes an even stronger community of practice (Moon, 2005).

Dialogue

Dialogue is the means by which a team of people shares ideas and experiences and it is this sharing of ideas that can potentially lead to new ways of thinking and behaving. When team members share the results of dialogue with others in the organisation they act as translators of learning between themselves and other organisation members. MacGilchrist et al (2004) argues that dialogue helps people inquire, share thoughts

and feelings, and to understand other peoples actions and behaviours. Through dialogue people learn about the organisation's climate, policies, practices, goals and achievements and in this way are able to challenge existing ideas and assumptions:

“Through the sharing of individuals' personal knowledge, dialogue has the potential to build capacities that dissolve resistance in times of organisational change (Brown, 1995, p.157).

Instead of seeing conflict as a barrier to learning, or as a failure to establish relationships, dialogue incorporating different viewpoints can be viewed as a method that pushes members to question existing premises – to reconceptualise their assumptions in order to create new meanings from their experiences. While maintaining and accepting differences in one another, team members may come to some understanding about each other's perceptions. This appreciation also contributes to the building of professional learning suggests MacGilchrist et al (2004).

Analyse, Action Plan and Implement

When teams collect, analyse and interpret data they engage in a collective inquiry process that produces information on important organisational issues and concerns. This sees teams of people working together to identify issues, trends or dilemmas that requires them to draw up a plan of action to address the identified theme. Action-planning involves taking what has been learned by members of the school and developing a plan for what should be done. Once the plan has been conceptualised it then has to be implemented. Implementation exemplifies the need to act on members' learning, to test out new methods, processes, procedures, products and services (MacGilchrist et al, 2004). As groups or teams work together on a project or seek to accomplish some goal, they often discover that they do not have all of the information they need in order to proceed. The collection, analysis and interpretation of data

should be viewed as ongoing processes that respond to the information needs of organisation members. The key task at this point is to clearly link the information needs to the questions and the kind of data that will best inform potential users of the information.

Evaluative Inquiry

An organisation can start with any one of the inquiry processes and employ any of the others as appropriate. It is the interaction among these processes that creates deep/double-loop learning (Argyris and Schon, 1978, 1996; West-Burnham and Ireson, 2005).

While the term evaluation is not used by authors on organisational learning, there is sufficient evidence to suggest, argues MacGilchrist et al (2004), that evaluation could play a powerful role when fully integrated into an organisation's climate. Lipshitz et al (2002) would seem to concur. Evaluation is described as "a process of systematic inquiry to provide information about some object – a programme, project, process, organisation, or product" (Torres et al, 1996, p.1), that concerns judgements about the merit, worth or value of something. Therefore evaluative inquiry can be seen as a process for learning in organisations where the evaluative inquiry processes sustains and institutionalises learning in organisations (MacGilchrist et al, 2004).

Summary

In the last decade there has emerged a real interest in the development and promotion of PLCs (Stoll and Louis, 2007; Hord, 1997) and increased attention on the role and impact of CPD (Bolam et al, 2004; Kelchtermans, 2004). It was felt that for the

purpose of this thesis these research topics were too broad; before a school can develop as a PLC or have truly effective systems in place for CPD it may be necessary for them to ensure they have the internal capacity for organisational learning through a perpetual learning system for all staff.

According to the literature, the benefits of continuous engagement in the learning process for school-based staff include: greater confidence and an increased enthusiasm for collaborative working and risk taking. Southworth (2000) and Nias et al (1992) identify that one of the central elements of school effectiveness is developing the capacity for perpetual learning.

MacGilchrist et al (2004) acknowledges that in order for senior leaders to promote learning there is the need to develop a very real management tool to actively promote and regulate the learning of organisational members. MacGilchrist et al (2004) incorporating many of the suggestions made by Stoll et al (2002); Lipshitz et al (2002) and Cordingley et al (2003) suggests an „evaluative inquiry’ model for organisational learning that requires members of the school to reflect, interrogate and share experiences to improve and transform organisational life. Effective school-based professional learning in the form of evaluative inquiry gives head teachers, teachers and teaching assistants opportunities to ask questions, identify and challenge values, beliefs and assumptions, reflect, engage in dialogue, collect, analyse and interpret data, plan actions and implement work plans (MacGilchrist et al, 2004).

Organisational learning in its most radical form, suggested Ortenblad (2002) and Southworth (2000), sees employees decide what it is they want to learn in a climate

where differences of opinion are valued and errors are tolerated and everyone is treated equally. Those who embrace perpetual, evaluative learning practices will surely have a more complex view of themselves as learners and greater control of their learning. They will be able to set goals, evaluate what they are doing and monitor their learning within the organisation thereby potentially developing their „personal mastery’ (Senge, 2006).

POWER AND ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING

What is Power?

In organisational settings power is an inherent aspect of human interactions and „circulates’ among groups of people (Foucault, 1970). Power is therefore an important issue for exploration for any phenomenological, interpretive research. Power however is stubbornly difficult to define as it “evades a simple conceptual understanding and determination because its significance is dependent on far-reaching preconceptions” (Ricken, 2006, p.542). Weber writing in 1947 stated that power is the ability of an individual to “carry out his own will despite resistance” (p.152). Manz and Gioia (1983) define power as “the ability or potential to influence others” (p.461). An alternative view propounded by Emerson (1962) is that power is a matter of dependence, with one person in possession of the power because they have something that another person wants.

Power suggests a compliant relationship and differs according to the means employed to exert it. These means suggests Etzioni (1975) may be physical, material, or symbolic. French and Raven (1959) classified power into five forms: „coercive’ the

power to force someone to do something against their will; „reward’ the power to give people something they want; „legitimate’ the power invested in a particular role; „referent’ the power that comes from someone admiring someone else and wishing to be like them and finally, „expert’ the power that springs from an individual having some knowledge or skill which others want.

Etzioni’s (1975) typology of power is separated into three forms „coercive’, „remunerative’ and „normative’. Coercive power rests on the application or the threat of application of physical sanctions, restriction of movement or control through force. Remunerative power issues rewards through salaries and services and controls material resources. While the first two of these are founded on the use of threat and the control of resources, the third, normative, is based on an attempt being made to control the underlying experiences, thoughts and feelings that guide actions with symbolic rewards and manipulation of image and esteem.

Etzioni (1975) categorises different forms of involvement from those whom power is held: alienative, calculative and moral, these referring respectively to unwilling involvement, involvement for gain and voluntary involvement motivated by some sense of the activity’s inherent value. How the different forms of power interact with the different types of involvement determines the compliance relationship as identified in Table 3 below.

| KINDS OF POWER | KINDS OF INVOLVEMENT | | |
|----------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| | Alienative | Calculative | Moral |
| Coercive | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Remunerative | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Normative | 7 | 8 | 9 |

Table3. A Typology of Compliance Relations (taken from Etzioni, 1975, p.12).

As outlined by Etzioni (1975) in Table 3, some power relationships are more likely to occur than others because of they are congruent. The three diagonal cases, 1, 5, 9, occur more frequently than the other 6 types and this is potentially important for school leaders. There are profound differences between a compliant relationship that is coercive and alienative and one that is normative and moral. The former is, in many respects, more ‚essential’ than the latter in that, within it, power is based in the physical world and, as Foucault (1970) would have recognised, operates in some way on the body of the inferior party – the alienative participant does not desire involvement, but is forced into it because if he or she does not then some basic need will not be met. The normative/moral compliance relationship, by contrast operates on a more conceptual level; it works because the inferior party is prepared to invest in it, the power holder having no method of ensuring compliance beyond whatever effect can be produced by his or her personal qualities.

On the whole, power that resides at the coercive end of the spectrum operates on what has been called the ‚essential’ level, whereas most other forms are more ‚conceptual’ in that they call for participation and commitment from followers to be effective. It

can be said that, the more complex an organisation becomes, the more conceptual it is forced to be as power is dispersed through different varieties of authority.

Power in the context of Organisational Learning

Ferdinand (2004) acknowledges that the notion of power has had significant attention in the research literature but this has not necessarily been the case in the field of organisational learning:

“One would perhaps expect the study of attempts to manage learning to involve careful consideration, and clear articulation, of the issues of power and political activity. This unfortunately is not the case in the existing organisational learning literature” (Ferdinand, 2004, p.435).

Fielding (1997) examined the ideas of Senge (1990) and while valuing the contributions made to the field suggested that power had not been fully explored.

James et al (2006) writing more recently, points to the fact that the micro politics of schools has been discussed by researchers in Educational Administration, Leadership and Management but has arguably not received as much consideration as one might expect given its prevalence and the nature of work in schools. The psychodynamic micro political perspective suggests that organisational politics arise primarily as a result of unconscious fears. These fears are often about identity and worth and can lead to high levels of anxiety. It is emotions suggests James et al (2006) that create the disparity between espoused and in-use theories that can have significant organisational implications.

Organisations must work hard if they are to be successful in the 21st Century. This hard work includes embracing organisational power for the good of the organisation.

Bottery (1992) explains that school managers have different forms of power at their

disposal and it is the use of this power that conceptualises relationships in a manipulative, means-to-end manner. Practitioners, he explains, are not valued for themselves, but are being used, through the variation of power available, to achieve school goals. There is not within this kind of relationship the degree of trust, the meeting of minds in equality, which should be central to an ethical and educational institution.

Bottery (1992), writing about leadership and power in schools, said that consideration ought to be given to the distribution of power. A literature which uncritically spends its time suggesting types of power resources to be used by leaders in schools is not being ideologically neutral, but is taking up an ideological position of accepting that leaders govern and control their schools. Educationally, this is derived, at least in part, from the largely hierarchical, class-based and bureaucratic inheritance of most schools suggests Bottery (1992). Such functional and power-based perspectives are clearly very different conceptions of leadership from one which sees it as distributing power so that all members of the school community are empowered.

School leaders suggests Southworth (2002) know that their work involves balancing tensions, solving dilemmas and making difficult decisions (Southworth, 1995; MacBeath and Myers 1999; Day et al 2000). One of these dilemmas is how best to capitalise and exercise power. Research shows primary head teachers to be “powerful, controlling and pivotal players in their schools” (Southworth, 1998). Lowe and Pugh, (2007), writing about teaching assistants perceptions of power supports this view as head teachers were perceived to have considerable power over teaching assistants. To increase capacity for organisational learning through a

perpetual learning system Ortenblad (2002); Southworth (2002); Lipshitz et al (2002); MacGilchrist et al (2004) and James et al (2006) make a persuasive argument for empowerment.

Empowerment

The concepts of teacher empowerment and organisational learning are not new, but are related according to McCharen et al (2011) to an historical effort to create more participatory workplaces. Empowerment suggests Watkins and Marsick (1993) generally means “to give power to” (p.196). To disempower is indisputably to take power from another. Empowerment is a term, for employee involvement, which is often hailed but far more difficult to practice. At the individual level, empowerment involves feeling valued and supported enough to be able to contribute ideas, make decisions and support others generatively. It is often measured in an individual’s sense of self-worth and an ability to make a difference (Watkins and Marsick, 1993).

In organisations empowerment is created through interaction (Watkins and Marsick, 1993). People feel empowered when they take confident actions to remedy seemingly intolerable or insoluble situations and when they are given responsibility and/or recognition in relationships characterised by mutual respect, a spirit of collaboration and inquiry and honesty, in a climate of safety and trust. They feel disempowered when they lack the authority, energy, or confidence to act, and when they feel belittled or put down in some way by a significant other (Watkins and Marsick, 1993). Yet empowerment is not an inherent, unchangeable personality trait. People can feel empowered and disempowered at the same time.

Organisations can create conditions that enhance or inhibit empowerment (Watkins and Marsick, 1993) and there are many reasons why empowerment is so difficult to make happen, but most of them stem from the conflicting values and beliefs that people, organisations, and societies hold about giving away power. When one person gains power, others have to give it up and in that way empowered workers and managers alter the fundamental dynamic of their relationship.

At micro levels, it is inevitable that schools as organisations will employ groups and individuals with different interests, strengths and abilities. This inevitably leads to conflict. Leaders therefore have to be skilled at the use of political methods, such as mediation and negotiation to move schools towards agreed-upon goals (Stoll et al, 2003). Empowerment requires concerted action at many levels of an organisation to change deep structures and cultures that prompt people to act as they do and reward them for their success:

“Companies, then, help people become empowered by giving them opportunities to take control of the situation, encouraging a habit of learning and development, helping them set and achieve goals, providing resources, and rewarding achievements. The organisation as a whole becomes empowered when the manager’s role changes to one of support rather than control...” (Watkins and Marsick, 1993, p.214-215).

Empowerment, according to Watkins and Marsick (1993) is the cornerstone of the learning organisation. Flattening the hierarchy alone will not bring about empowerment, although it is an essential ingredient. Authority will have to be decentralised along with responsibility, and a climate developed that supports decision-making at the level closest to where the work is done. Like other cultural changes, this one requires organisation-wide changes in values and relationships.

In the study of thirty teaching assistants (primary and secondary) by Lowe and Pugh (2007) the teaching assistants had a working conception of power as property (Pfeffer, 1992) embedded in the structure of the school and therefore closely associated with the head teacher. The majority identified that they had at least some elements of power within their organisation although they perceived that this power was limited. Lack of qualifications and learning was provided as the reason for the personal lack of power and the perception was that power would increase as qualifications increased; expert power (French and Raven, 1958), reinforcing the need for organisational learning mechanisms in schools to increase capacity for perpetual learning for all staff. Yet, to truly empower, it is necessary to revisit the conditions for learning as prescribed by the school climate.

Climate and Control

Climate, a term used interchangeable with culture in this thesis, is viewed as the shared rules governing cognitive and affective aspects of membership in an organisation. Climate, suggests James (2006), reflects workers' perceptions of and emotional responses to characteristics of their work environment and this can often be measured in levels of morale. James et al (2006) recognising that professional values will be an important dimension in the creation of organisational culture argue that there are three important influences; the leadership; the history and traditions; the wider community context.

According to James et al (2006), rather than creating a uniformed corporate culture, because organisations employ many different people they are likely to contain many different and competing value systems. This means that different teams or phases

within a school may create their own culture and guide their activities with reference to a common and integrated set of norms and priorities; these norms and priorities however may be different from the norms and priorities of another group of individuals within school.

Debate continues into whether climate is prescribed or assumed. The prescriptive view, argued Kunda (1992), focuses on the explicit and active design and management of organisational climate. The research carried out by Nias et al (1989) found that heads expected to set the school's guiding beliefs and saw it as their job to provide a sense of mission. Moreover, so strong was the association between the head and the school's beliefs, that it was possible to portray the heads as owners of the school, setting and maintaining its culture. This is consistent with Schein's work on organisational culture and leadership (1985).

In the view of Nias et al (1989) although recognising that school leadership was complex, dynamic and not confined to heads, the heads were the significant figures; all the other leaders were dependent upon them. They provided their schools with a mission based upon their educational beliefs which, in turn, helped to develop or sustain the schools' culture:

“Since the heads' responsibility for founding new cultures involves persuading others to accept fresh beliefs and values and because beliefs are the deepest and most difficult part of a person to change, it follows that the heads' work in this respect is an intensely difficult activity” (Nias, 1989, p.257).

As identified by Southworth (2002) and Lipshitz et al (2002), when school leaders establish a collaborative learning culture, they create openness, trust and security where teachers feel confident to become learners. The ideal employees are those who

have internalised the organisation's goals and values into their cognitive and affective make-up. This means that they do not need to be externally controlled or managed. Instead, they work hard because they are self-directing, enjoy what they are doing and have the ability to work from their own initiative ensuring the organisation succeeds as well as promoting their own personal interests in growth and maturity (Kunda, 1992).

Thus, in the view of proponents of strong cultures, work is not just a means of living but instead has a deep personal significance for the employee which ensures that they behave in not only their own best interests but in the company's too. The company in this view suggests Kunda (1992) harnesses the efforts and initiative of its employees in the service of high-quality collective performance and at the same time provides them with certain rewards: a compassionate and supportive work environment that offers the opportunity for individual growth.

However, there is a dilemma. Inevitably in any organisation there is likely to be a conflict between the needs and demands of the organisation and the time it takes to fulfil these with the needs and ambitions of the employees. With a diverse group of employees it is very unlikely that an organisation will make what is perceived as the right level of demand on all employees (Kunda, 1992). When organisational conflicts arise these are usually as a result of deep underlying beliefs, these conflicts can only therefore be addressed by changing the underlying beliefs. But psychologists all seem to agree that fundamental beliefs such as powerlessness or unworthiness cannot be changed easily. For most individuals, argues Senge (2006) they are developed early in life:

...beliefs change gradually as we accumulate new experiences – as we develop our personal mastery. But if mastery will not develop so long as we hold unempowering beliefs, and the beliefs will change only as we experience our mastery, how may we begin to alter the deeper structures of our lives” (Senge, 2006, p.148).

Thus managers need to ensure that members behave in ways compatible with organisational goals. Bureaucratic work organisations, suggested Etzioni (1961), are concerned with eliciting compliance from workers and had therefore traditionally employed utilitarian forms of control. However he suggests that there has been a shift towards normative control where an attempt is made to elicit and direct the required efforts of members by controlling the underlying experiences, thoughts and feelings that guide their actions.

Normative control usually sees organisational members acting in the best interests of the organisation. This is usually because they have a strong internal commitment to their work and share in the vision and goals they are all working to achieve.

Normative control therefore has little to do with physical coercion or economic rewards and sanctions. It could be argued that in a school setting, when the success or failure of a child’s education is the measured output normative forms of control are inevitable:

“Normative control is conceptualised as an appeal to the potential existing in people. To the extent that they are shaped, that shaping is framed as a process of education, personal development, growth, and maturity – in fact, a development of a better, healthier self, saved from the threat of anomie and alienation and the pathology of conflict” (Kunda, 1992, p.14).

If supporters of normative control however promise a self regained, critics warn of a soul lost (Whyte 1956, Edwards 1979) where managers are tempted into the practice of tyranny more subtly and more pervasively than ever before. Edwards (1979)

argues that normative control tends to be totalitarian in the sense that it involves the total behaviour of the worker. MacBeath (2008) warns that a learning culture can easily become a consensual one where uniformity of practice and expectation within the social setting means that individual growth and development is actually limited rather than enhanced.

Therefore, the recent popularity of the idea of strong corporate culture in schools may be seen as an alternative attempt to control. The essence of the ideology of strong cultures is a restatement and a reaffirmation of the doctrine of normative control. In order to ensure continuous school improvement shaping the employees' selves in the corporate image is thought not only necessary but essential. Normative control can be seen therefore as a form of tyranny or alternatively as a movement of liberation (Kunda, 1992).

Politics and Organisational Learning

“Politics is about power and influence, and to ignore political issues or consider that political activity is unworthy of a leader is to leave the school... vulnerable to competing social forces” (Stoll et al, 2003, p.107).

The idea of organisational learning as a political process is touched upon by authors of the ‚technical school‘, but from the perspective that this is a persistent problem which needs to be overcome if learning is to take place. Argyris (1986) and Senge (1990) have regarded organisational politics as one of the main barriers to the development of organisational learning and hence focus on ways of reducing the incidence and impact of political behaviour. It is assumed that where a climate of openness exists and political behaviours are limited ‚good‘ learning can take place (Argyris, 1986; Senge, 1990):

“The more formal power is exerted, the greater the level of micro-political interaction which is likely to result. The greater the level of micro-political interaction that results, the more likely it is that formal power will be undermined. Then formal power is exerted again, feeding a cycle of negative conflict” (Senge, 2006, p.117).

Senge (2006) goes on to explain that if the political dynamic is negative and is allowed to fester, then what emerges might be less than the sum of its parts. This must be so because learning is constricted and time is wasted. As such, sensitivity to political forces is crucial.

Thus Argyris (1986) and James (2006) demonstrate how organisational defensive routines that reduce learning capacity arise because people need to protect themselves from political threat. Argyris (1986) suggests that defensive routines that start at an individual level can quite frequently grown into organisational processes that disguise what is actually going on within an organisation and frustrate continued improvement. Senge (1990) supports this view and develops it further in relation to team-learning by showing that group processes can be frustrated by the need of one individual to protect themselves from getting negative feedback on the validity of their ideas. “The more effective defensive routines are, the more effectively they cover up underlying problems, the less effectively these problems are faced, and the worse the problems tend to become” (Senge, 1990, p.254).

Although it is widely accepted that defensive routines are problematic, some of the literature is critical of Argyris’ (1986) tendency to see politics as a barrier to the learning process. Chiva and Alegre (2005) argue that politics and power characterise the social process and as such need to be positively harnessed. Individuals and groups

socially construct knowledge, which will inevitably have different interpretations that will be supported by some and rejected by others (Coopey, 1994).

From the social perspective, the goal of eliminating organisational politics is seen as naïve and idealistic – because politics are a natural feature of any social process (Coopey, 1994, 1996). As this thesis accepts that knowledge is socially constructed by individuals and groups, it also has to accept that some interpretations will suit the interests of some and harm the interests of others. In many cases the „spin’ given to the interpretation of information will be unconsciously produced according to the experiences and settings of individuals who wish to show themselves in a positive light to others. But increasingly within organisations the interpretive process is directly mediated by power relations. Phases, year groups and working parties will organise consciously to present information internally and externally in a way that suits their purposes:

“What is needed, therefore, are conceptions of organisational learning, which embrace political processes within them” (Easterby-Smith et al, 2006, p.6).

So, it is necessary to look for theories of organisational learning which take the political nature of information and knowledge as a starting point. A good example of this is Coopey (1995), who adopted a critical perspective on the learning organisation, and worked with managers to help them better understand and make good use of these political processes (Coopey, 1998). The aim therefore is to incorporate politics and power into organisational learning, rather than to eradicate it.

This work is in direct contrast to Senge (1990) and could be considered as an attempt to address what Coopey (1998) describes as a „democratic deficit’ in organisations, a

situation where the learning of teachers and teaching assistants is largely determined by the ruling court of senior leaders or the head teacher. This is referred to by Senge (2006) as knowledge-power. This, he suggests, is witnessed when people in positions of power determine what is considered to be valid knowledge and consequently valid action. Attempts to establish approaches to organisational learning that include all organisational members in an activity of perpetual learning need to, at the very least, acknowledge the role of power and politics.

Summary

If we accept that power manifests itself in social interactions and that power is the ability or potential to influence others we must also accept that power will inevitably affect professional learning in the primary school context. Considering Etzioni's (1975) typology of power aligned with schools as learning organisations it is possible to see that normative power that engulfs employees in the organisations vision, core purpose and goals is likely to be the prevailing form of power. Similarly it is possible to see that moral involvement that is motivated by a sense of inherent value is likely to be the over-riding type of involvement suggesting a highly compliant relationship. Yet further research into power and organisational learning is needed as identified by Ferdinand (2004) if organisational learning is to truly embrace the effects of power.

Research carried out by Spillane et al (2009) suggested that the designated school leaders in their study had more access to formal learning opportunities than other members of staff. This they suggested warranted further study with particular emphasis on the learning opportunities for "those school staff members without a formally designated leadership position but who have the potential to influence their

colleagues with respect to the core work of schooling” (Spillane et al, 2009, p.426).

Lowe and Pugh (2007) support this view suggesting that further research needs to explore how an individual’s position in the organisation influences their perception of power.

It is widely accepted that to empower means „to give power to’ so that an individual has a sense of control over their ontology, cognition, and motivation. In organisations, empowerment is created through interaction but requires concerted action at many levels towards this end. According to Watkins and Marsick (1993) by encouraging a habit of learning schools are empowering their employees. With authority and responsibility a culture is developed that supports decision making and reflective learning. Like other climatic changes however, this one requires organisation wide changes in values and relationships. “Taking a stand for the full development of your people is a radical departure from the traditional contract between employee and institution. In some ways, it is the most radical departure from traditional business practices in the learning organisation” (Senge, 2006, p.135).

Yet head teachers have been described as powerful leaders (Southworth, 1998; Lowe and Pugh, 2007) who often decide on and set the climate of an organisation.

Normative control, although not coercive or remunerative, is also a form of asserted power that ensures that members act in the best interest of the school (Kunda, 1992; Senge, 1996). In this model practitioners are driven by internal commitment, strong identification with organisational goals and intrinsic satisfaction from work.

Therefore, a sense of strong corporate culture can also mean an alternative attempt to

control. The essence of the ideology of strong cultures is a restatement and a reaffirmation of the doctrine of normative control (Kunda, 1992).

The review of the current literature suggests that while it is possible to argue that deep/double-loop professional learning in schools is what is needed (West-Burnham and Ireson, 2005), in contrast to Ortenblad's (2002) and Southworth's (2002) views perpetual learning that really emancipates employees to set their own agenda for learning may be more challenging, particularly within a school system where the vision for school improvement is clearly established by the head teacher.

From a subjectivist ontological position power and politics cannot be abstracted from the process of social interaction. Perpetual learning in an organisational setting is fundamentally a process of interaction and therefore will be characterised by power struggles and political processes. The climate, although striving to empower employees to make their own choices and have ownership of their own learning will inevitably issue some form of normative control so that true emancipation for the organisational structures is perhaps unrealistic.

Thus power and politics will play a key role in organisational learning as will the culture of the organisation and the mechanisms in place to control it.

Acknowledgement of this is certainly important and will be further explored by research question three that will elicit how organisational learning can be further improved in the case-study schools.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented a review of the growing management and school-based literature on organisational learning and has been developed through four broad themes: what is organisational learning; the conditions for learning; encouraging perpetual learning; and power and organisational learning. The introduction of this thesis explained that this research has drawn on the work of Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Ortenblad (2002) and is assuming that there are two dimensions and four paradigms of organisational learning. With a subjectivist, interpretive epistemology, it outlined that the research will be analysing organisational learning as a social process.

In the sections that have been subsequently developed, this chapter revealed a number of models and approaches to organisational learning, including, sometimes contradictory, aids and barriers to successful learning. Consensus, however, seemed to rest in the fact that the literature agrees that organisation learning is a key facet of organisational effectiveness and improvement and goes as far as to suggest that those who embrace a model of organisational learning have a greater chance of success and are better placed to adapt to the ever present changes of the 21st Century (Argyris and Schon, 1996; Lipshitz et al, 2002; Stoll and Bolam, 2005; West-Burnham and Ireson 2005; Senge, 2006). As identified by Southworth (2004) if schools are to be successful in the 21st Century and meet the very many challenges they face they need to develop self-renewing systems. This means that they will need to embrace a system of perpetual learning where pedagogical knowledge is explored, created and disseminated. This means that as well as encouraging learning they need to ensure this is embraced generatively so that teachers and teaching assistants consciously and

collaboratively develop deeper understandings with and for each other so that they become and more highly accomplished.

The diversity of the literature has demonstrated that organisational learning is not a single process performed by an entire organisation in a uniform fashion. Rather, it is a collection of practices and processes facilitated by a wide variety of organisational learning models, in which different organisational units participate in different ways and at different levels of intensity (Argyris and Schon, 1978, 1996; MacGilchrist et al, 2004; West-Burnham and Ireson 2005; Senge; 2006; Bubb et al, 2009). At the primary school level there are debates about appropriate ways of implementing learning processes. Some of the writing has stressed the importance of shallow, deep and profound learning; other writing has emphasised the development of an individual's and groups capability for questioning, experimenting, adapting, and innovating on the organisation's behalf. Characteristically, much of this literature emphasises the mutually reinforcing benefits of this approach both for the individual and for the organisation or school as a whole.

The debate between instrumentalists and radicals reflects different styles with regard to power, the former suggesting a more coercive approach and the latter allowing more time for negotiation and dialogue. This, in turn, touches on the ethics of organisational learning; Senge (1996) and Easterby-Smith et al (1998) suggest that organisations are using the rhetoric of the learning organisation to obtain compliance and commitment from employees, rather than representing a genuine attempt to establish mutual partnership in collective action learning.

A more genuine approach to organisational learning it seems requires a fundamental mind shift. This type of learning will lead to a stage of ‚transformation’ where learning focuses on developing personal meaning and mastery (West-Burnham and Ireson 2005; Senge 2006), where school management structures flatten and head teachers and senior leaders become more like coaches. In this way everyone works together for personal and organisational benefits.

A search of the literature to date suggests that although there has been much work in the field of organisational learning further research would be welcomed in two existing areas of study. The first area concerns teaching assistants and their opportunities to learn in schools. As identified by Stoll et al writing in 2003:

“For us, the way forward for schools... is to focus hearts, minds and time on learning at all levels... In particular, the agenda should be about all of the adults connected with schools working and learning together to support and enhance pupil learning” (Stoll et al, 2003, p.161).

As yet, it is difficult to ascertain, from the existing literature, how much progress primary schools have made on their journey to include everyone in a system of learning. PLCs suggests Stoll and Louis (2007) have largely been interpreted as referring to groups of teachers and much of the existing literature makes little reference to teaching assistants opportunities to learn (Louis and Gordon, 2006, p.2).

A similar picture emerges from a search of the CPD literature with researches such as Day et al (2004) and MacGilchrist (2005) referring, in the main, to professional learning opportunities for teachers and leaders in schools.

The second area that would benefit from additional study is the influence of power on the professional learning process in schools. Although it is true that the dimensions of

power have received attention (Bottery, 1992; Easterby-Smith et al, 1998; Argyris and Schon, 1996; Senge, 2006; James, 2009), it is still not clear how the effects of power impact on organisational learning in primary school settings. Because the work of teachers is highly emotional, unconscious forces that have “colossal and unmanageable power and are impossible to predict” (James, 2009, p.45) can quite literally impede the learning process. This is also true, it is fair to assume, for head teachers and teaching assistants and therefore can be a significant barrier in the attempt to enhance organisational learning capacity.

In light of the literature this phenomenological research project sets out to investigate organisational learning as a professional, perpetual activity in primary schools as experienced by three groups of respondents in three case-study schools. It is possible that lessons learned from this research project may help schools to enhance their capacity for organisational learning. The next chapter, Chapter 3, will explain in detail the research strategy, design and methods. It will also outline aspects of the research management.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

This chapter will explain, justify and critically evaluate the research design. It will locate the researcher within the research, making clear the ontological and epistemological position from which the research is conducted. It will then justify the research practices against wider frameworks before presenting the research strategy and research methods. The research design and management will be justified and the limitation of the study will be presented for consideration.

Although this multiple case-study is directed by three specific research questions it broadly aims to explore how perpetual professional learning for three groups of staff (head teachers, teachers and teaching assistants) takes place in the case-study schools. It seeks to explore: how people access learning opportunities; what successful learning is in practice; how people learn best; how the organisation and its climate supports or discourages learning; who encourages and promotes learning for staff; the differences and similarities between different groups of employees within and across schools.

The research questions in this thesis will be addressed in four ways:

- a review of the organisational learning literature
- a small-scale case-study to include
 - three primary school head teachers working for Birmingham Local Authority

- Nine primary school teachers based in the head teacher's schools
- Nine primary school teaching assistants working in the same three schools.

Each of these four areas of study will address one or more of the research questions described in Chapter 1 and displayed in Table 4 below.

| RESEARCH QUESTIONS | Literature Review | Head Teacher Interviews | Class Teacher Interviews | TA Interviews |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. what experiences do the participants have of organisational learning? | | √ | √ | √ |
| 2. In the participants' experience, what are the key organisational characteristics that enhance or inhibit organisational learning? | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 3. From the participants' experience, how can organisational learning be improved in the future | √ | √ | √ | √ |

Table 4. Research Questions

It is important to note that question 1 will be answered mainly by the empirical research into organisational learning in the three sample primary schools. However, the findings will be triangulated, to “enhance the validity of the data” (Denscombe, 2003, p.133), by comparing the responses from the three different groups of respondents. In comparing the findings from the interviews the head teacher responses will be reported on first followed by the teachers and then the teaching assistants.

Wider Frameworks

This research will be contextualised by the wider frameworks of Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Habermas (1971). Having explored the work of Burrell and Morgan (1979), this research is epistemologically subjectivist recognising that all knowledge gained is as a result of social construction.

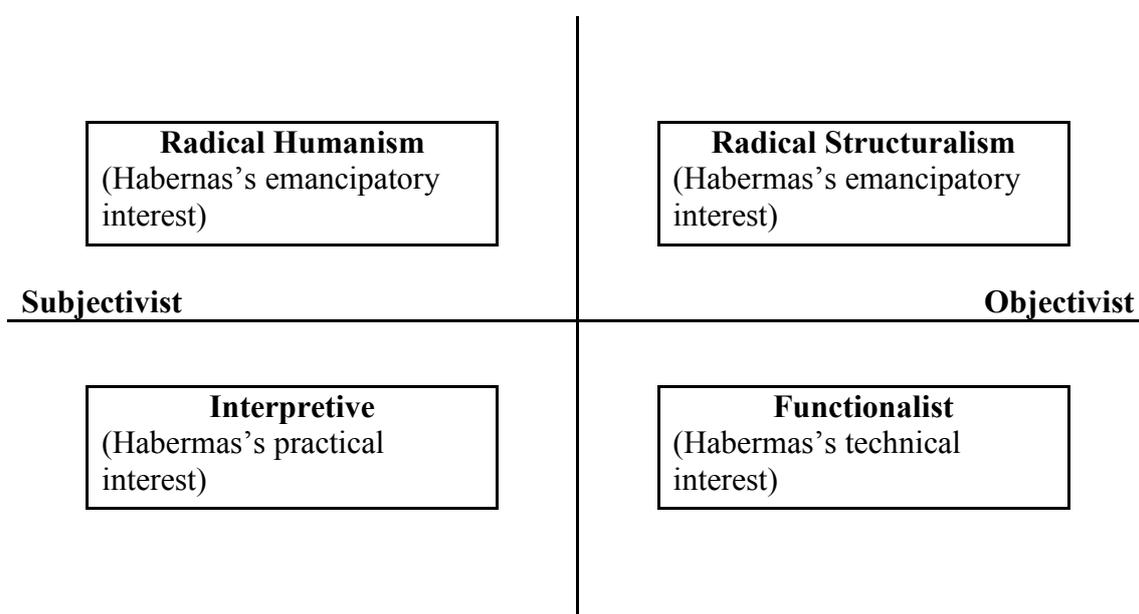


Figure 1. Sociological Paradigms (adapted from Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p.22)

Using the overview in Figure 1 where there are clearly two dimensions set within four paradigms, this research into enhancing an organisations capacity for perpetual learning is firmly rooted in the interpretive paradigm, with its aim being to develop and promote understanding. When compared to the work of Habermas (1971) this thesis is located in the second typology in Table 5 below; that is the practical interest as it will draw on peoples' experiences of organisational learning and the relationships that support and encourage learning as a perpetual system. Hartley (2007) in interpreting Habermas (1971) reinforces this view and explains how a researcher with

a practical interest focuses on understanding and thus favours an interpretive mode of inquiry.

Although firmly rejecting the third typology which Habermas (1971) calls „emancipatory interest’ that is concerned with subsequent action that changes structures of power (Hartley, 2007), this research will attempt to uncover ways in which practitioners are empowered to learn and have ownership of their learning experiences but from a practical perspective.

| Typology | Practical Application |
|---|--|
| Technical Interest (Positivism) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on tasks. • The knowledge sought is instrumental and concerned with the analysis of and solutions to problems. • Mode of inquiry draws from the natural sciences |
| Practical Interest (Interpretivism) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on people and relationships • The knowledge sought is based on the understanding of social relationships and why people act or behave as they do • Mode of inquiry is usually interpretive |
| Emancipatory Interest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on people (often injustice) • The knowledge sought is critical reflection leading to action to remedy injustice and promote emancipation • Mode of inquiry is critical theory |

Table5. Typology of Research, adapted from Habermas, (1971) and Hartley (2007).

Philosophical Approach

The aim of this research is to identify the ways in which the case-study schools are increasing their capacity for organisational learning by embracing learning as a perpetual activity. A synthesis of the findings may potentially lead to the development of a perpetual learning system that might prove useful to the case-study schools and schools in similar contexts. In order to do this, however, the research is

concerned with investigating and interpreting social situations and relationships in a mainly qualitative manner.

Dosi et al (2003) argued that research located in the social sciences is very complex and therefore is much more difficult to extricate than research carried out in different domains of analysis. Research in the social sciences often leads to multiple, coexisting levels of interactions among organisational members and because of this is more difficult to interpret than quantitative survey data for example:

“Social organisations – in their impressive variety over history, across societies and across domains of human activities - generally display also very diverse forms of division of operational and „cognitive’ labour, and, at the same time, equally diverse hierarchical arrangements, distributions of power and mechanisms of elicitation of efforts by individual agents” (Dosi et al, 2003, p.413).

Therefore understanding the social processes in the organisations being researched is one of the fundamental tasks of the social scientist. Easterby-Smith et al (2004) suggest that organisational learning researchers continue to be confronted by the challenge of how to best capture a fluid phenomenon such as learning.

Easterby-Smith et al (1998), and others have claimed a shortage of empirical work in the field of organisational learning (Fiol and Lyles, 1985; Huber, 1991; Miner and Mezias, 1996). More recently the work of Bolam (2004); MacGilchrist et al (2004); West-Burnham and Ireson (2005); Lowe and Pugh (2007) and Stoll et al (2003, 2005, 2007) has added much value to the organisational learning debate in schools and a range of approaches has been adopted. Some of the approaches used have been summarised by Easterby-Smith et al (2006) and are illustrated in Table 6 below.

| | |
|--|--|
| Role of Researcher | |
| (A1) Studies where the researcher is also a major player in the processes being examined (Dixon, 1994) | (A2) Studies where the researcher is detached and distant from the processes being investigated (Blacker, 1993) |
| Methodological Approach | |
| (B1) Survey-based comparisons across numbers of organisations (Antonacopoulou, 2004) | (B2) In depth cases of one, or a small number of organisations (Dixon 1994, Finger and Burgin 1996, Ayas, 1997) |
| Unit of Analysis | |
| (C1) Macro studies which look at total organisations, especially the strategic apex (Finger and Burgin 1996) | (C2) Detailed studies of micro practice within the organisational or trans-organisational settings (Gherardi et al, 1998) |
| Focus on Learning | |
| (D1) Studies that focus on outcomes as indicators of organisational learning (Finger and Burgin 1996, Ayas 1997, Antonacopoulou 2004) | (D2) Studies that focus on internal processes that might contribute to organisational learning outcomes (Pak and Snell, 1998) |
| Epistemological Stance | |
| (E1) Studies which aim to describe practice and then to conceptualise what takes place in a ‚grounded’ way (Nevis et 1995) | (E2) Studies which attempt to link, or to apply, specific theories to the phenomena observed (Blackler 1993) |

Table 6. Contrasting Features of Studies of Organisational Learning (Easterby-Smith et al, 2006, p.12)

Yet it seems to Easterby-Smith et al (2006) that the most common forms of empirical research to date have focused on processes where the researcher is either an active participant or a distant observer, favouring surveys over detailed case-studies, and privileging outcomes as indicators of learning processes over the processes

themselves. This means that a study that uses a small sample of in-depth cases and focused on the micro-politics within or across organisational settings could potentially be well received.

If Easterby-Smith's et al (2006) above suggestion is accepted, that there need to be more studies focusing on the micro processes of learning within organisations, then it will be important that suitable methodologies are chosen to facilitate this work:

“Learning is a notoriously difficult process to investigate empirically, which is why most researchers have taken the easy option by objectifying it and focusing on outputs. It is even more difficult to isolate learning processes within complex organisations because of the many potential levels of analysis and the wide range of actors involved” (Easterby-Smith et al, 2006, p.12).

In search of methods that can examine the more subtle processes of learning within organisations, Miner and Mezias (1996) emphasise the need to move beyond traditional positivist methods, and advocate greater use of qualitative methods of applied research. Easterby-Smith et al (2006) support this view and argue that the time has come where researchers should begin to carry out an analysis of language and stories (Elmes and Kasouf, 1995), begin to involve co-researchers and develop multifaceted case-studies.

As this thesis is located within the interpretive paradigm and has a subjectivist epistemology it rejects positivism as a research strategy. Positivism is concerned with applying the natural science model of research to investigations of the social world. It is based on assumptions derived from natural sciences and believes that there are patterns and regularities, causes and consequences in the social world, just as there are in the natural world that can be easily resolved. These patterns and regularities in the social world rather than being created by social interactions are seen as having their

own existence. Denscombe (2003) argued that for positivists the aim of social research is to discover these patterns and regularities by using the kind of scientific methods used to such good effect in the natural sciences. Positivism is perhaps not a paradigm that can be easily aligned with research based into organisational learning in an educational context where relationships and human interaction construct knowledge.

Trochim (2002) proposed a post – positivist strategy that argued for a single but provisional shared reality that most people could subscribe to. Trochim (2002) argued that the primary aim of social science is to search for and truly understand the reality accepted by the majority. However in doing this the social researcher ignores realities subscribed to by the marginalised few. In the study of organisational learning in a school context researchers must accept and acknowledge that there will inevitably exist multiple realities and that those multiple realities will actually be central to the development of knowledge itself.

As identified in the literature review this research subscribes to the interpretive view that accepts that reality is a human construct. Interpretivism is concerned with how meaning is constructed within the complex social world and so it is as an interpretive researcher that this study of organisational learning is approached (Blacker, 1993; Lave, 1993; Watkins and Marsick, 1993).

Research Strategy

This section justifies the overarching approach to the research methodology chosen. The research strategy will be phenomenological which, as described by Denscombe

(2003), focuses on people's interpretations of events. It is likely that it will uncover multiple realities that are shared by groups of people rather than one concrete reality of organisational learning. Phenomenology is an approach that focuses on how life is experienced and in this instance how organisational learning is experienced. It will not concern itself with explaining the causes of things but instead will try to provide a description of how learning has been experienced by those involved. The phenomenological investigation of organisational learning therefore would, for instance, focus on the experiences of professional learning and how individuals see and interpret their learning.

This research will seek to identify the perspectives of different groups of professional learners within three different organisations. It is likely that different groups of people may interpret and present things differently as their social world is inevitably socially constructed. Alternative realities may also exist – realities that vary from situation to situation, school to school. In this respect phenomenology stands in stark contrast with positivist approaches to social research; that assume one reality.

Phenomenology rejecting the idea that there is one universal reality accepts, instead, that things are likely to be seen in different ways by different people at different times in different circumstances, and that each alternative version needs to be recognised as being valid in its own right. This study is about making sense of the experiences the participants talk about.

When it comes to the matter of how phenomenologists actually do their research, a key characteristic of the approach is its emphasis on “describing authentic experiences” (Denscombe, 2003). In this research the authentic experiences of

participants will be provided through a phenomenological approach where an in-depth description that adequately covers the complexity of the learning under examination will be elicited. All this has to be conducted with the researcher suspending their own beliefs, expectations and predispositions about the phenomenon under investigation.

Research Methodology

With a phenomenological research strategy, the research will be designed around gathering data through a multiple case-study:

“Case-studies focus on one instance [or a few instances] of a particular phenomenon with a view to providing an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance” (Denscombe, 2003 p.32).

The use of a multiple case-study approach, argued Denscombe (2003), has become extremely widespread in social research, particularly with small-scale research such as this. Case-studies focus on a specific instance or phenomenon:

“... the idea of a case-study is that a spotlight is focused on individual instances rather than a wide spectrum” (Denscombe, 2003, p.30).

The multiple case-study approach therefore is very different from a large study or survey. The logic behind concentrating efforts on a small number of cases as opposed to lots of cases is that it allows the researcher to gain a greater insight from that individual case that can potentially have far reaching implications for the organisation or the matter under study. More importantly, it is possible that these insights would not have arisen through an alternative research strategy particularly one that tried to cover a large number of instances, a survey approach for example. “The aim is to illuminate the general by looking at the particular” (Denscombe, 2003, p.30). Case-study research means that phenomenon can be investigated in ways that potentially

lead to some valuable and unique insight and often this means investigating things in a different way from, and in some senses better than, what is possible using other approaches. Cohen et al (2007) state that case-studies attempt to portray what it is really like to be in a particular situation. Geertz (1973) agrees explaining that case-studies allow the lived realities to be explored and provide in-depth description of these experiences including the participants' thoughts about and feelings for a situation.

There are other advantages in adopting a multiple case-study approach to research design other than simply gaining the ability to investigate a case in depth. One of these strengths is that the phenomenon that is under investigation usually already exists and therefore is organic as opposed to artificially created or enhanced. A case-study therefore is a naturally occurring phenomenon. It exists prior to the research project and continues to exist once the research has finished. The case-study approach then studies things as they naturally occur, without introducing artificial changes or controls. This means that the reliability of the research findings is likely to be stronger (Denscombe, 2003).

The very fact that a case-study focuses in-depth attention on one phenomenon means that case-studies can begin to understand context as a powerful influence on the phenomenon being investigated and as such establish cause and effect. Indeed, one of the strengths of a case-study is the fact that events are investigated in real time (Cohen et al, 2007). As such then this research aims to understand organisational learning as a perpetual activity in the three case-study schools and accepts that it will reflect the realities in the case-study schools as perceived by the three groups of staff employed.

Along with the identified strengths inherent in multiple case-studies, as with any other research design, there are obvious limitations and potential weaknesses to be considered. Multiple case-studies can be perceived as producing soft data and as such have been accused of gathering qualitative data that lacks rigour and transferability. This supports the view that case-studies focus on processes rather than measurable end products and often reject quantitative data preferring to rely heavily on interpretive methods rather than statistical procedures. For this very reason it is important in case-study research that the researcher refrains from interpreting events or scenarios but rather reports them factually as perceived by the respondent or participant (Cohen et al, 2007).

Research Methods

Easterby-Smith et al (1998); Dosi et al (2003) suggest that organisational learning because it is a fluid phenomena will be potentially difficult to measure. It is also difficult to measure because measures of organisational learning are likely to depend on the ontology adopted towards it. Simply this means that how an individual perceives and approaches their learning will influence how they categorise and measure it. Since there are many different ontologies of organisational learning, the more one sets out to measure precisely its nature and extent, the more one is likely to fall into what Ryle (1949) calls a “category mistake”. This occurs when measures appropriate to one kind of object are applied to another kind of object. This means the validity of the diagnostic instrument has to be given very careful consideration. In order to avoid such trappings this research strategy investigated a range of research methods that would complement a phenomenological research strategy; including

questionnaires; interviews; and observations. Individual semi-structured interviews were chosen as the most appropriate method of data collection for this research.

Semi-Structured Interviews

There are three types of face-to-face interviews available to the researcher; structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. However, Brown and Dowling (1998) are keen to point out that the term „unstructured’ is misleading as there can be no such thing as interviews totally without structure.

The format of an interview therefore can be as structured as a scripted questionnaire, the advantage over a postal questionnaire being the opportunity for immediate clarification by the researcher. Or it can be as unstructured as a conversation with open questions and a loose set of guidelines for the interviewer. Clearly, a semi-structured interview falls somewhere between these two possibilities and relies on the researcher gauging the balance between the openness of the questions and the focus and order of the topics to be explored (Denscombe, 2003).

There are obvious advantages to using interviews, and it is suggested that in this research design the advantages out-weigh the disadvantages. These advantages and disadvantages are summarised in Table 7 below.

| Interviews | |
|---|--|
| Advantages | Disadvantages |
| Depth and detail to responses. A line of inquiry can be developed | Time consuming for the researcher |
| Insights gained from face to face encounter enabling multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, | Data analysis can be problematic due to the non-standard responses |

| | |
|--|--|
| spoken and heard | |
| Limited amount of equipment needed | Reliability – consistency and objectivity are difficult to achieve. Can be open to interviewer bias |
| Interviewees can share their priorities opinions and ideas | Interviewer effect – interviewee statements can be affected by the identity of the researcher |
| Provide a flexible approach to the collection of data where adjustments can be made. Space for spontaneity | Lack of correlation with reality – what people say they do and what they actually do can be very different |
| Validity – direct contact means that data can be checked for accuracy and relevance | Inhibitions – interviews are an artificial situation where people are speaking for the record |
| High response rate due to pre-arrangement | Invasion of privacy, inconvenient for respondents |
| Possibly a rewarding experience for the respondent | Resources – cost of interviewers time, travel, transcription etc can be high |

Table 7. Advantages and Disadvantages of the use of Interviews (adapted from Denscombe 2003 and Cohen et al 2007)

As identified by Denscombe (2003) the process of interviewing for phenomenologists is valuable. This is because it provides the possibility of exploring matters in depth. Interviews allow the interviewee to raise issues that he or she feels are important. This helps the research by highlighting things that matter to the person being interviewed. Also, during an interview the interviewee can give a discursive account of their experiences of organisational learning, giving them the opportunity to describe the processes as they see it and to provide some “thick description” (Geertz, 1973). Interviews allow the researcher the opportunity to check that he or she understands the interviewee correctly, so that meanings are clearly understood.

The research design will therefore use a semi-structured interview schedule, and the questions will be drawn from the key themes in the literature review that link directly to one or more of the research questions. This will allow plenty of scope to ensure the

research questions are addressed while allowing the interviewees to move the discussion to areas they regard as significant.

Pilot interviews will form an important part of the interview design. Once the pilot interviews had been conducted they were transcribed. “Data collection by phenomenology tends to rely on tape-recorded interviews” (Denscombe 2003, p.103). Analysing the data involved giving meaning to the words to identify the implications held within them for organisational learning. A straightforward, methodological approach was adopted to analyse the pilot schedule. It soon became evident that the interview schedule needed amending in order to give opportunities for respondents to provide rich and detailed responses of their own personal experiences of professional learning in line with the phenomenological approach. This meant re-wording some of the questions so that respondents could relive experiences as opposed to give opinions on things they were yet to encounter. It also led to the development of descriptive prompt cards (West-Burnham and Ireson, 2005; Lipshitz 2002) to support respondents with technical vocabulary and phrases (see Appendix 6 and 7).

Research Management

Selection

This research was a multiple case-study involving three primary schools. Although there was an awareness that the findings from this study may not necessarily transfer easily to schools in other contexts with re-evaluation and review there was confidence that at the very least there could be some relatable insights to be shared. The case-study schools were selected because they had all undergone successful Ofsted Inspections and were graded good or better which was indicative of their willingness

to embrace continuous improvement. They were not typical or average schools but those who had undergone successful and innovative improvement journeys suggesting there were some lessons to learn from them about their organisational learning practices.

The chosen sample of respondents included 3 head teachers, 9 class teachers and 9 teaching assistants (21 participants in total). The number of case-study schools was limited to three so that the sample would not become too large and unwieldy. This multiple case-study was designed to compare the respondents in respect of their concrete experience of organisational learning and to establish what they perceived had been the organisational aids and barriers to the learning process for them as individuals. The research will then compare the experiences from the different groups of staff within and across the schools.

Access and Insider Research

One aspect of the study's feasibility centred on the ability to gain access to three different primary schools to carry out the research. There was obviously no point in pursuing the idea of conducting interviews unless there were good grounds for believing that the necessary people could be accessed, and that some agreement could be obtained from all parties involved in the research. Working in the Local Authority where the research was to be based, offered some reassurances regarding access. The samples drawn were purposive in that the participants were hand-picked for the study (Denscombe, 2003). The head teacher participants were selected because they were known to the researcher as leaders who embraced innovative school improvement strategies. The purposive selection for teachers and teaching assistants was made

through those head teachers identifying staff in their school willing to take part. They were however given a clear remit for selection that included staff with a range of experience, length of service and roles and responsibilities so that the sample reflected the broad range of staff in each of the schools. Consent for participation was sought in all cases (see Appendix 2 and 3).

Mercer (2007) points to the fact that in recent years, education has seen a significant increase in small-scale practitioner research. This is evident through the increase in Masters and Doctoral programmes on offer to teachers and school leaders around the world. Once teachers and leaders are enrolled on these courses there is often a compulsory research module and their own school often becomes the focus for their research (Mercer, 2007). This research however is not based in the researchers own school acknowledging that researchers conducting research in their own place of work are not well-supported (Mercer, 2007) in their attempts to navigate the “hidden ethical and methodological dilemmas of insiderness” (Labaree, 2002, p.109).

Merton (1972) identifies two opposing positions to insider research, and referred to these as the outsider doctrine and the insider doctrine. The outsider doctrine suggests that in order to achieve an objective account of human interactions it is necessary that a neutral outsider carries out the research. This is to ensure that a non-biased and accurate account of the phenomenon under investigation is achieved. By contrast, the insider doctrine asserts the exact opposite, namely that the outsider “has a structurally imposed incapacity to comprehend alien groups” (Merton, 1972, p.15).

Although this research was not being carried out in the researchers own school it is important to acknowledge that all head teacher participants were known to the researcher as neighbouring colleagues and although this made access arrangements easier it also meant that the researcher's position in the research allowed for 'insider knowledge'. Hockey (1993), in exploring issues when researching peers and familiar settings, suggested over familiarity with a setting under investigation could mean that key information is missed. Shah (2004) however argues that "a social insider is better positioned as a researcher because of his/her knowledge of the relevant patterns of social interaction required for gaining access and making meaning" (p.556).

Merton, (1972) discusses the distinctive assets and liabilities of insider research, arguing that the negative implications are compensated for by the positive implications. Hockey, (1993) suggests however that individual researchers should consider the benefits and potential weaknesses of this approach and come to an informed decision as to its appropriateness. In considering the notion of insider research as part of the research management in this case-study it was accepted that a better understanding of the social setting because of the known context was more likely to lead to a system of perpetual learning from which others could learn.

Ethics

All participants in research have an entitlement to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity unless they have specifically waived this right and research should always be carried out ethically with a due regard for an individual's dignity (Denscombe 2003). Underlying ethical principles that should guide the activities of

researches can be broadly described under three headings and are summarised below in Table 8.

| Ethical Principles | In Practice |
|---|--|
| The interests of the participants should be protected | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants should not suffer as a result of their involvement i.e. physically, psychologically or personally • There should be no long term repercussions stemming from their involvement |
| Researchers should avoid deception or misrepresentation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers should operate in an open and honest manner disclosing the precise nature of the research • Fair and unbiased analysis of data should be presented |
| Participants should give informed consent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People should never be forced or coerced into helping with research • Participants should have been given sufficient information about the research to have arrived at a reasoned judgement about participation |

Table 8. The Principles of Ethical Research (adapted from Denscombe 2003, p.136-138 and BERA, 2004)

Social research especially requires the need to operate with honesty and integrity (Denscombe, 2003) ensuring an ethical approach to the collection of the data, the analysing of the data and particularly the dissemination of the findings. All participants in this research were asked for their informed consent before taking part in the research and all were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity (BERA, 2004).

Validity and Reliability

Threats to validity and reliability are almost impossible to totally overcome; rather the effects of these can be addressed by attention to validity and reliability throughout the research (Cohen et al 2007). Historically, validity was concerned with ensuring that a chosen instrument measured what it was meant to measure yet more recently validity

has included other concepts. For example, in qualitative research such as this validity might be addressed in a number of ways including the extent of participant triangulation, the quality of the semi-structured interviews and their ability to elicit honest and considered responses and the objectivity of the researcher (Winter 2000). Maxwell (1992) concurred and argued that qualitative researchers should be careful not to fall into the trap of quantitative measures in regard to validity and expect to demonstrate concurrent, predictive, convergent, criterion related validity.

Reliability is concerned with the measurements of the research instrument ensuring that it does not give one reading on the first occasion it is used and a different reading on the next occasion when there has been no real change in the time being measured. Argyris (1999) suggested the more rigorous the research methodology the higher levels of reliability meaning the research is more likely to get future public verifiability. Therefore the reliability of the research instrument and the rigour with which the research is conducted is essential.

In qualitative research it is important that the researcher records accurately what occurs in the phenomenon being studied so that it can be aligned with what actually occurs in each of the setting under study, i.e. there must be a degree of accuracy and comprehensiveness of coverage. Brock-Utne (1996), argued that qualitative research, will make an effort to record the multiple interpretations of the phenomenon being studied and this is a real strength. Conversely semi-structured interviews as a research method can compromise reliability giving different readings on separate occasions.

To ensure validity and reliability in this research project where semi-structured interviews are used as the instrument of data collection, attempts will be made to:

- minimise the amount of bias;
- structure the interviews well, so that each stage of the interview is clear to the participant;
- design the interview questions carefully and amend as the result of the pilot;
- allow participants to take their time and answer in their own way;
- keep to the point and the matter in hand, steering the interview where necessary in order to address this;
- minimise the effects of power;
- check the reliability, validity and consistency of responses by well-placed questions;
- Ensure opportunity for respondent validation.

Measures of validity and reliability in this research will be as robust as possible.

Triangulation, although not methodological, will ensure that different groups of people will be interviewed in different schools. Pilot interviews will be conducted with a sample of respondents prior to the research; the respondents will be given the opportunity to read their interview transcriptions and amend or comment as necessary; thus reducing the uncertainty of the findings (see Appendix 4).

Analysing the Responses

In qualitative research, Miles and Huberman (1994) define analysis as “three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification” (p.10). It was the use of data reduction and data display in

tables and charts as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994) that led to the emergence of patterns in the responses of the participants. Holloway (1997) describes a process of thematic analysis where similar ideas, patterns or categories emerge from the interviews. In this research project the patterns and themes emerged from the data reduction stage of the analysis.

Gunter (1999) suggested an alternative strategy for the analysis of interview data where the analysis begins with already identified patterns or themes and the transcripts are analysed for coherence. This method could potentially lead to important information being missed or an element of bias influencing the analysis. This study therefore intends to use Miles and Huberman's (1994) approach to the analysis of data and the key themes to emerge from the analysis will be recorded in tables and grids and aligned with the three research questions and four themes that shaped the literature review.

Limitations of the Research

Whilst there is confidence with the richness of the data collected, weakness in research design must be acknowledged. Inevitably by employing just one principal method of data collection in the form of semi-structured interviews a potential flaw emerges. Whilst this is not untypical for this kind of research, methodological triangulation may have given additional confirmation as to how organisational learning as a perpetual activity takes place. The very nature of focusing on just a few cases to identify the subtleties and intricacies of complex social situations will mean that this initial study will need to be supported with further work in the field in order to generalise from the findings. The extent to which findings from the multiple case-

study can be generalised to other examples in the class depends on how far the case-study example is similar to others of its type, argued Denscombe (2003). Therefore, when reporting the case-study findings, it will be important to consider how far the findings have relevance to schools in other contexts.

Reflexivity

Qualitative research, as opposed to quantitative research, relies much more on the subjectivity of the researcher. The researcher's reflections, perceptions, interpretations and feelings form a significant part of the findings (Flick, 2002). An awareness of „self“ in the process of the research and in the interpretation of the findings and any conclusions reached is important in order to consider researcher reflexivity (Denscombe, 2003). In presenting the findings of this research, it is important to acknowledge the influence of „self“ on the research. The perceptions the researcher holds and the meanings interpreted from the findings will inevitably be affected by the researcher's own “culture, social background and personal experiences” (Denscombe, 2003, p.88). As the researcher is a head teacher of a school in similar circumstances to those involved in this research, perceptions are already formed about the value of organisational learning as a perpetual activity. However, in acknowledgement of this, the research will attempt to give impartial justice to the findings in as balanced and unbiased way as possible.

Interviewer effect

Another consideration that has to be taken account of is interviewer effect and, in particular, the „Hawthorn“ effect – derived from a set of industrial studies – whereby the special attention of an external observer creates a positive effect on that being

studied (McQueen and Knusson, 2002). This view is supported by Argyris (1999) who states that even when participants in a study have not been told the nature of the research they can still try to please the researcher and say what they think the researcher is expecting them to say. This means that much time and energy is being spent by the participants thinking about how to respond instead of considering the thing being studied as it naturally occurs. As such there is, in this situation, a risk of unintended contamination.

The notion of power is significant in interview situations too suggests Cohen et al (2007). This is because interviews are not simply about the collection of data or figures in a linear conversation. Instead they are a socially constructed interaction that involve political forces and power struggles. Although power resides with both the interviewer and the interviewee, Scheurich (1995) argues that typically more power resides with the interviewer. This is because the interviewer generates the questions for the interviewee to answer and it is the interviewee who is ultimately under scrutiny while the interviewer is not. Another aspect of power worthy of consideration, suggests Cassell (2005), is that those with power, resources and expertise e.g. the head teacher participants in the study, might be anxious to maintain their reputation, and so will be more guarded in what they say, responding with well-chosen, articulate phrases:

“Interviewers need to be aware of the potentially distorting effects of power...” (Cohen et al, 2007, p.152).

Limerick et al (1996) supports this view suggesting that interviewees have the power to withhold information, to choose the location of the interview, to choose how seriously to respond to the interview, how long it will last, when it will take place,

what will be discussed. Echoing Foucault (1970), they argue that power is fluid and is discursively constructed through the interview rather than being the province of either party.

Argyris (1999) believes that contamination is inevitable. The issue, therefore, is not how to ensure that there is no contamination or that power forces are eroded but rather under what conditions can the researcher have the greater awareness of and control over, the problem of unintended contamination. This is particularly pertinent in this thesis as the notion of the researcher as a fellow head teacher could prove a threat to the validity of the research. To minimise the effects of power and unintentional contamination interview questions will be asked in a non-threatening manner, participants will be guaranteed anonymity and assured that their comments are in complete confidence. There is no intention for any of the participants to be named at any time during the study and the schools will only be described as primary schools in Birmingham Local Authority.

Summary

This chapter has outlined the research design. It has placed the research strategy within the wider frameworks of Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Habermas (1971), explaining that the research is epistemologically subjective, located in the interpretive paradigm with a practical interest so that the knowledge sought is based on the understanding of social relationships and why people act or behave as they do.

A growing evidence base of empirical investigation in the field, (Easterby-Smith et al, 1998; Bolam, 2004; MacGilchrist et al, 2004; West-Burnham and Ireson, 2005; Lowe

and Pugh, 2007; Stoll et al, 2003, 2005, 2007) outlines the significance of this research. The phenomenological research strategy will adopt a multiple case-study approach focusing on people's interpretations of events and give rise to multiple realities of learning through semi-structured interviews. This will contribute to the growing research to date which has sometimes favoured surveys or has focused on learning outputs as opposed to learning processes.

The research management including selection, ethical considerations, access arrangements, validity and reliability, analysis of data and the limitations of the research have also been explained. In doing this, this chapter has demonstrated the potential of the chosen methodology for the research into enhancing capacity for organisational learning in schools through a perpetual system of professional learning. The next chapter will present the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

Chapter 4 will present the findings from the 21 interviews made up of responses from head teachers, teachers and teaching assistants. To aid the reader the findings will be grouped together under the research questions identified in the introduction: RQ1.

What experiences do the participants have of organisational learning? RQ2. In the participants' experience, what are the key organisational characteristics that enhance or inhibit organisational learning? RQ3. From the participants' experience, what improvements can be made to organisational learning in their schools?

Chapter 5 will discuss the findings in light of the literature review and elaborate on the studies contribution to knowledge. It will identify how learning takes place for the three groups of respondents and discuss in more depth those things that have been identified as aiding the learning process as well as those things that have been identified as hindering it. In doing so, Chapter 5 will transcend description and begin to consider more fundamentally what learning as a perpetual system in a primary school setting actually means. Chapter 6 will draw conclusions from the findings and potentially present a system of perpetual learning for consideration to support the case-study schools and schools in similar contexts to reflect on their organisational learning practices in light of it.

Data Analysis

It is acknowledged that there is a risk when relying on a small case-study of 3 head teachers, 9 teachers and 9 teaching assistants to generate reliable data. However, the

qualitative tradition emphasises the importance of all findings. It is important to recognise that the head teacher sample was small. This was due to the limitations of this study which predetermined sample size. It was still considered a worthy sample however as lessons can potentially be learned from those leading successful schools no matter how small the sample (Easterby-Smith et al, 2006). The teacher and teaching assistant samples were larger. This was so that real life experiences of teachers and teaching assistants learning could be better understood from their own perspectives.

The transcripts of respondents' interviews were simply labelled and all respondent quotations given in this chapter are shown in Table 9 below.

| Phase One | Phase Two | Phase Three |
|------------------|--|---|
| Head Teacher 1 | Teacher 1a Teacher 1b Teacher 1c | Teaching Assistant 1a Teaching Assistant 1b Teaching Assistant 1c |
| Head Teacher 2 | Teacher 2a Teacher 2b Teacher 2c | Teaching Assistant 2a Teaching Assistant 2b Teaching Assistant 2c |
| Head Teacher 3 | Teacher 3a Teacher 3b Teacher 3c | Teaching Assistant 3a Teaching Assistant 3b Teaching Assistant 3c |

Table 9, Transcript Labels

This technique was used to refer back to the data and also to determine the number of responses made on any particular issue under arising themes. The labelling technique has also been used in this thesis to fulfil the confidentiality and anonymity agreed with the participants at the start of the research.

The research investigated perceptions through individual semi-structured interviews. These were built around sixteen questions derived from the research questions, review of the literature and pilot study (see Appendix 6 and 7). The themes arising from the

sixteen questions are dealt with in the following sections of this chapter reported under each of the research questions. Discussion of the findings will take place in Chapter 5 before a conclusion is presented in Chapter 6.

Context

Three participating primary schools were involved in this multiple case-study and 21 members of staff were interviewed in total. The interviews took place in Spring and Summer Term 2010. The three head teachers were at different stages of their careers; one was relatively new to post while the other two had been in post for considerably longer. The teachers involved had a broad range of experience; some being relatively new in post while others had been in teaching for over twenty years. Of the 9 teachers interviewed 6 were in leadership roles within their school. The teaching assistants involved in the research had a broad range of experience too; some of which extended to over fifteen years.

The purpose of the research was two-fold. It was to find out through a small multiple case-study the learning experiences of head teachers, teachers and teaching assistants. It aimed to extrapolate how the participants felt their organisational learning could be further improved for them as learning individuals and for the school as a whole. It was intended that the findings from the interviews would be compared so that relatable insights could emerge between and amongst the groups being interviewed in each of the schools.

Findings

The following sections of this chapter explore the findings. The first section in response to RQ1 will report on the participants' experiences of organisational learning and aspects of the learning that had a significant impact on their professional roles in school. Subsequent sections in response to RQ 2/3 will consider the respondents perceptions of those things that had aided and hindered their learning as well as summarising how the participants thought their learning could be improved in the future. The findings will be presented from the three groups of respondents in turn: head teacher, teacher and teaching assistant. This is to aid the reader and ensure congruence throughout. The section on climate will report on each of the schools in turn; this is to allow a deeper insight into the influence of the school climate on the organisational learning of participants in the research.

RQ1. - What experiences do you have of organisational learning?

There were two overarching themes to emerge from the „data reduction and display’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.10) to the questions relating to respondents own learning experiences. These were:

- Formal and informal learning.
- The impact and influence of learning.

Formal and Informal Learning

Appendix 8 summarises the respondents' experience of learning. The head teachers were able to articulate their formal learning experiences more readily than their informal learning experience yet all three head teachers were keen to point out that although the majority of their learning, since being in education, had been structured

around courses much of their current learning was informal and to a certain extent „on the job’ learning. This picture emerged to a greater extent as the interviews continued.

The formal learning experienced by each of the head teachers was very similar and included subject leaders’ courses in their early careers followed by leadership and management training either directly preceding headship or in the early stages of headship. The informal learning ranged from telephone conversations with key Local Authority personnel, to the reading of articles and papers, to discussions with a variety of stakeholders and with staff and senior leaders within their schools. Of the informal learning discussed, support in the form of individualised discussion featured in all three responses in a variety of guises.

Like the head teachers the formal learning of teachers had largely taken place on external courses of various lengths. The teacher respondents however seemed more inclined to acknowledge informal aspects of their learning, valuing the support and ideas received by working with others:

“I do think that there is a balance in the learning between courses and informal learning. A lot comes through informal learning and in some aspects informal learning is best...” (T1a).

This view was most apparent however in the responses from teachers in School 2 in the study and may be significant for discussion of the findings in Chapter 5.

Teacher 2a said:

“Informal learning, all sorts goes on in school. It is brilliant here in terms of learning from each other... I think everyone is very willing to learn from each other...” (T2a).

This was supported by Teacher 2b:

“The staff are quite open and we have got quite a good learning environment and we do quite a lot of sharing good practice and um, observing each other and learning through that” (T2b).

It is important to acknowledge that all of the teachers interviewed said that they had learnt things informally from others and cited „pinching ideas’, ‘seeking advice’ or „observing best practice’.

The majority of the learning experienced by the teaching assistant respondents came through informal opportunities to learn with access to courses being quite limited. A course commonly cited was „First Aid’. Teaching Assistant 1c said:

“...Epi-pen training and First Aid training... I have been on a course at a Special School to do with handwriting. That was a couple of years ago I think” (TA1c).

Teaching Assistant 1b said:

“I’ve not really done much training since I have been a TA... I think this is an area that is quite disjointed really, you never know if you are going to go on training again. There hasn’t been any set pattern of training. I really wouldn’t know” (TA1b).

Of the nine teaching assistants interviewed all placed significant importance on learning from each other perpetually:

“You are learning all the time aren’t you? I learn from other people. People I work with, different members of staff. Some of which I learn more from than others because of the way that they are. I think it is invaluable, I learn more that way than any course I have been on” (TA3b).

This was supported by Teaching Assistant 2a:

“that goes on all the time really, learning from one another” (TA2a).

When asked if the teaching assistants were given the opportunity to observe each other they said that they weren't. "We've never had opportunities to observe each other" (TA1b). "Not formally no. I mean if I asked to go and observe in another class the opportunity would be there. It's not planned" (TA2b); and Teaching Assistant 3a said, "not much... sometimes you get swapped around to different classes so you can see different teachers, not so much watch other TAs – no" (TA3a).

It appears then that the three groups of respondents in this study learn in a social context by active involvement with others both formally and informally but in unequal measure. The head teacher respondents throughout their careers have been presented with a number of formal opportunities to learn in the form of external courses. This type of learning for teachers however appears to be limited and for teaching assistants, significantly limited. All three groups of respondents cite aspects of informal learning that they have been involved in with colleagues that happens perpetually.

Impact and Influence of Learning

When asked about learning that had resulted in a significant impact all three head teachers cited the leadership and management training that was supporting them in post. Head Teacher One talked about the Induction Programme for New Heads that was organised by the Local Authority and the National College New Visions programme as being invaluable in supporting transition to headship. Head Teacher Three talked about the impact of NPQH in progressing leadership thinking.

However, perhaps more interestingly, two of the three head teachers, stated that the learning that had influenced them most significantly had been professional development that had taken place in the context of the school:

“I suppose the most effective thing is learning on the job really. Guidance through situations” (HT1).

Similarly Head Teacher 2 said:

“I think that the impact of the training I have done in school has had the biggest impact as opposed to the training that I have done outside school. I think courses are all very exciting... and they start you thinking but then you have to come back and do something with it... (HT2).

And although Head Teacher 3 cited two leadership and management programmes that were run outside of the school context as having the biggest professional impact both of these programmes had components that asked the participants to reflect and build upon their day to day practice in school.

When the head teacher respondents were asked to think about learning they had organised for staff that had resulted in a significant impact a common theme emerged (see Appendix 9). The head teachers perceived that learning that was focused and linked to a whole school initiative was more productive than learning targeted at individual need.

As stated by Head Teacher 1:

“...the training that followed was for everyone and they all learned from each other... and it was almost like a competitive element starting taking over and people were showing each other how to do things and saying well I can do this... and there was a sort of a buzz in the place to learn as much as possible” (HT1).

This head teacher went on to explain that learning that was focused around an individual need did not have the same whole school impact as that organised for all the staff together.

This was supported by Head Teacher 2 who was keen to point out that the most successful learning in School Two originated from the staff themselves identifying that they needed to teach an aspect of the curriculum more effectively throughout the school. From this shared identification then grew the professional learning to support the need. Head Teacher 2 also acknowledged the importance of providing learning opportunities for all practitioners:

“and we looked at how we have trained other adults so for example the Teaching Assistants and what support we have given them. And we have tried very hard where we have had parental helpers volunteer...” (HT2).

Head Teacher 3 talked about a very concentrated approach where the learning actually took a variety of forms and was revisited regularly over a substantial period of time. In this example, the staff were all exposed to an ‘expert’ in the field as the stimulus for learning and then this was followed up with in-house staff meetings. The teachers had the chance to observe the ‘expert’ before being observed themselves.

When the class teachers in this study were asked to think about learning that had made a significant contribution to their practice only one of them cited formal training alone, while 4 of them cited informal learning and 4 of them cited a combination of the two.

| Class Teacher | Learning | Impact/Influence | Type |
|----------------------|--|--|-------------|
| Class Teacher 1a | Assertiveness training course I attended as an NQT | Increased my confidence. Everyone said after that I was a different person. My personality had to come across. | Formal |
| | My Experience as Acting Head | Soured relationships, wrecked my confidence Made me realise I’m at | Informal |

| | | | |
|------------------|---|---|-------------------------------|
| | | my happiest in the classroom. | |
| Class Teacher 1b | Outstanding lesson course | Really inspired me. Changed my practice | Formal |
| | Learning from my colleagues here | I am now more flexible and less rigid. | Informal |
| Class Teacher 1c | Things early in my career | | |
| | Use of a computer and interactive whiteboard which has been self taught | I can now use a computer and whiteboard | Informal |
| Class Teacher 2a | Previous Head teacher | She made me highlight things and analyse my own practice and push myself forward | Informal |
| Class Teacher 2b | Thinking Skills and APP | Now I feel quite confident. Thinking Skills made me think about the reason behind learning. | Formal |
| Class Teacher 2c | Informal work I have done on English | Improved my English grammar and my teaching. | Informal |
| Class Teacher 3a | NPQH | It made me move camps completely and made me do a lot of thinking. | Formal with informal elements |
| Class Teacher 3b | Reflecting on my teaching | I am self critical. Helped me when working with staff. | Informal |
| Class Teacher 3c | Ten Day Literacy Course | Enabled me to become a highly effective literacy coordinator | Formal with informal aspects |

Table 10, The Impact/Influence of Learning for Teachers

If we consider the emerging theme from the head teachers where they preferred to organise whole school learning focused on a key initiative this does not necessarily align with the preferred method of learning for the teachers as summarised in Table 10 above. None of the teachers cited a whole school training initiative as influencing

their practice most (perhaps with the exception of a whole school initiative led in one of the schools by an expert in the field).

It is clear to see from Table 10 above that the teachers certainly felt that their learning needed to be relevant to their roles in school (Outstanding Lessons Course, ICT training, Learning from my head teacher, Ten Day Literacy Course) and with the exception of one of the teachers all said the learning that had influenced them most had been learning they were involved in with others. In fact, one teacher took exception to having to learn in isolation:

“And then we had whiteboards in and my whiteboard malfunctioned... It was very difficult for me but it would have been nice to have learned it bit by bit with everyone else” (T1c).

When the teaching assistants were asked to think about learning that had made a significant contribution to their practice, unlike the head teachers and teachers the majority of them, (seven out of the nine respondents) cited formal courses. Although they valued learning with and from others, they felt in the main this learning was limited to the teacher with whom they worked.

| Teaching Assistant | Learning | Impact/Influence | Type |
|---------------------------|--|--|-------------|
| Teaching Assistant 1a | Cluster INSET Day with lots of other schools | You could choose a workshop that you felt would benefit you. It was hands on and things I wanted to know. I could take it back | Formal |
| Teaching Assistant 1b | The ICT training | This has impacted on my display work and use of internet etc. | Formal |
| Teaching Assistant 1c | TA course because a lot of it was hands on. | I could relate it to what I was doing for the children | Formal |
| Teaching | Cluster Training with | When we get together as | Formal |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--|--|--|
| Assistant 2a | <p>other schools</p> <p>First Aid obviously.</p> <p>Probably ones that you are actually sent on because then there is a reason that you are going on them.</p> | <p>Cluster TAs it was very useful because it was usually based on things that were happening in school and particularly special needs</p> | <p>Formal</p> <p>Formal</p> |
| Teaching Assistant 2b | <p>Foundation and Honours Degree</p> | <p>It has really looked at the wider implications of learning for children</p> | <p>Formal</p> |
| Teaching Assistant 2c | <p>Voluntary work out of school</p> <p>A recent Talking and Drawing course</p> <p>A behaviour modification course over three weeks when I worked in a different role</p> | <p>It empowers me to think I am worth something, you know in school I am the TA when I go out I'm not the TA.</p> <p>It has changed the way I look at things, I notice things differently.</p> <p>Helped me to break behaviours down into tiny steps</p> | <p>N/A</p> <p>Formal</p> <p>Formal</p> |
| Teaching Assistant 3a | <p>I would say working in my first school because of the range of children</p> | <p>Helped me understand various issues including child protection and opened my eyes to the role of a TA</p> | <p>Informal</p> |
| Teaching Assistant 3b | <p>Barriers to Learning courses</p> | <p>I know how to work with children with emotional and behavioural problems now.</p> | <p>Formal</p> |
| Teaching Assistant 3c | <p>Things I have done personally out of school like counselling</p> | <p>I've been able to use the skills I've learned with the children</p> | <p>N/A</p> |

Table 11, The Impact/Influence of Learning for Teaching Assistants

Although the head teachers cited whole school learning initiatives as being most productive the teaching assistants said that they were often excluded from this type of learning and so cited individual courses as impacting on their practice most

significantly. In Table 11 above it is clear to see that the teaching assistants felt that their learning needed to be relevant to their role in school (ICT training, special needs, first aid, behaviour modification, barriers to learning). Limited opportunities for this training, however, in their opinion led two of them to cite learning opportunities out of school as having the greatest impact on their work.

So there seems now to be emerging a slightly different experience of organisational learning for the teaching assistant respondents. It is clear that access to formal courses that impact on the progress of children in their care had been limited.

Although they valued opportunities to learn from each other in school these too were limited which had led some to pursue learning opportunities outside of their school setting (4 of the 9).

For the three groups of respondents it still holds true however, that learning that is on-going (perpetual), focused, individualised and highly relevant to the job in hand proves to be most successful. With this being the case this study was eager to explore how the respondents believed this could be achieved in their school.

RQ2 – What are the key organisational characteristics that enhance or inhibit organisational learning?

In response to the above research question five themes emerged from the data reduction and display (Miles and Habermas, 1994) and each of these will be presented in turn below:

- Access to learning.
- Organising learning.

- Preferred learning method.
- School climate.
- The value of organisational learning.

Access to Learning

It became increasingly evident when analysing head teacher responses that access to learning before their headship had been heavily dependent on their previous head teachers. For example Head Teacher 1 said:

“At one school particularly, I hardly had any training at all and at the other school I had loads of training opportunities... [this was due to] the ethos and leadership of the school and the attitude towards CPD really... So it has been varied largely by which institution I have been working in” (HT1).

Head Teacher 2 said:

“I’d say I was very much pushed by my last Head to do NPQH... very much pushed to do that, encouraged to do it. It wasn’t something that I had absolutely wanted to do because in doing it you are making a statement that you want to move on aren’t you?” (HT2).

This head teacher went on to explain that the best personal learning took place under good management:

“My previous Head was very intelligent with a lot of experience in education and was quite happy to talk about it at quite a high level really...and you sort of have a conversation and it sorts of draws out your feelings and thinking like that” (HT2).

Once in post as head teachers it appeared that the head teachers were responsible for assessing their own learning with very little support or direction from other parties.

This was seemingly also true in some respects for teacher respondents.

“I would normally take a course that I would like to do to the Head teacher...” (T1a):

“... I am quite self motivated in my own learning needs and so I kind of go to my Head with what I want to do and so I put myself forward for courses...” (T2b).

Once learning opportunities had been identified however access to this learning seemed largely driven by the head teacher or senior leaders in each of the schools and this was reinforced by Teacher 2a who said:

“So it’s often about people taking that step, so after things have been identified by management and then if anything comes up or they see things then they can go and ask their Phase Leader or their Performance Management person if they could go on a course like this” (T2a).

One teacher suggested that access to learning was sometimes about how persistently a person asked as opposed to how much in need of it they were:

“Um, I have to say I think I probably get a better deal because I think I find more things that I want to do... Um, so I think most people are more passive in that” (T2c).

And another felt very unlikely to gain access to any learning through school:

“Through school no. Because if school don’t sanction it then I can’t do it” (T1c).

A similar picture emerges from the responses of the teaching assistants where access to organisational learning seemed largely predetermined by the head teacher or senior leaders in each of the schools:

“I think that you are supposed to look at the courses and well there is no set thing really. I think that you are supposed to look at the courses and try and request but a lot of the set up that we do involves waiting to be asked really” (TA1b).

This was supported by Teaching Assistant 2b:

“I think it is leaflets and things that come into school and you can have a look through and if there is anything you are interested in you can approach the Phase Leader or the Head teacher to go on training courses or anything like that” (TA2b).

There also appeared to be a more opportunities for teaching assistant learning in some schools than others. The teaching assistants in School One seemed to have less opportunity with Teaching Assistant 1c stating:

“I get the impression there is supposed to be a certain amount of training... You can sort of say... any chance of... and you put that on a piece of paper and off it goes and you might or might not hear anything back...”
(TA1c).

This teaching assistant also went on to explain that they thought that learning was unequally distributed; “the rest of us are sort of a bit left” (TA1c).

So the learning of practitioners in each of the schools seems to be largely sanctioned by the head teacher. As seen with the responses from teachers and teaching assistants, access to courses is not guaranteed. Observing others classroom practice is not a consistent feature of all three schools and is not a learning opportunity extended to teaching assistants. As yet teaching assistants did not seem to benefit from structured observations, team teaching or PPA with others and their attendance at staff meetings and INSET days was not always required with two of the schools only inviting teaching assistants along when necessary. Much of the learning for teaching assistants was portrayed as un-coordinated and un-structured, with no whole school approach or targeted support and this warrants further discussion in Chapter 5, in light of Brundrett and Rhodes’ (2011) claims that “support staff should be enabled to develop a sense of professionalism” (p.53).

Organising Learning

When the three head teachers were asked how the learning for staff in schools was generally organised all three acknowledged that there were processes in place to

ascertain the views of teachers and to a lesser extent teaching assistants about their professional development needs. Head Teacher 1 said:

“Every year I have professional discussions with staff, so um, that is one of the main ways of me getting information from staff about what they perceive are their needs... Here we don’t have many that do have career aspirations in all honesty but um, when they do have we start to discuss them to see what strengths and what support is in place...” (HT1).

This head teacher went on to explain that in the past they had trained groups of people based on need but that generally practitioner learning would be linked to performance management and the school improvement planning cycle. This was supported by Head Teacher 2 who said that learning needs would be audited against the school development plan. In this school, questionnaires were sent to every member of staff to ascertain their views on school, career aspirations and development needs. Again staff would be grouped for training into those with similar needs. Much of this would take place in-house through existing expertise. Head Teacher 3 said an audit of learning needs was necessary on appointment and was structured through observation and informal conversations with staff.

Yet it was Head Teacher 2 who seemed most likely to be embracing a system of perpetual learning:

“we have quite a lot of people here who are happy to talk... they won’t just accept something they will talk about it and I think in that discussion I learn a lot because I am having to focus and verbalise what it is I am trying to do and have to think about what I am trying to say” (HT2).

When the nine teachers were asked, since they had been in post, could they identify how their school based training had been organised, it became clear that their learning was generally organised in five ways:

- Staff meetings and teacher days (INSET), including Cluster Training.

- Courses.
- Observing lessons.
- Leadership meetings.
- PPA (planning, preparation and assessment) time.

All nine of the teachers cited INSET and courses as the main ways in which their learning was organised. They described twilight sessions after school and teacher days; “well we have a lot of INSET and teacher days” (T1a); “well obviously INSET through staff meetings” (T2a); “it’s things like staff meetings which we have and cluster training days” (T2b); “it’s mostly learning through the staff as a whole at staff meetings or teacher days” (T3a).

When prompted, seven of the nine described having the opportunity to watch other people teach through structured observations as contributing significantly to their practice. “I was fortunate enough to go around observing” (T1b); “We did [observations] in Phases, we watched with other teachers and then made comments. That was quite useful actually because it is picking up things in an informal way” (T3a). One teacher was upset at the fact that they had not been given this opportunity even after requesting it, “I’ve asked to do that in my performance management but it has not happened” (T1c).

Of the six teachers in leadership roles, two cited working together with members of the senior leadership team as supporting their learning and development. Only one of the teacher’s interviewed, mentioned PPA as vehicle for learning, “sort of having PPA time with your partner you learn a lot through them as well through discussion and

planning and things like that” (T2a), and again this was a respondent from School Two.

Of the learning that was organised for teachers in school there seemed to be much that was predetermined by the head teacher or senior leaders of the school:

“A lot of it is based around the school development plan and the SEF and so as a SLT we sit down and discuss priorities... And most of the learning I guess is top down from SLT but it is very much that we are trying to foster an ethos of openness in staff meetings so everyone has an input...” (T1b).

The opportunities for learning that had taken place seemed to be centred around the needs of the school and the success measured in classroom practice:

“Most of it I would say is led through staff meetings, either twilights or INSET days. Um, it might be that it is done through staff in school or it might be that we get outside people in if it is something that we have no expertise on. Um, we are generally given time to practise that or embed it into our practice and then if it is a kind of key initiative we are observed or monitored to see if it is embedded in our practice” (T3c).

Only one of the nine teachers mentioned being asked about their individual learning needs in the form of a questionnaire and one of the respondents said:

“I guess I don’t do enough independently if you like and have focused on what the school is doing at the time. So any learning that takes place is linked in with the key developments on the SIP I think. Yeah” (T1b).

When the nine teaching assistants were asked, since they had been in post, could they identify how their school based learning had been organised, it became clear that their learning had been organised in just three ways (see Appendix 10):

- Courses.
- Observing the staff they work with in situ.
- Staff meetings and teacher days (INSET), including Cluster Training.

All nine of the teaching assistants said the expectation was that they would find courses themselves that they would like to attend and put forward requests. They explained that they were not always involved in whole school INSET or twilight sessions for two reasons, 1) they weren't required to attend and were told so by the leaders of the school or 2) they worked part-time and the hours that they worked meant that they were not on site for these meetings.

Of those that did attend whole school INSET however, all said that they found it invaluable and actually said that they wanted to be more involved. Two of the teaching assistants talked about how useful training had been when it had been personalised specifically for them. A recurring theme that seemed to emerge was that there was potential for teaching assistants to feel undervalued and even excluded from the important business of the school because they were not always at staff meetings or involved in performance meetings in the same way as their colleagues:

“When we are not invited to staff meetings I feel quite put out. Because I know in other schools the TAs are never excluded from meetings” (TA1b).

So the learning of adults in school from the perspectives of all groups of respondents seems to be largely predetermined by the head teacher and senior leadership team. This is worthy of discussion in the chapters that follow. Much of it seems to be organised internally, and although courses still featured in the responses, access is not guaranteed for all. Observing others classroom practice has an increasing significance in the learning of teachers and in some schools, leadership meetings and PPA are beginning to be seen as vehicles for perpetual learning. However it appears from the perspectives of the nine teaching assistants that learning opportunities are unevenly distributed and not necessarily strategically planned.

Preferred Learning Method

When the head teachers were asked about how they would categorise their learning; as memorisation; as reflection; or as intuition, (West-Burnham and Ireson, 2005) or as anything else, two instinctively said that they learnt by reflecting. The other head teacher acknowledged a reliance on all three methods and used them as appropriate but also said that most personal learning was probably through reflection. Head

Teacher 3 said:

“I suppose I spend a lot of time reflecting on, well on the leadership team and where we are as a leadership team and what we need to do to really move the school on and I suppose within the team how we are each contributing or what I need to do to support them... I do tend to talk to my colleagues closely and that questioning and dialogue helps me to think about things...” (HT3).

When the teachers were asked about how they would categorise their learning two instinctively said that they learnt by memorisation:

“I suppose I would have to go with memorisation because the other things in essence come from it. We spend so much time in that. I had to memorise what to do with the whiteboards for example...” (T1c).

Six said that they learned mainly through reflection and felt that having the time to reflect on learning, whether that be learning acquired on a course or learning taking place in school was essential. Another respondent said that they learnt through a mixture of reflection and intuition:

“Definitely not memorisation. A bit of reflection and intuition. I like to have time to reflect and I like to develop things myself before I try to influence people...” (T2b).

While yet another said that it was mainly through a mixture of all three:

“A bit of everything. That is really hard. I do find that I do remember things well. I do gather information... I often do the reflection as well... (T2c).

When the teaching assistants were asked about how they would categorise their learning seven said that they learnt by reflection. However, they cited time constraints as a real barrier to this type of learning:

“I’d say reflection. I think when we get chance, because it is so busy at the minute... (TA3a).

This was supported by Teaching Assistant 3b:

“If I always had the time to reflect upon it I would go for that one but there isn’t always the time to reflect” (TA3b).

One of the teaching assistants said that they learned by memorisation, “[we are] given lots of information to remember and go away and use” (TA1b) and one by a combination of reflection and intuition. There seemed therefore to be a consensus amongst the teaching assistants, just like the teachers and head teachers that although all three aspects of learning were evident, reflection was perhaps their preferred way to learn.

When the head teachers were asked how each of them thought they best learned there were similarities and differences in their responses (see Appendix 11). Two of the three stated that it was important that they felt passionate about what they were learning or had the desire to learn and one particularly emphasised the importance of collaborative learning through discussion and talk. Head Teacher One said that it was important to be able to relate learning to the job in hand acknowledging that learning was difficult when feeling inhibited. Head Teacher Two very clearly thrived on learning with others and in social contexts and Head Teacher Three talked a great deal about the importance of informal learning with past and present colleagues.

When the teachers were asked how each of them thought they best learned, as with the head teacher respondents, there were similarities and differences in their responses (see Appendix 11). Four of the nine stated that it was important that they felt passionate or interested in what they were learning, and as opposed to the head teachers where only one out of the three particularly emphasised the importance of collaborative learning through discussion and talk with others, six out of the nine teachers cited this as important. Interestingly at least one respondent from each of the schools felt that collaborative learning was important for them:

“Um, I thoroughly enjoy being with other people... So I would much rather learn with other people than learn on my own” (T1c).

When the teaching assistants were asked how each of them thought they best learned, again there were similarities and differences in their responses (see Appendix 11). Four of the nine said that they learnt best when they were able to watch something and then do it for themselves. As with the teachers, the majority of teaching assistants stressed the importance of collaborative learning through discussion, watching and talking with others:

“...my biggest way of learning is through actually working in class. I learn from others. I have worked for a long time for an experienced teacher who I think is a very good teacher and I have learned a lot from her and I learn far more from that than sitting with a book and reading from a book and as I said I go away and reflect upon what she had taught...” (TA3b).

Specifically they mentioned the “approachability of staff”, “the atmosphere of the school”, “staff who were prepared to share their knowledge”, “being in a learning environment all the time” and the “supportiveness of colleagues”. Interestingly all

but one of the teaching assistant respondents said that they felt that collaborative learning was important for them.

So it becomes evident from the responses of participants in this case-study that learning with and from others through an on-going, perpetual system that allows individuals and groups time for reflection is important. Schools therefore that want to embrace a system of perpetual learning need to consider the prevailing conditions to support this.

School Climate

In order to ascertain a fully rounded picture of the school climate respondents were asked to think about the five norms that are likely to lead to inquiry, openness and trust as identified by Lipshitz et al (2002).

It is possible to see from the head teacher responses in Appendix 12 that Head Teacher 2 described the climate of School 2 in positive terms. This school also seemed the one most closely aligned with a system of perpetual learning (Schein, 1992). In this school the head teacher described everyone as feeling valued and able to contribute; there is evidence of risk taking, little evidence of embarrassment and of the five norms that Lipshitz et al (2002) cited as important characteristics of organisational learning, all scored highly. Conversely in School One where the head teacher described the climate as varied and some of the staff as a negative influence, there were elements of embarrassment and of the five norms identified by Lipshitz et al (2002) only two scored highly. This supports the work of Senge (2006) and

Lipshitz (2002) who claim the climate of an organisation in this case a school, has a significant impact on practitioner learning.

The next sections will explore the climate of each school individually from the perspectives of the teacher and teaching assistant respondents. It is necessary to report on each school separately in this section in order to identify differences and similarities in climate that may or may not inhibit or enhance organisational learning practice.

School One

All three teachers in this school seemed to suggest that the climate was not particularly conducive for learning. Two out of the three cited the workload as a contributory factor in this. This view was supported by two of the teaching assistants:

“...there isn't a supportive climate. It is difficult to analyse, I've never worked in a place quite like it really. Um, I mean for me I just think that there is a steep hierarchy and um, I think that you are pushed down if you're not in the – well I think it's the management down. It is difficult to try and be an individual and try to do something because you feel you are put back into your box” (TA1b):

“We all have off days and if someone is not being particularly friendly to you and you are working with them it is harder to get through the day and function and give your best” (TA1c).

There was a mixed response from teacher and teaching assistant respondents to the questions relating to ‚risk taking and embarrassment’ too. The two teachers who were reticent about taking risks also seemed to find some scenarios embarrassing. Two of the three teaching assistants felt that there were times when they or their colleagues had been undermined. Interestingly all three teaching assistants in this school said

that they were not risk takers and two of them said that they had been embarrassed or had felt uncomfortable in front of colleagues:

“But now I have lost my confidence I have to say and even if I was given the opportunity I probably wouldn’t have the confidence to do it now. I have certainly lost my confidence”: “I think that it’s hard to learn when you are not given opportunities or do not have any confidence” (TA1b).

Whereas Teacher 1c (see Appendix 13) told me that they took risks all the time and never felt embarrassed. This was particularly interesting as it was this respondent who seemed largely disaffected; feeling deeply undervalued having disengaged, to a certain extent, from the learning processes:

“So I don’t necessarily make the contributions that I ought to now in staff meetings because I think well is there any point... Um, but when you start to get the feeling that I’m not going to listen to anything that person says you then are reticent about contributing. I am sure that some of the things I say are seen as negative. They are not meant negative...” (T1c).

Of the five norms that Lipshitz et al (2002) cited as important characteristics of organisational learning, only two were scored highly by the head teacher. A similar picture emerges from the responses of the teachers and teaching assistants working in the school. They all agreed that accountability was a visible norm but then there were inconsistencies in the scoring of the other 4 norms. Transparency however was assigned a low score by all respondents and was an agreed weakness in the school:

“No I don’t think transparency is very true of here at all. There is a real confidence issue. People are worried...” (T1b).

School Two

In School Two in this study all the teachers and teaching assistants felt the climate was conducive to learning using phrases like, “the climate is positive”; “there is a nice feel to the school” and “we are supportive of each other”. This was also the view of

the head teacher in this school who said that the climate was positive and everyone felt that they could make a contribution.

All the teachers and teaching assistants in this school said that they were prepared to take risks, one of the central tenants of learning (Stoll et al, 2002) although it must be acknowledged that the teaching assistants were more reticent about this than the teachers. Unlike some of the teachers, the teaching assistants in this school found it difficult to think of times when they had felt embarrassed, a necessary pre-cursor to risk-taking and the limiting of defensive routines (Argyris, 1999).

Of the five norms that Lipshitz et al (2002) cited as important characteristics of organisational learning, although there were slight discrepancies in the comments made by the respondents, all scored highly when compared to the scores from School One. It was evident that much work had taken place around building a climate of mutual trust and respect, as illustrated by Teacher 2a, “everybody is, you know, valued for what they say” (T2a); and Teacher 2c, “I think that quite a lot of us are open about our errors, not in an error way but sort of looking at something to improve on and people are quite open to asking for help...” (T2c).

“I feel that I have a voice, I am not frightened of saying that I don’t understand or wow that is fantastic... I don’t mind people coming in and seeing what I am doing because I feel that if I make a mistake it is not the end of the world” (TA2c).

This was supported by Teaching Assistant 2a:

“For me personally, I think because we are more at ease, more comfortable you are in a better learning situation...I think you can ask more questions, contribute more without feeling undervalued...” (TA2a).

Unlike School One, the teaching assistants in this school were clear that the climate of the school had a direct impact on them as learners:

“You want to learn, you want to do more, you want to give as much back, as much as you can because you feel good” (TA2c).

School Three

The responses from the teachers and teaching assistants at School Three were similar to those from School Two, and they expressed that in the main the school climate was positive and supported their learning.

“I think it makes you want to learn more... you are given so much support and encouragement it makes you want to aim a bit higher and evolve your learning in that way” (TA3a):

This concurred with the view of the head teacher of this school who said that overall the climate of the school was “fine”. There did however seem to be elements of power and position affecting the teaching assistants feelings of well-being and value in this school.

Unlike the teachers who had all taken risks all three teaching assistants said that they wouldn't consider themselves as risk-takers. Two of the three however, when prompted, did say that they took risks with the children and the third said she felt she worked from her own initiative. Again, teacher and teaching assistant respondents cited incidences where they had felt embarrassed in front of colleagues. Two teachers cited examples when they thought they may have said the “wrong thing”:

“I have said the wrong thing in staff meetings before” (T3a).

And Teacher 3b said:

“I think in terms of when I ask questions I suppose when I don’t know whether I am saying the right thing sometimes... maybe I have said something that the others may not have agreed with and I felt I shouldn’t have said that particular comment related to whatever the discussion was” (T3b).

One teaching assistant said they did not volunteer anything in staff meetings due to being “terrified” of getting it wrong.

Of the five norms that Lipshitz et al (2002) cited as important characteristics of organisational learning, although there were slight discrepancies in the comments made by the respondents, all scored highly in comparison to School One. It was clear that much work had taken place around developing aspects of these five norms and yet it was evident from the responses that unlike School Two there was still an uncertainty in the confidence of the teachers and teaching assistants as illustrated in the two quotes below:

“I don’t know if I would feel as confident confronting the Head, well I don’t mean confronting... but if I wasn’t as happy about something I would probably feel more comfortable doing it with one of my peers as opposed to the Head” (T3c):

“Transparency, no. I would say that some of the TAs don’t have a good, open relationship with the teachers that they are working with... One of the Teaching Assistants told me a while ago that she felt the Teacher undermined her in front of the children and she didn’t feel that she was as valued as she could have been” (TA3c):

Summary of School Climate

So it is possible to see from the quotes above and Appendix 8-16 that the responses from the groups of respondents in each of the schools were largely congruent. In the school where all the respondents perceived the school climate as favourable there was a general feeling that teachers and teaching assistants were valued and were able to contribute to school improvement and on-going continuous learning practices. It

appeared that although teachers and teaching assistants shared similar views in the main there were subtle differences in their perceptions with teaching assistants generally feeling less confident to contribute or access learning opportunities as evidenced in School One and Three. Some of the teaching assistants described feeling somewhat excluded or undervalued and referred to low levels of confidence. Although there were consistencies in practice across the three schools, there were also many differences. Perhaps most significant were the differences in climate. All nine teaching assistants, teachers and three head teachers recognised that the climate of the school impacted on the learning within their schools.

The Value of Organisational Learning

All three head teacher respondents in this research placed significant importance on adult learning within their organisation all citing it as a key factor in the success of their school. When asked to explain how they encouraged adult learning in their organisations there was a tangible sense of responsibility. Other than in the ways already sighted, through school improvement planning, performance management, questionnaires and informal discussions, Head Teacher 2 said that learning was encouraged by leading by example. This was also cited by Head Teacher 3 who said:

“I try to model the kinds of things and behaviours you expect to see. I am always very conscious of the model I am giving to other members of staff” (HT3).

Head Teacher 2 stated the importance of encouragement, “I think with the staff here I very much encourage and support them to develop themselves” and Head Teacher 3 talked about talent spotting and encouraging people to take on various roles within school.

It was evident that all three head teacher respondents saw practitioner learning as an essential aspect of continuous school improvement and this view was supported by the teacher respondents too. All nine teachers in this research placed significant importance on continuous learning citing it as a key factor in the improvement of their practice. When asked if they thought the climate of the school impacted on them as a learner all nine said they felt that it did:

“...at the moment staff would probably very happily take on board anything... learn quite successfully I would imagine in this sort of climate” (T3c).

When asked to explain how they encouraged professional learning in their organisations for others, with the exception of two teachers from School One all the others believed that it was one of their central responsibilities. They cited concrete examples like,

- NQT mentoring;
- coaching;
- performance management;
- auditing needs of staff through monitoring and then providing relevant support;
- open door – welcome staff into my classroom;
- informal help, support and guidance;
- being a role model;
- enthusing and motivating others.

All nine teaching assistants placed significant importance on continuous learning too citing it as a key factor in the improvement of their practice:

“You know I am a real believer in life-long learning. I think if you don’t keep learning you get stuck in your ways and you don’t move forward... Ideas have to be challenged and those opportunities have to be there through courses or INSET or staff meetings really...” (TA2b).

This view was supported by TA3c also:

“I think for every person to be a life-long learner is a really good thing... because it is so easy just to... become static and things move on and new

initiatives come into place. I think you really need to keep on top of your game” (TA3c).

When asked if they thought the climate of the school impacted on them as a learner it was clear that they thought that it did with them citing inhibiting factors such as “feeling undervalued”, “knowing their place”, “being kept in a box”, “not feeling like they could make a positive contribution” and “feeling disadvantaged” because they were not always invited to staff meetings and INSET days. Conversely those that felt well supported by their colleagues and senior leaders said that they were in a better position to learn and felt more open to it. Their professional identity was being crafted and as such they knew the value they brought to each of their schools.

When asked about how they encouraged professional learning in their organisations for others, 6 out of the 9 cited concrete examples like,

- having a positive attitude;
- informal discussions with other TAs;
- demonstrating and sharing knowledge;
- encouraging others.

Of those that felt they did not support the learning of others, two came from School One. Much of the learning the teaching assistants felt they encouraged was restricted to other teaching assistants and none of them talked about helping other groups of staff to learn e.g. teachers. Yet there were many ways cited in which they facilitated learning for others that mirrored the responses of their teacher colleagues including, „informal conversations’, „being enthusiastic and positive’ and „informal help, support and guidance’.

It is evident therefore that practitioner learning was viewed by all the respondents in this multiple case-study as an essential part of continuous school improvement.

Research Question 3 – From Experience, how can Organisational Learning be improved in future?

Although no distinct themes emerged from the three head teachers they each had very definite ideas of how learning could be further enhanced in their individual settings and the benefits this would have to staff and the school as a whole. Head Teacher 1 said that access to learning needed to be more evenly distributed, feeling that some staff accessed more opportunities to learn than others. This head teacher also wanted to introduce a system to better share knowledge, especially the knowledge gained on a specific course attended by maybe one or two members of staff. If this was accomplished this head teacher said:

“if everybody was really highly trained I would have outstanding Teachers across the board. And I think I would have a highly motivated team who were accepting of each other’s thinking and were able to affect their own behaviours. I think I’d have the perfect school” (HT1).

However, this head teacher had also suggested in earlier questions that the climate in the school varied and the attitudes and dispositions of the staff were inconsistent. Yet this is not something cited for improvement to enhance learning.

In contrast Head Teacher 2 was concerned with the time available for learning arguing that meetings were too often used for ‚house-keeping’ as opposed to ‚learning’ and said “I don’t think it is a question of telling people but it is about them having the time to understand it... and also the time to disseminate their understanding to others”(HT2). Head Teacher 3 on the other hand talked about the need to conduct a needs analysis with the staff to really understand their perceived learning needs and then devise training packages based around the analysis. This

head teacher concurred with Head Teacher 2 stating time as a constraint, “there is probably not enough time devoted to individual needs” (HT3).

Head Teacher 2 was keen to point out that adult learning is an essential investment in more ways than one:

“ [it is] giving people back the opportunities that you have had... and I think it is about having that understanding and thinking I really so want to encourage these people and give these people opportunities because someone has done it for you” (HT2).

So for the head teacher respondents further improvements in adult learning in their schools would mean,

- sharing/distributing knowledge;
- ensuring equal access to the learning experience;
- creating more time for learning;
- asking individuals about their learning needs;
- investing in people.

All nine teachers had very definite ideas of how learning could be further enhanced in their individual settings. Class Teacher 1a suggested more opportunities for joint planning, Teacher 1b, as well as citing the importance of improving the climate of the school, suggested really focusing staff meetings away from business meetings and more towards active learning. This respondent also wanted to see management structures in place so that good practice could be shared, “for as long as I have been here we haven’t done internal observations... year group to year group... and I think that would be really beneficial” (T1b).

Teacher 2a felt that a bigger budget allocation should be made for training and on-going learning which would allow teachers more time to try things and reflect on their practice. Teacher 2b felt that there would be benefits for teachers in visiting other schools to see best practice and Teacher 2c and 3c reiterated the need for more time for focused learning which involved shadowing other teachers for considerable periods of time. This was reiterated by Teacher 3c who also felt that extra time for joint PPA and for observing best practice in the form of other teachers' lessons was essential. Only two of the nine teachers questioned cited more access to courses.

So for the class teacher respondents, in contrast to a certain extent with the perceptions of the head teachers, further improvements in practitioner learning in their schools would mean:

- sharing/distributing best practice via observations and visits to other schools;
- creating more time for learning;
- focused learning during staff meetings and INSET;
- improving the climate and feelings of psychological safety;
- more time for joint PPA;
- greater monetary investment;
- greater access to courses.

All nine teaching assistants also had very definite ideas of how learning could be further enhanced in their individual settings. A key theme to emerge was that they felt that there should be more opportunities for teaching assistants to engage in the learning process whether this was through greater access to courses or simply being invited to attend staff meetings and training. There also seemed in some of the

settings to be the opinion amongst teaching assistants that they were not as important as other members of staff and therefore were disadvantaged:

“I expressed two or three things that I wouldn’t mind developing further... But I haven’t heard anything. I mean I do appreciate that at the top you have an awful lot more to juggle with than you do lower down but that is not to say that just because you are lower down you are not important” (TA1c).

This was supported by TA2a and TA2b:

“I know the Teachers obviously get offered courses that are relevant for them and what they are doing in their role. I think TAs would probably appreciate more opportunities to learn (TA2a):

“Perhaps a bit more encouragement. It is like courses, yes there are leaflets that are put in the staffroom but they are put in a box and hidden” (TA2b).

As teaching assistants are often employed on a part time basis it was not always possible for them to meet and chat:

“We all work different hours and the majority are part-time and so we don’t get to see each other very often. It’s usually at the photocopier or first thing in the morning that we have a quick chat. Some staff meetings are not relevant to us and sometimes we have been told that TAs are not needed” (TA1a).

This was also the case in School Two and Three, where TA2b said, “... I don’t do staff meetings... and I miss out a little bit on information sharing there... But you need to be there to experience the information.” And Teaching Assistant 3b said,

“If TAs can’t go to meetings they don’t get to know about all of the things that are going on and they miss out sometimes. That could do with being better. If they were involved with more, communication would be better and then they would want to do more as part of the school and they would want to learn more as well and do more training whereas at the moment it is the case of come in, do the job, do what you have to do and go home” (TA3b).

When Teaching Assistant 1b was asked how learning could be further developed the school climate was cited as the primary inhibitor:

“I think that it is difficult in the climate of the school really. We’ve got very strong people at the top and I think it would be difficult to break it all down. I don’t know where it has all gone wrong” (TA1b).

This teaching assistant went on to explain the necessity for structured programmes of support and learning development:

“I would quite like a structured learning for everybody...And I’d quite like to be asked what I would be interested in” (TA1b).

This was supported by TA2a who said they would like more learning opportunities for the things they would like to be involved in:

“It’s always good to have more opportunities to share good practice whether it is through meetings or observing” (TA2).

So for the teaching assistant respondents in this research, in contrast to a certain extent with the perceptions of head teachers, further improvements in adult learning in their schools would mean:

- greater access to courses;
- developing a structured programme of learning for all staff;
- creating more time for learning;
- sharing/distributing suggested best practice via observations and networking with TAs in other schools;
- improving the school climate;
- more time for joint PPA for all teaching assistants.

Summary

The research findings have painted a detailed picture of organisational learning in the three case-study schools and some common themes have begun to emerge as well as some more obvious differences within and amongst the schools. In response to RQ1 – what experiences have the respondents had of organisational learning it was clear

that opportunities existed in each of the case-study schools for formal and informal learning. Those organisational learning experiences that were most successful were cited as informal opportunities that were on-going, focused, individualised and highly relevant to the job. Reflection was the way in which all three of the head teachers said they engaged in most of their learning and was something that they tried to encourage for their staff teams. Reflection was the way in which the majority of teachers and teaching assistants said they engaged in learning too, and was something that they would value additional time for.

In response to RQ2 that asked about the key organisational characteristics that enhance or inhibit learning all three sets of respondents identified what it is, in their view, that makes organisational learning successful and what it is, that they believe actually inhibits it in practice. The head teachers believed that successful learning, both for themselves, and their staff was learning that was focused and highly relevant to the school development plan and key initiatives. It was evident that the head teachers in this study had not relinquished control of the learning agenda. Teacher and teaching assistant respondents believed that the most successful learning is learning that is relevant to their class based roles and is often informal through observation, conversation, guidance and support.

Through this phenomenological multiple case-study it also became apparent that the climate in each of the three schools was quite different. There appeared to be a direct correlation between the climate of the school and staff engagement in the learning process with a teacher and a teaching assistant in case-study School One acknowledging this.

RQ3 was concerned with eliciting how organisational learning in each of the schools could be improved upon as expressed by the respondents. The head teachers wanted to carry out individual learning audits to ensure the learning and development needs of all staff were met. Teacher respondents suggested more opportunities for joint planning; a management structure that would allow good practice to be shared; more time to try things and reflect on their practice. The teaching assistants were clear that they wanted to be able to attend formal courses and have more opportunities for informal learning. It appeared that teaching assistants opportunities to learn were far fewer than for the other two groups. For the most part the climate of the school although being described as having a significant impact on the learning processes within each of the settings was, with the exception of one teacher and one teaching assistant, not identified as an area for further investigation or improvement.

The next chapter of this thesis will discuss the findings in light of the literature review. It will make explicit the potential contribution this study can make to the existing theoretical knowledge base and make preliminary recommendations. The final chapter, Chapter 6, will use the preliminary recommendations to draw conclusions and present a system of perpetual learning for primary school practitioners consideration. It is intended that this perpetual learning system will not only support the case-study schools but also others interested in enhancing the organisational learning capacity in their own schools.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

Having reported on the findings in the last chapter, this chapter will now discuss those findings in light of the literature. This chapter will transcend description to critically analyse the emerging themes. Preliminary recommendations will be presented for consideration. Having done this, the next chapter – The Conclusion, will use the preliminary recommendations to identify the potential contributions to knowledge this study makes. The potential contribution to knowledge will be presented as a perpetual system of organisational learning for primary school practitioners thereby enabling school leaders to reflect critically on the learning practices they engender.

The findings that have emerged from the fieldwork have been grouped under the themes discussed in the literature review, each of which relate directly to one or more of the three research questions upon which this study is based as illustrated in Table 12 below. These themes will be discussed in turn.

| Themes | Research Questions |
|--|--|
| Understanding the Learning Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - types of learning/reflection; - formal and informal learning; | RQ1. What experiences do the participants have of organisational learning? |
| The Conditions for Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - climate; | RQ2. In the participants' experience what are the key organisational characteristics that enhance or inhibit organisational learning? |
| Encouraging Perpetual Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - learning together; | RQ1. What experiences do the participants have of organisational learning? RQ3. From the participants' experience how can organisational learning be improved in the future? |
| Power and Organisational Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - harnessing power and politics; - equality to learn. | RQ2. In the participants' experience what are the key organisational characteristics that enhance or inhibit organisational learning? RQ3. From the participants' experience how can organisational learning be improved in the future? |

Table12, Literature Themes matched to Research Questions

Understanding the Learning Process - RQ1 experiences of organisational learning

Having used the modes of learning adapted from West-Burnham and Ireson (2005) developed from the foundational work of Argyris and Schon (1978) this section will discuss the types of learning the research respondents were engaging in. It will discuss the implications for formal and informal learning practices in the case-study schools before making some preliminary recommendations for consideration.

Types of Learning; Reflection

When starting this research it was necessary to establish what organisational learning actually meant and what learning in an organisation actually looked like in practice. It soon became apparent (Huber, 1991; Mackenzie, 1994; Chiva and Alegre 2005; Prange, 2006) that organisational learning had been classified and presented in a multitude of ways, making it complex and multi-faceted.

This research, however, was based on the premise that organisational learning is a social process rather than a technical one where people socially construct knowledge together through complex interactions (Watkins and Marsick, 1993). This view was supported by MacGilchrist et al (2004) who suggested that learning is an active process rather than a passive one that includes asking questions, reflecting, understanding and subsequently being able to use and apply learning in a range of situations. This often involves learning with and from others in an interactive social process (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

A number of theories then emerged providing insight into how learning actually occurs in practice. Argyris and Schon (1978) developed a distinction between single and double-loop learning; Carnell and Lodge (2002) identified three different approaches to learning; reception, construction and co-construction. West-Burnham and Ireson (2005) extended Argyris and Schon's (1978) model of single and double-loop learning to include triple-loop learning too, referring to the different learning models as shallow learning, deep learning and profound learning.

When the respondents in this study were asked about how they learned, all three head teachers said that they relied heavily on reflection characterised as deep/double-loop learning. The very term reflection means "to learn" suggests Moon (2005); it can be defined as thinking carefully about thoughts, actions and behaviours and in doing so learning from these reflections and experiences (Nehring et al, 2010). Reflection however is more than just thinking. It involves a greater level of processing and requires a desire to want to improve. The term reflection is used to pull together a broad range of previous thinking or knowledge in order to make greater sense of it for another purpose (Brookfield, 1995; Moon, 2005).

Field (2011), in support of Stoll et al (2002) and MacGilchrist (2004), argued persuasively for the development of reflective practice in schools suggesting that learning without a component of reflection does not empower practitioners but instead makes them over-reliant on others. Overwhelming, the majority of teachers and teaching assistants in this study cited reflection as the way they engaged in most of their learning. With this consensus, and with nearly all of the participants acknowledging that they liked to learn with and from others in social situations, it

became clear that a perpetual system of learning in schools should encourage and support group and individual reflection.

Although perhaps to a lesser extent in School One, the three groups of respondents in this multiple case-study, if we are to accept Argyris and Schon's, (1978) argument, engaged in double-loop learning. If comparing this with the work of West-Burnham and Ireson (2005) these responses suggest that the head teachers, teachers and teaching assistants in this study were primarily involved in deep learning where the participants derived knowledge and understanding as a result of their reflection driven by an intrinsic desire to learn and comprehend. In turn this enabled them to interpret information and situations making them interdependent on those around them.

The literature review has suggested that double-loop learning is essential in 21st Century organisations. The participant responses suggest that they engage in double-loop learning in their respective schools. This may delineate a shift within the interpretive paradigm towards an approach to learning where individuals have more ownership of their learning experiences and engage in learning that results in a change of action or practice. The responses however seemed to suggest that participants were yet to embrace a profound mode of learning (triple-loop), where individuals achieved greater levels of "wisdom, creativity and independence" (West-Burnham and Ireson 2005). Much of the learning was described as „top down' and was directed or governed by the head teacher. Although this ensures that organisational goals are central to developments (Kunda, 1992) it can be argued that this approach to organisational learning does not promote the most efficient learning for individual

employees and the organisation in turn (Argyris, 1986; Coopey, 1994; Ortenblad, 2002).

Formal and Informal Learning

If we accept that continuous learning is an essential component of schools sustained capacity to improve, then it is necessary to consider what the respondents in this multiple case-study said about opportunities for formal and informal learning.

Opportunities for formal learning in the form of external courses seemed unevenly distributed with perhaps those in leadership positions in school gaining the greater access. This would support the work of Coopey (1995); Bolam (2005) and Spillane et al (2009).

However, with the exception of the teaching assistants who wanted greater access to formal learning, it is informal learning rather than formal learning opportunities that the majority of the respondents in this multiple-case study favoured. The findings suggest therefore that highly effective learning that impacts on practice is often informal, personalised and driven by individual need.

For the head teachers in this study informal learning, was extremely important and seemed to come in two forms: firstly, mentors and advisories and, secondly, personalised reading of current literature. Two of the three head teachers in this small study said that the learning that had influenced them most significantly had been learning that had taken place in the context of the school supporting the arguments for situated learning suggested by Lave (1993).

A similar picture emerged from the teachers and teaching assistants but almost more forcibly, with them really valuing the support and ideas received through working with others. What was interesting however was that those things that they cited as adding most value, such as watching colleagues teach, team teaching, or shadowing, were quite limited with teaching assistants not really having the opportunity to take part in this type of learning at all. This shows that although Stoll et al writing in 2003 encouraged schools to develop a model of professional learning that would include all staff this was not yet evident in the case-study schools where much of the practitioner learning excluded teaching assistants from formal and informal opportunities to learn. This supports the work of Louis and Gordon, (2006) who describe teaching assistants as “critical resources that lie fallow in schools” (p.2).

Although all the head teachers in this study, and to a lesser extent the teachers, appreciated the role they played in supporting the learning of others within school, the vast majority of teaching assistants only saw themselves as impacting on the professional development of other teaching assistants, with three of the nine interviewed not seeing themselves as providing learning for others at all. The findings suggest therefore that teaching assistants need to be encouraged to learn through a variety of informal means supporting the learning of others generatively.

So the notion of embracing organisational learning means that schools have to explicitly elect to place the learning of all staff at the core of their work (Stoll et al, 2003). This means adopting a generative approach to learning where reciprocal arrangements are made for the benefit of head teachers, teachers and teaching assistants. In such organisations linkages between leadership and learning are

reflected in the learning of leaders themselves and, importantly, in their leadership actions that enable the learning of others (James et al, 2000). Such leadership requires the establishment of both structural and climatic support. This should be under constant review, to address the changes needed within the contexts and communities in which these improvements are pursued (Brundett and Rhodes, 2011).

Preliminary Recommendations

In answer therefore to RQ1 – experiences of organisational learning, the following preliminary recommendations are made.

1. Build in lots of opportunities for reflection (deep-learning) during formal and in-formal in-school training.
2. Design learning situations that require practitioners to learn from each other and make explicit the generative nature of this support.

The Conditions for Learning - RQ2 key organisational characteristics that enhance or inhibit organisational learning

This section will explore the organisational climate in each of the case-study schools in light of the literature reviewed and consider the implications of this on participants learning. It will discuss the implications for head teachers in embracing a system of perpetual learning before making some preliminary recommendations for consideration.

Establishing a Learning Climate

We accept that head teachers establish a clear vision for school improvement and in this vision there must be a clear commitment to learning (Senge, 2006). Lipshitz et al (2002); Senge (2006) and James et al (2006) specify that leaders, in promoting organisational learning, should instil the values of a learning climate and create conditions that support psychological safety. Argyris and Schon (1996) suggest that a learning leader must assess the adequacy of the organisation's climate, detect its weaknesses and promote its transformation. According to Senge (2006) the organisation that discovers how to tap into people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels secures longevity. All the participants in this small case-study understood that the school climate impacted significantly on the success of their organisational learning practices (Bottery, 2003; Lipshitz et al, 2002; Senge, 2006). None of the head teachers however cited the climate of their school as an area for further improvement when thinking about how learning could be further enhanced in each of their schools. The findings of the case-study suggest therefore that head teachers need to prioritise the transformations or on-going improvement in school climate in their drive to secure successful organisational learning.

Interestingly, one of the teachers and one of the teaching assistants interviewed said that the learning of staff would be enhanced if the climate was a priority for improvement. This supports the work of Stoll et al, (2003) who argues that the likelihood of practitioners choosing to engage in continuous learning will be much greater in a school where conditions are in place to support it. Further research would be necessary however into the climate, meaning shared rules or normative behaviours, of schools to identify explicitly how the conditions for learning could be

achieved in a range of primary school contexts. The main implication is that without a clear focus on climate by those with power, a perpetual system of learning may be difficult to facilitate (Easterby-Smith et al, 1998).

Assessing the Learning Climate

Lipshitz et al (2002) stated that effective organisational learning requires a climate that fosters inquiry, openness, and trust. This is also true in the development of personal mastery, one of the five disciplines of organisational learning identified by Senge (2006). Senge (2006) identifies personal mastery as the most radical of the five disciplines; the idea that an organisational environment can be created in which people can truly grow as human beings.

The three head teachers in this small case-study were able to discuss the effectiveness of the organisation's capacity to instil inquiry, openness and trust and had a clear understanding of their limitations in this regard. However, although all three valued organisational learning and saw it as a necessary pre-cursor to school improvement they did not necessarily realise the fundamental impact that the climate of the school had on organisational learning. Not having analysed in detail the behaviours that inhibited learning and impacted negatively on the climate of their school it was difficult to fully appreciate that an organisation's learning system is somewhat dependent on organisational behaviours and if this is to be fully understood then significant attention needs to be focused on the school climate and the normative behaviours of practitioners. It may even be necessary for head teachers to delve into the realms of psychodynamics which interprets individual and group behaviours in social settings as identified by James (2009).

All three groups of respondents however were confident in their assessment of the school climate against the five norms identified by Lipshitz et al (2002) that have been identified as leading to effective systems of organisational learning (transparency, integrity, issue orientation, inquiry and accountability). In those schools where the climate was perceived to be supportive and encouraging the participants attributed high scores to each of these norms and said that they felt valued and able to contribute constructively. In the school where the climate was less supportive or perceived to be more varied the participants attributed lower scores to each of these norms and learning seemed to be less successful.

When considering School Three, it was evident to see that the teachers and teaching assistants felt empowered and disempowered at the same time (Watkins and Marsick, 1993), with the organisation creating the conditions to enhance or inhibit empowerment. So, for example, one of the respondents felt they were a valued member of the senior leadership team with the ability to lead the school forward in the drive for sustained improvement but at the same time was also worried about saying the wrong thing in leadership meetings thereby acknowledging not always feeling psychologically safe.

Similarly, in School One where teaching assistants were excluded, in the most part, from staff meetings then we see a disempowered body of staff that were acutely aware of their exclusion and resented it. There was no acknowledgement of this however during the interviews with head teachers. There was an apparent lack of awareness that some staff felt genuinely disempowered, reinforcing the significance of climate

and the need for head teachers and senior leaders to evaluate school climate, set up mechanisms to improve it and so aid learning but in a way that does not limit political activity thereby inhibiting learning at the expense of normative controls.

Even though the climate in each of the schools was different there were similarities in the responses of respondents. For example, accountability, defined as assuming responsibility for both learning and implementing lesson learned, was cited as being almost always present in all of the schools by all of the groups interviewed.

Transparency, however, exposing one's thoughts and actions to others in order to receive feedback, was an area identified for further development in each of the settings by each group of respondents. Even in School Two where the staff reported feeling very well supported, valued and able to express themselves freely, they suggested that transparency, although present in some form or other, was not consistently employed throughout their school. Some staff, they explained, felt more comfortable being truly transparent with someone of their own standing rather than with someone they perceived as more highly ranked. This supports the view of Lipshitz et al (2002) who suggests that total transparency is difficult to embrace as it means that individuals have to be prepared to accept the exposure of potential failures. The anxiety caused by expecting or experiencing failure leads to the emergence of defensive routines that can hinder inquiry or subvert its integrity. So without true transparency and psychological safety it is difficult for individuals in schools to trust colleagues and engage in triple-loop or profound learning which leads to creativity and independence. This supports the findings of Matthews (2009) who said that school leaders must ensure that practitioners feel they can be innovative and allowed to experiment, confident in the knowledge that they will be supported.

Developing Psychological Safety

Edmondson (1997, 1999a, 1999b) found empirical evidence for the relationship between psychological safety and team learning in organisational settings and suggested that psychological safety increased people's capacity to admit their mistakes and thereby learn from them. Argyris (1996, 1999) and James (2009) has shown that Model I theory-in-use leads to entrenched defensive routines. These were evident to some extent in the responses from participants in School One. Although more prevalent in School One, defensive routines were identifiable in some form in all three schools. The key then was for head teachers to reduce these defensive routines for all staff by increasing the individual's capacity to learn through extensive inquiry into the views and experiences of others (Model II, Argyris, 1978).

When the three groups of staff in each of the schools were compared there seemed to be lower levels of psychological safety amongst teaching assistants. Two of the teaching assistants in School One explained that there were times when they felt they were undermined. None of the teaching assistants in this school were prepared to take risks and two of them said that they were frequently embarrassed. This mirrored to an extent the views of the teaching assistants in School Three and to a lesser extent some of the teaching assistants in School Two. Unlike the responses of the teachers the teaching assistants seemed far more reluctant to take risks and did not feel the climate was always supportive of their learning.

In these situations the teaching assistants were disempowered. This would seem to point to a conflicting values and beliefs system held by the people in these

organisations in relation to the giving away of power and the development of mutually supportive relationships. The findings from the small case-study seem to suggest a direct correlation between the climate of a school, individuals' behaviour and successful engagement in the learning process.

However, the need for further research in the field becomes apparent. Although the case-study findings and preliminary recommendations will be synthesised into a perpetual system of organisational learning this would benefit from being trialled in a great number of schools in different contexts. In a recent report by Matthews (2009) for NCSL, having interviewed a large cross-section of staff of schools designated as National Support Schools, the report produced a detailed picture of the characteristics of highly effective leaders. Getting the most out of people was related to the philosophy, leadership approach and personal skills of the head teacher, which included "promoting professional development focused on teaching, learning and leadership, and keeping abreast of change; encouraging initiative and allowing people – students and staff – to experiment" (Matthews, 2009, p.9). Therefore, successful organisational learning in schools could be solely dependent on highly effective leaders regardless of the system used to encourage and support perpetual learning and this would benefit from further research in the field.

Preliminary Recommendations

In answer therefore to RQ2 the organisational characteristics that enhance (or alternatively inhibit) organisational learning, the following preliminary recommendations are made.

1. Head teachers and senior leadership teams should analyse the school climate and develop an intrinsic commitment to inquiry, openness and trust.
2. Head teachers should ensure an organisational commitment to learning and express this explicitly.
3. Staff should work together to create conditions that support psychological safety.
4. Emphasis should be placed on improving the climate of the organisation for all practitioners.

Encouraging Perpetual Learning - RQ1/3 experiences of organisational learning and improvements to be made

This section will explore the systems and structures in place in each of the schools to encourage a perpetual system of learning for all practitioners. It will discuss the extent to which individuals directed and governed their own learning and outline the potential implications for head teachers in developing a system that encourages perpetual learning before making some preliminary recommendations for consideration.

Learning Together

It is accepted in the Literature Review that teachers and teaching assistants need to learn and that through on-going continuous learning they derive benefits both personally and collectively for the organisation as a whole. It is also acknowledged that learning is endemic and something that individuals are involved in naturally in a social setting (Cordingley et al, 2003; MacGilchrist et al, 2004).

The Literature Review also accepts that school leaders need to capitalise on this learning with Senge (1990) and Rhodes and Greenway (2010) suggesting that they should act as a ‚model’ for the employees, embracing learning themselves and creating the climate through their own behaviours. Of the three head teachers interviewed in this case-study, two of them said that they felt they encouraged learning for others by example. In support of Senge (1990) and Rhodes and Greenway (2010), the participating head teachers discussed the importance of demonstrating learning behaviours for their staff to follow. One of the head teachers interviewed also placed significant importance on the impact such modelling could have on developing and releasing potential in others, of creating new ways of thinking and new attitudes by focusing on the latent capacity of each individual.

However, it is important to acknowledge that modelling alone may not ignite everyone’s capacity to learn and that the learning that is decided upon in the best interests of the organisation (usually by the head teacher) may not be in the best interests of the individual. Argyris (1978); Ortenblad (2002); MacGilchrist (2004) suggested that the first thing school leaders should do is hand over ownership of the learning process to the individual so that they develop themselves.

All three head teachers cited organisational learning models within their own schools including regular staff meetings, teacher days, school development planning, informal dialogue and performance management cycles. Much of the learning in the case-study schools, in reality it seemed, had been predetermined by the head teacher or a member of the senior leadership team. The structure and timing of internal, informal learning also fell to the head teachers and senior leaders in each of the schools

meaning that the professional identity of staff was largely shaped not by the individual but by those in positions of power.

From the responses of the teachers and teaching assistants it became evident that the models of learning referred to by the head teachers were not consistently employed. For example not all teaching assistants were requested to attend staff meetings or INSET days. A number of teachers and teaching assistants could not readily recall their performance management professional development discussions and many felt that access to learning was unevenly distributed. Therefore the learning engaged in by practitioners was very much dependent on the regularity of management systems and learning models introduced by the head teacher.

Yet, the respondents in this multiple case–study had a very clear idea of what it was both personally and professionally that they wanted to learn. This mirrored findings by Goodall et al, (2005):

“Teachers expressed high levels of dissatisfaction with CPD events that did not meet their needs or failed to live up to their expectations” (Goodall et al, 2005).

The overwhelming majority of respondents in this study were proactive in their requests for professional development and there was a sense of disappointment when requests were not granted or when individuals or groups of individuals were excluded from learning opportunities. In School One, Teacher 1c (see Appendix 16) had been encouraged to adopt the attitudes and behaviours of the organisation and had simply withdrawn from the learning experience altogether. This it was suggested, stemmed from ignored requests for professional development coupled with the knowledge that contributions at meetings would not be welcomed. Similarly this was true for some of

the teaching assistants interviewed in School One and School Three who cited “feeling undervalued”, “knowing their place”, “being kept in a box”, “feeling disadvantaged”, “not being able to make a positive contribution” meaning that although they valued continuous learning they were unable to fully engage in the learning processes in their schools.

This shows that true evaluative practice as outlined by MacGilchrist (2004) that encourages individuals to ask questions; identify and challenge values, beliefs and assumptions; reflect; talk; collect and analyse information; action-plan and implement, leading to deep learning was not accessible for all groups of practitioners. Evaluative inquiry then, if embraced in schools, could potentially provide a mechanism for head teachers to promote deep and profound learning for all staff.

It is evident from the responses in this small study that the overwhelming majority of staff felt able to reflect on their practice identifying what worked well and what needed improvement. Yet true evaluative inquiry where it is the interaction among the processes that creates deep or double-loop learning (West-Burnham and Ireseon, 2005; Argyris and Schon, 1996) was not always encouraged. Therefore the development of new knowledge, insight, skills or appreciation for some practitioners was more problematic than for others. This then compounded the theory in action Model I behaviours that inhibit the learning process and a cycle emerges that is difficult to unlock. This supports the work of James (2009) who suggests that organisational practice involves defensive behaviours that are intended to protect against the experience of unacceptable feelings or the prospect of that experience. Therefore a good deal of educational practice is actually intended to defend against

the prospect of experiencing difficult feelings and to optimise the probability of experiencing positive ones. These defensive behaviours can be very difficult to change.

Preliminary Recommendations

In answer therefore to RQ1/3; experiences of organisational learning and necessary improvements, the following preliminary recommendations are made.

1. Head teachers and senior leaders should lead by example.
2. Learning should be owned and directed by the individual within a professional framework.
3. Management systems and learning models should include everyone and be under continual review.
4. Evaluative practice should be considered to enhance perpetual learning in schools.

Power and Organisational Learning - RQ2/3 organisational characteristics that enhance or inhibit organisational learning; what improvements can be made?

This section will discuss the participants' responses that provide an insight into the debate on power. It will relate the findings to the relevant literature and consider whether it is really possible to empower practitioners in school so that they can take real ownership of the learning experience. It will discuss the implications for head teachers in embracing a system of perpetual learning before making some preliminary recommendations for consideration.

Harnessing Power and Politics

Ferdinand (2004) suggested that power has been insufficiently examined in the field of organisational learning. This research project was interested in examining the effects of power and politics on organisational learning in the case-study schools. In reality, if a perpetual system of organisational learning was to be supposed then inevitably the influence of power could not be ignored.

Where power and politics has been acknowledged in the literature, it has been regarded as one of the main barriers preventing successful organisational learning (Argyris, 1986; Senge, 1990; Chiva and Alegre 2005). But power and politics characterise the social process with individuals and groups socially constructing knowledge. Where this happens inevitably there will develop different interpretations and this could be seen in the responses of those interviewed as part of this study, especially in School One and to a lesser extent School Three. Coopey (1998) unlike Argyris, (1986) and Senge, (1990) suggested that managers need to work with political processes harnessing them for positive effect. This means an open and honest approach that empowers employees to voice their thoughts and ideas within a professional, supportive framework.

The findings in this study support the work of Schein (1985) and Kunda (1992) who suggest that the climate of an organisation can be prescribed via explicit and active design so that employees are managed in the organisations interests:

“...heads in schools seek to influence others, secure the acceptance of their authority and align followers with their vision or a vision that they feel they are required to portray” (Rhodes and Greenway, 2010, p.149).

However this can result in inherent conflict, with the demands of the organisation being in direct opposition to the desires and needs of the employees. This study confirms that prescriptive normative control can inhibit learning, disempowering staff so that learning is merely shallow and superficial.

This was perhaps more evident in School One where some of the teachers and teaching assistants were clearly opposed to the climate being set. Thus the head teachers in this study, although striving to ensure that the teachers and teaching assistants behaved in ways compatible with organisational goals, had varying degrees of success.

In the literature review, Etzioni (1975) separated power into three forms: coercive, remunerative and normative. Normative meaning that members are controlled through their working environment as they are required to embrace the organisations vision and goals and work towards these. In this situation members act in the best interests of the organisation often because they subscribe to the vision and are driven by internal commitment and an intrinsic satisfaction from their work. From the participants responses it appears that School Two had successfully mastered normative control with all those interviewed, both teachers and teaching assistants, demonstrating a shared vision for sustained school improvement. And to some extent School Three had also experienced some success in this regard with the respondents clearly articulating personal and professional satisfaction. Yet, as identified by Edwards (1979), the idea of strong corporate culture can be viewed as an alternative attempt to control which limits the extent and nature of political activity and thereby inhibits profound learning. In this scenario a token form of empowerment emerges

where individuals are given power but are expected to use it in the best interests of the organisation.

Yet it was evident that nearly all of the staff in School Two and an overwhelming majority in School Three valued their interactions, both formally and informally. They were happy to take confident actions to remedy problems. They felt they had been given responsibility and their relationships were characterised by mutual respect, a spirit of collaboration and inquiry, honesty, safety and trust (Bottery, 1992; Watkins and Marsick, 1993). This is in contrast, however, to the findings from School One where relationships did not seem to be based on mutual respect, honesty and trust and where respondents felt there was a clear hierarchy of worth and importance. It was in this school that one member of staff had disengaged from the learning process and was frustrated with the learning models and structures in place.

This presents a real challenge then for school leaders who need to strike the balance between empowerment and normative control. Organisations help people to become empowered by giving them opportunities to take control of a situation and by rewarding their achievements. This means trusting fellow colleagues so that relationships are based on care, respect, integrity and are therefore qualitatively better (Bottery, 2003). This view is supported by Watkins and Marsick (1993) who describes the organisation as becoming empowered when the manager's role changes to one of support rather than control and the fundamental dynamic of the relationships in schools is irrevocably changed.

Equality to Learn

The case-study findings suggested that much of the power regarding what people learned and when and how people learned lay with the head teachers and senior leaders in the school. Although teachers and teaching assistants in each of the schools were encouraged to select and request courses autonomously, in reality the majority of the learning that took place was predetermined. This view was reinforced by the head teachers themselves who acknowledged that they could improve learning in their settings if they carried out individual learning audits and asked their staff about their individual learning needs.

Another of the improvements the head teachers were keen to make was to ensure there was equality of access to learning and professional development. The findings of this case-study illustrated that access to learning is unevenly distributed with teaching assistants being most severely disadvantaged.

Two issues relating to access emerged during the course of interviews. The first was that those teachers who had leadership roles within school and were proactive in requesting learning opportunities gained the greater access. One teacher explained that “those that shouted the loudest accessed learning whether they needed it or not” and another teacher said “those that felt confident to continually request learning accessed the most”. One of the ways in which the teachers wanted to improve learning in their schools was to ensure greater access.

The second issue to emerge was that the learning opportunities on offer to teaching assistants, both externally in the form of courses and internally in terms of staff

meetings, teacher days, observations and team teaching, was scarce. When asked what training or learning they had received all but one cited First Aid Training most readily. Most of their learning appeared to take place informally with colleagues. This too was problematic however as many were part-time and because of this they did not see other teaching assistants during their working day and relied on the class teacher to whom they were assigned for learning conversations. Also, many did not attend staff meetings or teacher days as they had children at home that they would need to look after when the school was closed.

Like the teachers before them, they thought that learning could be improved in their schools if there was greater access to courses and a structured programme of learning devised that included them. This study identifies that the development of a structured programme of support that includes teaching assistants is therefore essential in the development of a system of perpetual learning. Literature focusing on the continued professional development of teaching assistants has grown in recent years although, as stated by Bolam et al (2005) and Spillane et al (2009), it is still quite limited. Stoll et al (2003) suggested that schools should focus learning on all the adults in school; Brundrett and Rhodes (2011) argued in favour of the development of professional identities for teaching assistants; Bolam et al (2005) suggested that a school's learning community should have the development of teaching assistants at the core. Yet based on the findings of this small-scale multiple case-study these suggestions had not yet been fully realised in practice.

Preliminary Recommendations

In answer therefore to RQ2/3 the organisational characteristics that enhance (or alternatively inhibit) organisational learning and mechanisms for improving organisational learning, the following preliminary recommendations are made.

1. Access to learning should be more equally distributed and include all practitioners.
2. A structured programme of learning should be developed based on audited individual need.
3. Include teaching assistants in all internal learning structures including performance management, staff meetings, teacher days and observations.

Summary

In summarising the discussion of the findings it becomes apparent that thirteen preliminary recommendations have been made to support schools enhance their capacity for organisational learning (see Table 13):

| Number | Preliminary Recommendation |
|---------------|---|
| 1 | Build in lots of opportunities for reflection (deep-learning) during formal and in-formal in-school training. |
| 2 | Design learning situations that require practitioners to learn from each other and make explicit the generative nature of this support. |
| 3 | Head teachers and senior leadership teams should analyse the school climate and develop an intrinsic commitment to inquiry, openness and trust. |
| 4 | Head teachers should ensure an organisational commitment to learning and express this explicitly. |

| | |
|----|--|
| 5 | Staff should work together to create conditions that support psychological safety. |
| 6 | Emphasis should be placed on improving the climate of the organisation for all practitioners. |
| 7 | Head teachers and senior leaders should lead by example. |
| 8 | Learning should be owned and directed by the individual within a professional framework. |
| 9 | Management systems and learning models should include everyone and be under continual review. |
| 10 | Evaluative practice should be considered to enhance perpetual learning in schools. |
| 11 | Access to learning should be more equally distributed and include all practitioners. |
| 12 | A structured programme of learning should be developed based on audited individual need. |
| 13 | Include teaching assistants in all internal learning structures including performance management, staff meetings, teacher days and observations. |

Table 13, Preliminary Recommendations based on research findings

The thirteen preliminary recommendations have been made in light of the data; review of the literature and in response to the research questions posed. It seems that many of the preliminary recommendations are grounded in the epistemological interpretive framework and will inform the perpetual system of learning presented in the next chapter.

So, it is necessary, it would appear, for leaders to create opportunities for informal learning ensuring that this informal learning is relevant to the organisation but driven by individual need. Priority should be given perhaps to on-the-job learning where people learn with and from each other in situ and recognise the generative role they play in facilitating learning for others. It is also important to ensure that the learning that is structured actively promotes reflection and aspects of evaluative inquiry in an attempt to ensure double-loop and maybe even triple-loop learning in a climate of openness, trust and physiological safety. This then encourages individuals to develop their personal mastery (Senge, 2006).

The power and politics inevitably at play within the organisation, instead of being seen as problematic, should be harnessed and even promoted so that teachers and teaching assistants are truly empowered and the relationship between the head teacher and his or her colleagues shifts to one of mutual support. Lowe and Pugh (2007) described teaching assistants' perception of their own power as limited; they saw power residing with the head teacher. The findings from this small case-study would support this and suggest that it is essential that all groups within schools are given access to learning opportunities that will in turn empower them and contribute significantly to the sustained improvement of their personal practice and the school as a whole.

None of these strategies however appear possible without a clear assessment of the schools climate through individual and group behaviours and an overt commitment to improve it for everyone. This will inevitably present a significant challenge for head

teachers and senior leaders. Further research would be welcomed to support head teachers and senior leadership teams assess their school climate; to identify the factors that are not conducive to learning. It is accepted that high quality leadership is essential for successful organisational learning (Day, 2004; Matthews, 2009), yet perhaps further investigation is needed to support head teachers in the development of climates that relinquish rigid normative controls and empower staff to be successful learners.

The final chapter, Chapter 6, will present the conclusions drawn from the study. It will use these conclusions informed by the preliminary recommendations made during the discussion of the findings to present a perpetual system of organisational learning in the primary school; for use not only by practitioners in the case-study schools but also for those interested in developing effective organisational learning practices in other schools too. The Conclusion will identify the contribution this study has made to the organisational learning literature and suggest opportunities for further on-going research.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This phenomenological research project was designed to draw on the organisational learning experiences of head teachers, teachers and teaching assistants in three case-study primary schools. Their experiences together with a review of the organisational learning literature inform the conclusions presented in this chapter. These conclusions will draw on the preliminary recommendations presented in Chapter 5 but will focus specifically on new learning arising from the research.

As organisational learning has been approached from many different perspectives and implemented in different ways at different times by different organisations the construction of an overarching theory for primary school practitioners is potentially impossible (Lipshitz et al, 2002). Nevertheless, a theoretical systematisation that acknowledges diverse perspectives and multi-faceted nature of organisational learning in the primary school and that integrates at least some of the issues outlined in the previous two chapters should help both researchers and practitioners in the field, enhance a school's capacity for learning.

In the Introduction, this thesis argued that the time had come for a more radical approach to organisational learning where individuals take ownership of their learning (Ortenblad, 2002); that learning should involve deep or profound methods (West-Burnham and Ireson, 2005) and that learning should lead to significant changes in the climate and structures historically at work within schools (Lipshitz, 2002; Senge, 2006). This chapter will therefore return to an examination of the three research

questions set out in Chapter 1 and through these questions present the conclusions that will contribute to a perpetual system of organisational learning for consideration in schools. Following this the contribution this research makes to the organisational learning debate will be presented. Aspects of organisational learning that would benefit from additional research will be considered before a summary concludes the work.

The three research questions asked were:

1. What experiences do the participants have of organisational learning?
2. In the participants experience what are the key organisational characteristics that enhance or inhibit organisational learning?
3. From the participants experience how can organisational learning be improved in the future?

RQ1 Experiences of Organisational Learning

The ontological perspective on which this thesis is built is that organisational learning in 21st Century schools should function as “a perpetual system” (Schein, 1992, p.372).

The reason underlying this premise is that the better schools and the practitioners within them are at learning the more likely it is that they will be able to adapt to change, develop innovative strategies for improvement and recognise effectively their limitations in regard to both of these (Argyris, 1999).

The learning experiences of the respondents interviewed fell clearly into two categories; formal learning and informal learning. The respondents’ learning was predominantly done through reflection. This can be aligned to the Argyris and Schon

(1996) and West-Burnham and Ireson (2005) deep/double-loop learning models. To take this learning to what West-Burnham and Ireson, (2005), influenced by Argyris and Schon (1996), describe as profound learning/triple-loop however, head teachers would need to hand over ownership of the learning to the individuals therefore allowing the creation of personal meaning and so enhancing wisdom and creativity. This was not something that had been embraced in the case-study schools with respondents acknowledging that access and design was predominantly controlled by the head teacher or senior leadership teams. **This leads to the first conclusion: schools should consider ways in which individuals are encouraged to take ownership of their own learning; influencing what and how they learn.**

From the analysis of responses it was apparent that all practitioners valued the informal opportunities to learn, especially when they were required to learn together on issues relevant to their role, co-constructing knowledge and meaning through social interactions (Carnell and Lodge, 2002). These findings support the subjectivist epistemological stance which acknowledges that learning is contextualised and in essence a social process that involves relationships and interactions with other people. **The second conclusion to emerge from this study is that informal opportunities to learn, within the context of the school, are seen as highly valuable.** This supports the existing literature presented by (Stoll et al, 2002; MacGilchrist et al, 2004; Senge, 2006 and Bubb, 2009). Stoll et al (2002) suggest that teachers learn in seven different ways, citing ‚relating’ as one of the seven examples. Relating, according to Stoll et al (2002), emphasises mutual sharing and assistance, e.g. team teaching, mentoring, collaborative action research, peer coaching, joint planning and mutual observation and feedback. MacGilchrist et al (2004) building on the work of

Nias et al (1992) and Cordingley et al (2003) presented seven evaluative inquiry practices three of which are; asking questions; identifying and challenging values, beliefs and assumptions; and dialogue. Senge (2006) introduced five disciplines that characterise the learning organisation, one of which is team learning, learning with and from others. Through this research it was possible to draw out similarities and differences in the schools approaches to organisational learning; and similarities and differences too in these approaches for the different groups of practitioners. What became clear as a result of RQ1 and was quite unique in that it elicited consensus from all respondents, was that everyone valued the internal, informal opportunities to learn from one another.

Southworth (2000) drawing together empirical evidence from several projects spanning a number of years argued that practitioners should take responsibility not only for their own professional learning but for the professional learning of others too. Although the participants in this study were active learners, the generative nature of this learning was less apparent. Head teachers and senior leaders saw their role as generative but half of the teachers and the majority of teaching assistants interviewed felt that they had limited impact on the learning of others in each of their settings.

The third conclusion drawn from this study suggests that schools should try to ensure that learning is seen as a generative process.

The findings of this multiple case-study also suggest that access to learning is not evenly or fairly distributed. The learning of teaching assistants appeared to be uncoordinated and limited, supporting to a certain extent the work of Bolam et al (2005); Spillane et al (2009) and Lowe and Pugh (2007). The uneven distribution of

learning opportunities in each of the schools supports the claim that learning was not seen as a generative process with some practitioners benefitting individually rather than collectively. A significant outcome of the research by Butt and Lance (2008) was that with the growing expectation for teaching assistants to involve themselves in the learning and progress of pupils, it was also necessary for them to benefit from sustained and continued professional development. This view was supported by Brundrett and Rhodes (2011) who suggested that as teaching assistants are now being expected to embrace para-professional responsibilities in schools it is reasonable to expect that they will require more professional development. Yet this case-study found that the learning opportunities for teaching assistants were limited when compared to the learning of other groups of staff. **This leads to the forth conclusion: learning opportunities need to be developed inclusively and teaching assistants' learning needs to be central to this.** To achieve this, head teachers in consultation with staff would need to audit organisational learning practices and develop structured programmes tailored to the individual but aligned with organisational goals. This was certainly something the teaching assistant respondents thought would improve their access.

Therefore RQ 1 has drawn four conclusions.

1. Schools should consider ways in which individuals are encouraged to take ownership of their own learning; influencing what and how they learn.
2. Informal opportunities to learn, within the context of the school, are seen as highly valuable.
3. Schools should ensure organisational learning systems are generative.

4. Opportunities to learn should not only be perpetual but also inclusive with teaching assistants gaining greater access.

RQ2 Organisational Characteristics that Enhance or Inhibit Organisational Learning

This study aimed to draw on the experiences of practitioners in the case-study schools to determine the organisational mechanisms that encouraged and hindered their learning. This research was framed around the works of Sergiovanni (2001); Schien (2002); MacGilchrist et al (2004); Lipshitz et al (2002) and Senge (2006) who suggested that learning organisations should be built on a climate of openness, inquiry and reflection.

As outlined in the introduction, Ortenblad (2002) claimed that organisational learning should “emancipate” the employees – from traditional structures and ideas. In this way the learning space in such organisations would overtly encourage different opinions, and allow everyone to reflect upon their actions and learning. Ortenblad’s (2002) claims were not grounded in educational theory. However, Coopey and Burgoyne (2000) and MacGilchrist’s et al (2004) writing from an educational perspective seemed to agreed with Ortenblad (2002) arguing that a free and open form of political activity allows individuals in schools the freedom to voice their opinions and thereby enhance organisational learning.

In this research, the five norms identified by Lipshitz et al (2002) that potentially lead to the optimum conditions for learning were used to gauge the climate of each of the schools. The school that aligned itself most closely to these norms seemed to be

embracing a model of successful learning because people felt psychologically safe. Whereas in the school that had most difficulty aligning itself to these norms, defensive routines were embedded and learning for some of the respondents was limited. Although all respondents in all three schools were able to assess their school climate and the potential impact the climate had on the learning of practitioners, the vast majority (19 of the 21) did not identify their school climate as a priority to enhance the organisational learning capacity of their school. Yet, in order to enhance a schools capacity for organisational learning, the climate is of significant importance; the organisation provides a facilitating climate for the individuals' learning and because a school is a social learning context it is the context that influences the nature of that learning and breaks down the defensive behaviours described by Argyris (1999) and James (2009).

Still firmly rooted in the interpretive paradigm (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) this research supports the existing literature to reveal that perhaps the single most important factor influencing the success of organisational learning is the climate of the school and the normative behaviours promoted by the head teacher and the leadership team in creating a climate that supports learning, whether shallow, deep or indeed profound (West-Burnham and Ireson, 2005). It was clear however, that although climate was perhaps the single most important factor encouraging or inhibiting organisational learning it was not given sufficient consideration in the design of successful learning systems. **Therefore RQ 2 led to one conclusion.**

1. Leaders need to continually assess their school climate to ensure that it is conducive to learning and empowers practitioners to develop their own personal mastery (Senge, 2006).

RQ3 Organisational Learning Improvements

This research question aimed to elicit how learning experiences of head teachers, teachers and teaching assistants in the case-study schools could be further enhanced.

The participants' experiences, aligned with the existing organisational learning literature, have already led to a number of preliminary recommendations in the previous chapter. These have been synthesised with the five conclusions presented so far in this chapter to inform a system of perpetual learning. **Therefore RQ3 draws one conclusion**

1. Schools may want to consider adopting a perpetual system of learning where practitioners are continually engaged in the learning process

To do this school leaders may want to consider the perpetual learning system presented in Figure 2 over leaf that has been developed as a result of this study and offers an overview of organisational learning for primary school leaders. At the very least primary school colleagues may find this perpetual learning system a useful reflective tool; a tool that will allow them to evaluate their own organisational learning practices in light of the suggested system.

A Perpetual System of Learning in the Primary School

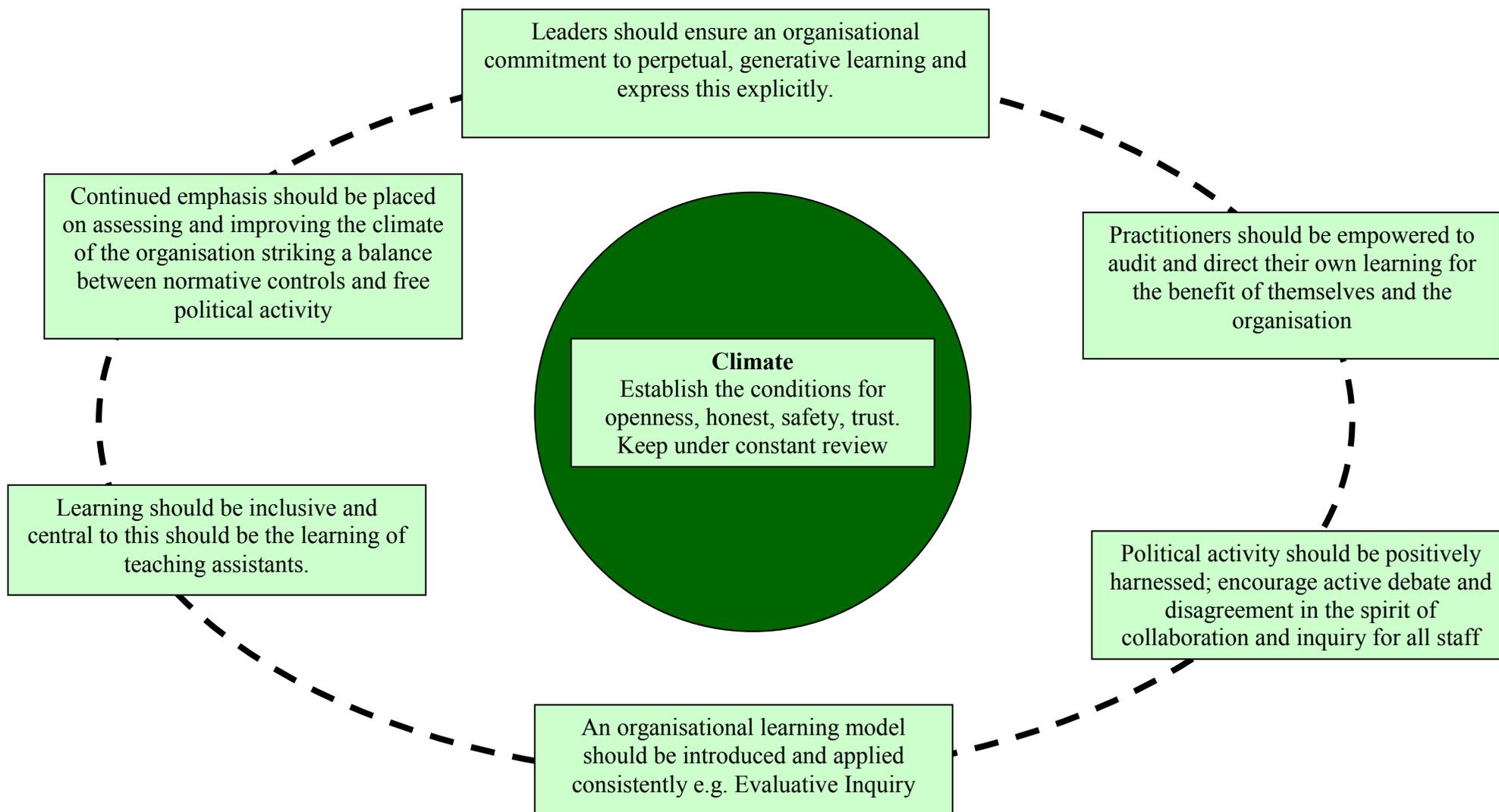


Figure 2. Organisational Learning – a perpetual system

The model over leaf drawn from the case-study data, review of literature and conclusions and recommendations in this and the previous chapter, make suggestions for school-based organisational learning that can be used or adapted by other primary school settings although no claim is being made to the generalisation of this study to other schools in other contexts.

The perpetual learning system presented acknowledges the importance of the head teacher in establishing an organisational commitment to learning supporting the view of Lipshitz et al (2002) and Senge (2006). It suggests that this ought to be the first priority when setting out to ensure a school embraces highly effective organisational learning systems. More often than not organisational learning involves learning with and from others, which means that much of learning is an interactive social process. This was acknowledged through this study, but what this study also identified, is that learning together informally and internally as opposed to externally on for example a one day course, has just as much, if not more value for the participants.

The findings from this study also place fundamental importance on school climate. But perhaps more importantly this research suggests that head teachers and senior leaders should continually assess the climate of their school and work tirelessly to ensure that the conditions are created to encourage effective learning for all staff to ensure ongoing school improvement in the 21st Century.

MacGilchrist et al (2004) and James (2009) acknowledges that in order to promote learning there is a need to develop a very real management tool to regulate and modify so-called inappropriate behaviour of organisational members. Here, the role

of the head teacher is critical, maybe the most crucial, as the manager, suggests Senge (1990) acts as a model for other employees, “expounding the mental model to be shared by all”. Yet, it could be argued that if this is accepted the very essence of profound/triple-loop learning which encourages political activity and debate and gives ownership of the learning to the individual, is potentially compromised.

This study accepts that political activity is an integral part of all humanly constructed social situations. It was accepted too that learning in a fast-changing world means practitioners need to learn, unlearn and relearn (Stoll, 2003); for Senge (2006) this means that individuals learn on behalf of the organisation so that it continually expands its capacity to create its future. To do this people need to disagree with each other (Southworth, 2000), argue and debate. Effective learning agrees MacGilchrist et al (2004) is an active process rather than a passive one confined to studying. Effective learning involves asking questions, reflecting, understanding and linking old and new knowledge so as to apply it in a range of situations.

Argyris and Schon (1996) suggested that an organisation’s learning system is made up of the structures that channel organisational inquiry and it is the behaviour of individuals within these structures that facilitates or inhibits organisational learning. This study would support this view. Yet, what this small-scale study also suggests is that if head teachers and senior leaders in schools can effectively assess their school climate and introduce strategies to improve it, they will be able to reduce defensive routines and create the conditions under which individuals engage successfully in perpetual learning (see Figure 3).

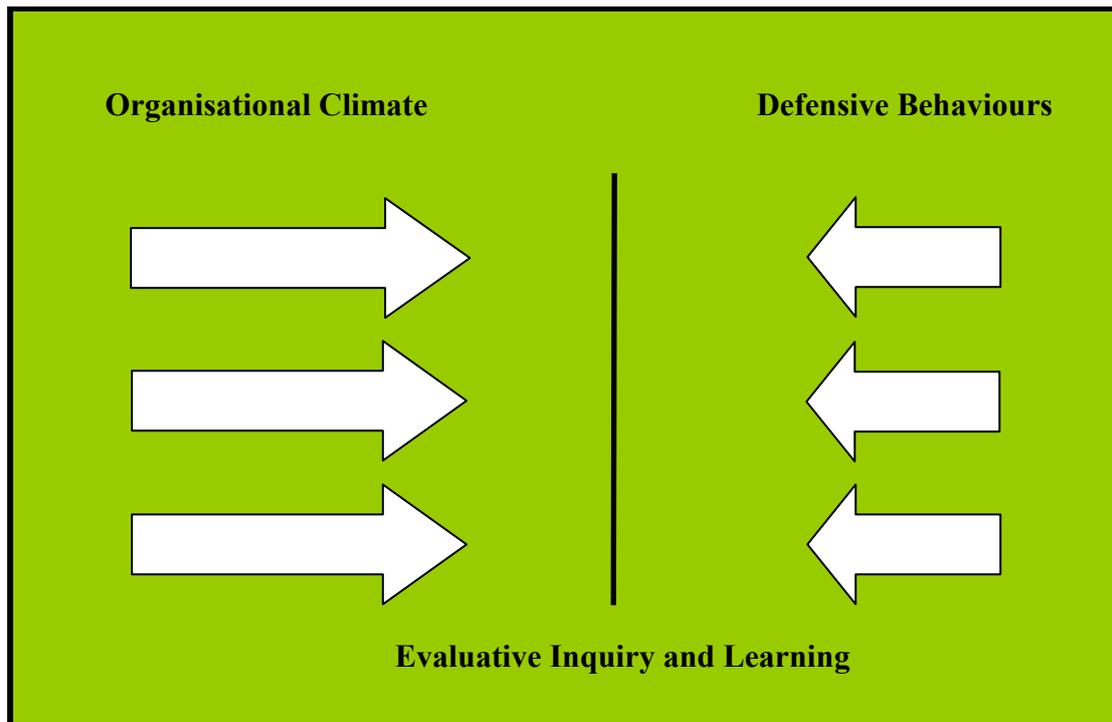


Figure 3. Organisational Learning System

As identified by Argyris and Schon (1996) if we are interested in overcoming the forces that inhibit double-loop learning then it is necessary to seek an alternative learning system. If it is right to assert that most organisations contain Model I learning systems that because of defensive routines do not allow any other types of learning then it is unlikely that new learning systems will succeed by reshaping existing learning models. Rather it will be necessary to create a new learning system that embraces new visions and values (Argyris and Schon, 1996). This small scale-study, as can be seen in Figure 3, suggests that defensive behaviours inherent in social interaction can be significantly reduced if emphasis is placed on organisational climate; the shared rules governing cognitive and affective aspects of membership in an organisation. This includes encouraging open and honest political activity and debate in a climate of trust supporting the work of Bottery (2003).

The three schools in this study varied in their ability to positively harness political activity and engage in true authentic debate. In the school that was embracing it we learned that the five norms purported by Lipshitz et al (2002) were in evidence amongst the groups of learners. However, it was apparent that due to the hierarchical structures in place, which were borne more out of historical expectation than espoused values, true debate and evaluative inquiry was less likely to occur between people perceived to be of different ranks. Learning to empower involves learning many new actions that are more supportive and facilitative. For many head teachers therefore this means learning to give up control by helping staff to develop the skills for individual growth and personal mastery (Senge, 2002). A perpetual system of learning can facilitate this when applied consistently (see Figure 2).

MacGilchrist et al (2004) building on the work of Stoll et al (2002) and Cordingley et al (2003) present an argument for evaluative practice which seems to align with a perpetual system of learning. MacGilchrist et al (2004) explains that the process of evaluative inquiry requires that members of an organisation critically consider their behaviour, actions and dialogue whilst at work. Evaluative inquiry is an approach to understanding, improving and changing organisational life where the beneficiaries of inquiry are the practitioners. This too then is in direct contrast to Senge (1990).

Evaluative inquiry asks individuals to consider what they think and what they do as well as how they make decisions and what drives them to form conclusions or actions.

The processes MacGilchrist et al (2004) identified as the core of evaluative inquiry are: asking questions; identifying and challenging values and beliefs; reflection; dialogue; collecting, analysing and interpreting data; action-planning and implementation. These seven evaluative inquiry processes help individuals to learn as

it requires teams and individuals to develop new knowledge, insight, skills and appreciation. The impact of evaluative inquiry approaches however would benefit from greater research in the field and was beyond the scope of this study.

Stoll et al writing in 2003 suggested that schools needed to focus on the learning of all adults, especially the learning of teaching assistants. It was difficult to ascertain from a review of the literature how successful schools had been at doing this.

PLCs have largely been interpreted as referring to groups of teachers and much of the literature makes little reference to teaching assistants opportunities to learn (Louis and Gordon, 2006, p.2). A similar picture emerges from a search of the CPD literature with researches such as Day et al (2004) and MacGilchrist (2005) referring in the main, to professional learning opportunities for teachers and leaders in schools.

In this study of 9 teaching assistants it was evident that their opportunities to learn were limited when compared to the opportunities afforded teachers or head teacher colleagues. In support of Lowe and Pugh's (2007) findings the teaching assistants described power as property (Pfeffer, 1992) owned very much by the head teacher. In this study the teaching assistants thought that their personal lack of power was directly related to their lack of qualifications and learning. The perception was that their power would increase as their qualifications increased; expert power (French and Raven, 1958). This suggests that organisational learning mechanisms in schools should ensure a system of perpetual learning includes all staff thereby empowering all groups within school to contribute to whole school effectiveness.

Implications of the Findings to the Overall Study

If the literature and the conclusions presented from this small multiple case-study are considered, it is evident that organisational learning is complex and multi-faceted.

The interpretive view of this research allows the lived realities of 3 head teachers, 9 teachers and 9 teaching assistants to be explored and it is evident that the quality of their learning has been dependent on the climate of their schools and the commitment to organisational learning held by their leaders and managers. By taking a qualitative approach, this study has been able to establish answers to how they have learned, what inhibits their learning and what encourages it, how they think organisational learning could be improved in each of their settings and generalisations have been possible by comparing each of the groups of respondents and each of the settings. As a result an interpretation of how each respondent has learned can tentatively be made within the context of the lived reality of the individual. To this end, the research could be deemed as authentic.

However, this study was limited to a sample size of 21 and so has clear limitations in terms of transferability. Nevertheless it does provide a fuller picture of how individuals learn within organisations and how different groups of learners are catered for. These interviews allow tentative answers to the research questions posed. It has been found that the single most important contribution to successful organisational learning is the climate of the school and the commitment from the head teacher and senior leaders to continuous learning for all staff, particularly teaching assistants; that the learning experience has to be owned by the individual and must be relevant to their role in school, thus empowering them; that informal, internal learning structures should be extended and generative in nature; that political debate and discussion

should be encouraged to empower practitioners and capitalise on opportunities for profound learning.

The Contribution and Further Research

This research has been successful in making a contribution to the existing knowledge base and sets a direction for further study, particularly in relation to the importance of school climate on the employee's willingness to engage in meaningful learning experiences. It has examined how individuals' best learn in organisations and has outlined a perpetual system of organisational learning in the primary school. The findings from this research provide information to further our understanding in relation to:

- How organisational climate impacts on the quality of learning in the primary school;
- The importance of informal, internal learning structures for head teachers, teachers and teaching assistants;
- The limited learning opportunities afforded to teaching assistants when compared to other groups;
- The place of organisational learning models such as evaluative inquiry to encourage ownership of the learning and thereby re-distribute power.

The research employed semi-structured interviews with 21 individuals located in schools within the same Local Authority and Area Network. As the study of organisational learning through phenomenology inevitably draws on description and interpretation, it is possible that the responses will be influenced by the locality from which the sample has been drawn. These conclusions have been reached from

research undertaken in ‚good‘ primary schools with excellent reputations for success. This may also have an impact upon the findings. For example, working in a successful school as predetermined by Ofsted and the local community may serve to influence the climate of the school. In other schools, where they do not enjoy such parity of esteem or where they face greater contextual challenges, different results altogether may have been witnessed. Although this is inevitable in this type of research, it does place limitations on the extent to which the knowledge gained in this research is transferrable to schools in other Local Authorities or Area Networks.

Similarly the position of the researcher as a colleague head teacher at the time of the research should also be taken into account. It is important to acknowledge ‚interviewer effect‘ and how this may have impacted on the respondents. This view is supported by Argyris (1999) and Cohen et al (2007) who states that subjects can try to please the researcher for the interview is not simply a data collection situation but a social and frequently a political situation. Argyris (1999) believes that contamination is inevitable. To minimise the effects of power and unintentional contamination interview questions were asked in a non-threatening manner and participants were guaranteed anonymity. The researcher’s reflections, perceptions, interpretations and feelings form a significant part of the findings too suggests Flick (2002). In presenting the findings of this research, it has been important to acknowledge the influence of ‚self‘ on the research. As I am a head teacher of a school in similar circumstances to those involved in this research, my ontology was pre-determined and because of this every effort was made to address the issue of bias, by suspending judgement.

However, this study does provide key insights which will inform the ongoing research into organisational learning as a perpetual system and this would now benefit from being broadened to include primary schools in a range of contexts and with a broader range of employees. Further research possibilities could include:

- The impact of an evaluative inquiry model of learning adopted whole school.
- A study into whether or not successful organisational learning is dependent on highly effective leaders?
- How can head teachers and senior leadership teams be supported to assess their school climate?
- How do practitioners recognise and break down defensive routines?

Applying the Contribution to Knowledge

The contribution made by this research can be applied in the following ways:

1. To head teachers who are striving to create a commitment to continuous learning.
2. To head teachers and senior leaders when designing learning experience for all staff.
3. To alert aspiring leaders to the complexity of organisational learning.
4. To aid those responsible for devising meaningful and productive informal learning experiences.
5. To further inform the research agenda and the literature regarding organisational learning in primary schools, particularly for teachers and teaching assistants.

Summary

It is intended that lessons learned from this research will be used to inform the practice at the three primary schools involved as each head teacher will be given a summary of the findings in the form of a short report. It is also intended that further dissemination of papers from this research will add to the wider educational debate on organisational learning as a perpetual system in school.

What emerges from this small-scale study of 21 respondents from three separate primary schools is the importance of school climate and the normative behaviours that are inherent in the school on the outcome of successful learning for all staff. A significant lesson learned was that head teachers must analyse the climate of their school to ensure that it supports and engenders learning for all. This may mean considering Lipshitz et al (2002) norms of transparency, integrity, issue-orientation, inquiry and accountability so as to set the prevailing conditions for optimum learning. Yet, more significantly this study has identified that although head teachers consider the climate of their school as an important factor in encouraging or inhibiting learning none of them cited this as an area for improvement when asked to consider how they would like to enhance learning in their organisations. Therefore improving the climate of a school is a necessary precursor to improving the learning.

Another lesson learned was that informal, internal learning structures and models that allow people to learn with and from other people on relevant subjects is essential. It became apparent that teachers and teaching assistants wanted ownership of their learning and wanted it structured in a way that would give them opportunities to reflect. Therefore head teachers may want to consider introducing internal learning

systems based on an evaluative inquiry model as an integral part of the organisational functions. Yet teachers and teaching assistants need to be involved in setting their own learning agendas. The learning experiences should include opportunities to observe, work shadow, team teach, discuss, argue, debate, reflect and problematise through a generative approach (MacGildchrist et al 2004) so they are truly empowered.

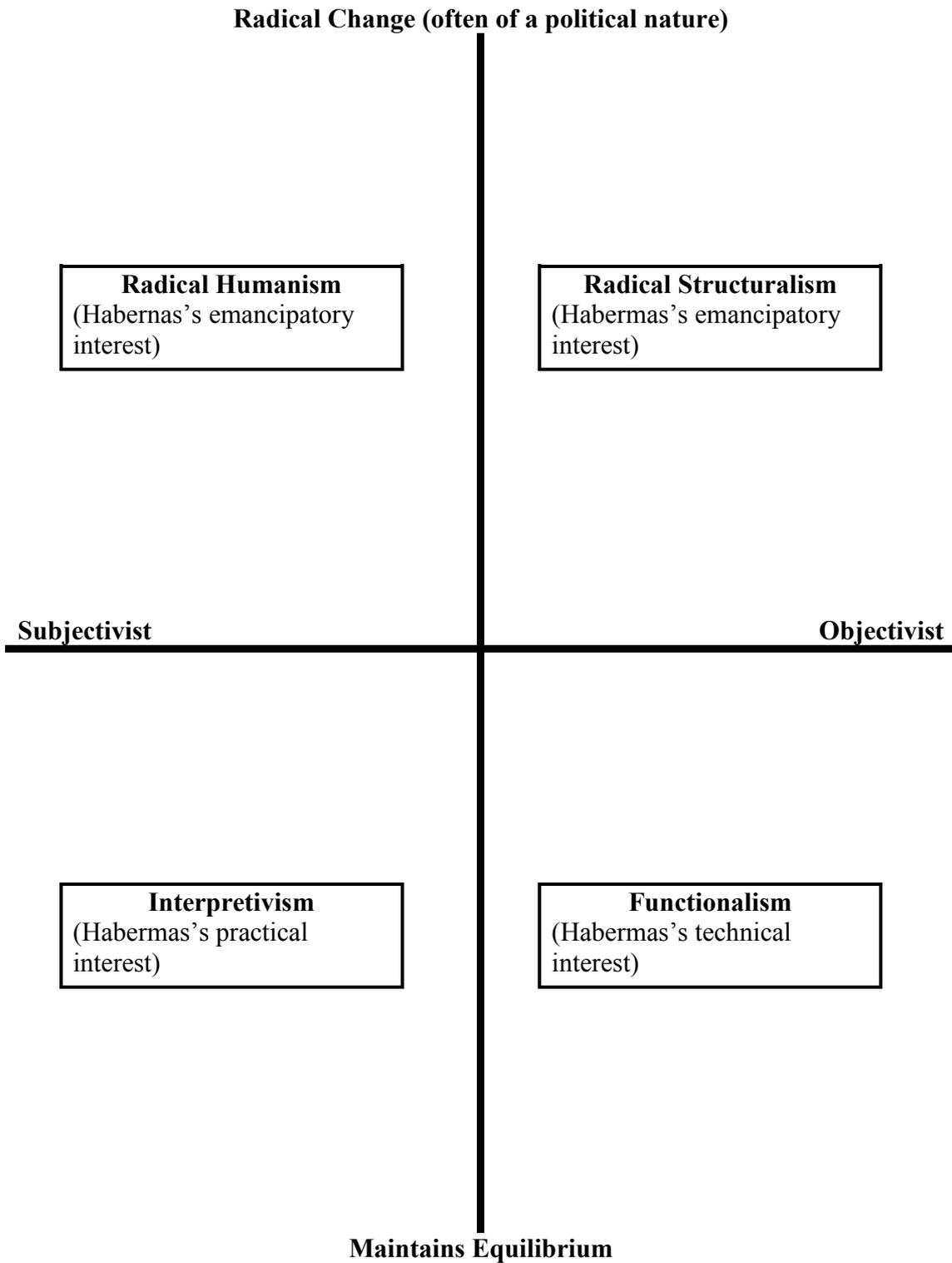
Finally, this research had demonstrated that teaching assistants were especially disadvantaged in terms of access and inclusion to the learning process. Many of them said that they were not invited to staff meetings. Many who worked part-time were excluded from the learning process entirely. Many were not included in appraisal or performance management systems and as such, their learning was not formally audited. Therefore learning opportunities for practitioners in school need to be inclusive and the learning of teaching assistants should be central to this.

To conclude, in order to enhance a school's capacity for organisational learning, head teachers and senior leaders would need to ensure that they clearly articulated the desire for perpetual learning. They would need to ensure that the responsibility for on-going continuous learning was embraced by all practitioners thereby redistributing the balance of power within the organisation so that everybody learns. This means investing time in creating a climate and normative behaviours in which people feel physiologically safe to learn and able to participate in debate and open discussion. But, perhaps most importantly, head teachers and senior teams would have to keep the climate of the school under continual review to ensure that some practitioners or groups of practitioners were not marginalised from the organisational learning

processes. Inevitably, embracing a system of perpetual learning will require a desire for continuous improvement; it will involve a great deal of commitment on behalf of the entire workforce and it will mean that head teachers will need to work tirelessly to ensure all practitioners are given the opportunity and encouragement to govern their own learning so that they can become the very best that they can be.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - Sociological Paradigms, adapted from Burrell and Morgan (1979, p.22)



APPENDIX 2 - Letter to Head Teachers Requesting their Schools' Participation in Research

Dear Colleague

I am currently undertaking my Doctorate in Education at Birmingham University. A major element of this study involves a research project into organisational learning in primary schools.

I am writing to ask if you would be willing for me to undertake some of my research at your school, interviewing yourself and 6 additional members of your staff, three Teachers and three Teaching Assistants with varied experiences and length of service. The interview would allow me to gain some insight into the organisational learning that you and your staff have been involved in. The format would be a taped interview lasting approximately 50-60 minutes.

The taped interviews will then be transcribed and analysed, along with responses from seven participants from two other primary schools. The data gathered will be used in my final dissertation. All recordings will be kept securely and will not be made available to anyone other than my research supervisors. No one will be named at any time during or after the study and your school will not be disclosed.

A transcription of the taped interviews will be available to each participant prior to the final analysis of the data. This will offer them the opportunity to comment and amend if they want. Each of the schools will also have access to my final dissertation before submission if you so wish.

If you are happy to participate in this research I would be grateful if you would sign the attached consent form for my records.

Yours Sincerely

Beth Clarke

Please tick where appropriate

I agree to my school being involved in this research project _____
I agree to being interviewed for the research into organisational learning _____
I agree to identify 6 other members of staff to be interviewed _____
I request a copy of the transcript of my interview to comment and amend _____
I request a summary of the findings _____

Signed _____

(Print) Name _____

Date _____

APPENDIX 3 - Letter to Participants Requesting Participation in Research

Dear Colleague

I am currently undertaking my Doctorate in Education at Birmingham University. A major element of this study involves a research project into organisational learning in primary schools.

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to be interviewed. The interview would allow me to gain some insight into the organisational learning that you have been involved in. The format would be a taped interview lasting approximately 50-60 minutes.

The taped interview will then be transcribed and analysed, along with responses from five other participants from your school and six other participants in two other primary schools. The data gathered will be used in my final dissertation. All recordings will be kept securely and will not be made available to anyone other than my research supervisors. You will not be named at any time during or after the study and your name will not be stored electronically as part of this project. Your school will not be disclosed.

A transcription of your taped interview will be available to you prior to the final analysis of the data. This will offer you the opportunity to comment and amend if you want. You will also have access to my final dissertation before submission if you so wish.

If you are happy to participate in this research I would be grateful if you would sign the attached consent form for my records.

Yours Sincerely

Beth Clarke

Please tick where appropriate

I agree to being interviewed for the research into organisational learning _____
I request a copy of the transcript of my interview to comment and amend _____
I request a summary of the findings _____

Signed _____

(Print) Name _____

Date _____

APPENDIX 4 - Letter to Interviewees Accompanying their Interview Transcripts

Dear Colleague

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking part in my research into organisational learning. I found your responses most insightful and look forward to analysing them in detail along with the other respondents.

I enclose a copy of your interview transcript as requested. I would be grateful if you would read the transcript to ensure that it is a true and accurate representation of what was said. If, on reading the transcript, you would like to amend any of your responses please feel free to do so by drawing a line through the section/s you would like to delete. If you would like to replace any of these sections with additional text I would be grateful if you would number each of the deleted section/s sequentially and write the additional comments in number order on the reverse of the transcript.

I enclose a stamped address envelope for you to return your transcript. I would be most grateful if you could do this before the end of this month. If you do not wish to make any changes please send your original transcript back to me so that I know that you have received it and have had the opportunity to read it. Once again many thanks for your valuable time, it really is appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Beth Clarke

APPENDIX 5 - Bottery (2003) Seven Forms of Trust

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Calculative Trust | To take a variety of factors into account and make a judgment that someone will do something that is beneficial to us. |
| Practice Trust | Repeated encounters increase the amount of knowledge about a person, and therefore facilitate more accurate calculations concerning an individual's trustworthiness. This also involves the creation of interpersonal bonds in relationships which have ethical and affective components. |
| Role Trust | Applied to groups of people or to professional groups who are seen to possess the same cultural role, value codes and ethical commitments. |
| Identificatory Trust | A level of interpersonal commitment such that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts; where two people begin to act as one. |
| Meso-level Trust | Belief in the culture and ethos of organisations - organisational underpinnings for personal and interpersonal relationships. |
| Macro-level Trust | Belief in the culture and ethos of society. Societal and cultural underpinnings for personal and interpersonal relationships. |
| Existential Trust | Belief in the rightness of the world - underpinned by support from our broad community. |

APPENDIX 6 - Pilot Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Organisational Learning

Position in the Organisation _____ Length of Service _____

Organisational Learning in Practice

1. Tell me about any work-place learning that you have been involved in.
2. How is work-place learning generally organised?
3. Of the work-place learning that you have taken part in which has had the biggest impact on you and why?
4. Of the work-place learning that you have taken part in which has had the biggest impact on whole school effectiveness and why?
5. Look at this description of different types of learning (adapted from West-Burnham and Ireson 2005). How would you describe the learning that you have been involved in? Why?
6. In your opinion how do you learn best?

Organisational characteristics that act as aids or barriers to learning

1. What are the barriers to work-place learning?
2. What are the drivers for work-place learning?
3. How would you describe your school climate and how does this impact on everyone as a learner?
4. Are you encouraged to take risks? How?
5. Tell me about the last time you felt embarrassed in front of your colleagues.
6. Look at these statements which if any do you think apply to your school and why (adapted from Lipshitz et al, 2002)?
7. How do you and your colleagues access work-place learning opportunities?

Radical organisational learning – the benefits

1. Could you please outline how you think organisational learning should be developed further in your school?
2. What do you see as the benefits of this for you individually?
3. What do you see as the benefits of this for the school as a whole?
4. Is there anything else that you would like to say about work-place learning?

Different Types of Learning – as described by West-Burnham and Ireson (2005)

| | Shallow (what) | Deep (how) | Profound (why) |
|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Means | Memorisation | Reflection | Intuition |
| Outcomes | Information | Knowledge | Wisdom |
| Evidence | Replication | Understanding | Meaning |
| Motivation | Extrinsic | Intrinsic | Authentic |
| Attitudes | Compliance | Interpretation | Creativity |
| Relationships | Dependence | Interdependence | Independence |
| | Single Loop | Double Loop | Triple Loop |

Learning Characteristics defined by Lipshitz et al (2002)

| |
|--|
| Transparency defined as exposing one's thoughts and actions to others in order to receive feedback |
| Integrity defined as collecting and providing information regardless of its implications. This means giving others feedback as fully and as accurately as possible and being willing to accept full and accurate feedback from others. Integrity not only implies a willingness to be open about and accept one's errors, it also means encouraging others to provide feedback |
| Issue orientation defined as focusing on the relevance of information to the issues regardless of the social standing or rank of the recipient or the source |
| Inquiry defined as persisting in investigation until full understanding is achieved. It implies a willingness to accept a degree of uncertainty and to suspend judgement until a satisfactory understanding is achieved and is similar to the value of intellectual curiosity |
| Accountability defined as assuming responsibility for both learning and implementing lessons learned |

APPENDIX 7 - Semi-Structured Interview Questions for all Groups of Respondents

Organisational Learning

Could you give me a little background information about yourself including length of service, a little about your career history and your current post in school?

Organisational Learning in Practice

1. Tell me about the formal and informal adult learning that you have been involved in.
2. How has your adult school based learning generally been organised?
3. How have you accessed learning opportunities?
4. Of the learning that you have taken part in, which has had the biggest impact on you?
- 4a. Why do you think this is?
5. Tell me about the learning for staff that you have organised. Why?
- 5a. Of the learning that you have organised which has had the biggest impact on whole school effectiveness? Why?
6. Look at this description of different types of learning (adapted from West-Burnham and Ireson 2005). Does one description or an alternative of your own, best describe your learning? Why?
7. In your opinion how do you learn best?

Organisational characteristics that act as aids or barriers to learning

8. What makes learning difficult for you?
9. What are learning easy for you?
10. How would you describe your school climate?
- 10a. How does the climate impact on you as a learner and everyone else as a learner?
11. Do you take risks? Tell me about them.
12. Can you remember the last time you felt embarrassed in front of colleagues? Tell me about it.
13. Look at these statements. Thinking of your school in relation to these statements where 1 is definitely; 2 is mainly; 3 is occasionally give each one a number and tell me why (adapted from Lipshitz et al, 2002).
- 13a. How do you know?

Radical organisational learning – the benefits

14. Tell me about times you have encouraged adult learning?
- 14a. How do you do this?
15. Could you outline how you think adult learning could be further developed in your school?
- 15a. What do you see as the benefits of this for the individual?
- 15b. What do you see as the benefits of this for the school as a whole?
16. Is there anything else that you would like to say about adult learning?

Different Types of Learning – as described by West-Burnham and Ireson (2005)

| TYPE A | TYPE B | TYPE C |
|--|--|---|
| Memorisation | Reflection | Intuition |
| Given lots of information to remember that you then use in the classroom | Given time to reflect on what you already know and develop a deeper understanding of information | Your knowledge is deep and sophisticated so that you can solve complex problems alone |

Learning Climate adapted from Lipshitz et al (2002)

| |
|---|
| <p>Transparency</p> <p>Staff feel confident to tell other staff about their thoughts and actions in order to receive feedback</p> |
| <p>Integrity</p> <p>Staff will give other staff feedback as fully and as accurately as possible and will also accept full and accurate feedback from others. Staff are open about their errors.</p> |
| <p>Issue Orientation</p> <p>Staff are able to focus on the relevance of information to the issues regardless of the social standing or rank of the recipient or the source</p> |
| <p>Inquiry</p> <p>Staff will persist in investigation until a full understanding is achieved. This means they accept a degree of uncertainty and suspend judgement until a satisfactory understanding is achieved.</p> |
| <p>Accountability</p> <p>Staff assume responsibility for both learning and implementing lessons learned</p> |

APPENDIX 8 - Formal and Informal Learning of Head Teacher, Teacher and Teaching Assistant Respondents

Head Teachers

| | Formal | Informal |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Head Teacher 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NPQH - LA Induction for new Heads - NCSL, New Visions - Music subject specialists courses - ICT training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support from LA - Support from colleagues' |
| Head Teacher 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NPQH - New Heads Conference - DSP for Child Protection - Maths coordinator training - First Aid - Numeracy and Literacy subject leaders training - Raising Standards in Maths - Guided Reading - Behaviour Management Strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PR visit - Mentor discussions - SIP discussions - Cluster Head Support |
| Head Teacher 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management training such as Working together for Success and the Primary Leadership Programme - NPQH | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - meetings in school - school training days - leadership team meetings - discussions - organised colleague debates - reading |

Class Teachers

| | Formal | Informal |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| Class Teacher 1a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of courses ranging right back to when I was an NQT • ICT training • NPQH | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyday life experiences • Pinched ideas off other people • Lesson observations |

| | | |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Class Teacher 1b | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INSET, Local Authority driven and formal in-house learning • Outstanding lessons courses • Coordinator days • Days on new initiatives like APP • NQT mentoring | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different styles of management • Support from HT, DHT and senior leaders • You learn as you go along • Receiving advice • Observing lessons |
| Class Teacher 1c | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses going right back to when I was a secondary school teacher • Curriculum courses • Computer courses internally • SEAL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot, but I wouldn't even think it was learning • Picking up things from other people |
| Class Teacher 2a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class teacher courses • NCSL courses • LA management course • Network meetings • Primary Leadership Programme • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sorts • Its brilliant here in terms of learning from each other • Observing other teachers • Learning from you Head Teacher • There's a willingness to learn from each other |
| Class Teacher 2b | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide range • Classroom skills • The last Head was very keen on thinking skills so she sent us all on those. • APP course • SENCO courses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour management • I think in school there is quite a lot of leaning through each other, the staff are quite open and we have a good learning environment and we do quite a lot of sharing good practice. • Staff Meetings • Cluster Days • Researching new initiatives |
| Class Teacher 2c | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INSET • Specific training opportunities externally via courses • Philosophy for Children • Visual Literacy Research Project • NQT training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainly through working with colleagues • Research things myself |
| Class Teacher 3a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various coordinators courses • ICT training • Maths training • Leadership for Middle Management • NPQH • Lots of one day courses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Meetings • I have learnt a lot from others • Observations of colleagues in the same phase |
| Class Teacher | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses, like differentiation, mentoring, gifted and talented | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with a range of staff and being a mentor has given |

| | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| 3b | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network meetings • I have personally taken on a Masters Courses • I started my doctorate this September | me opportunities to learn |
| Class Teacher 3c | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten day Literacy course • Five day Literacy course • Network meetings • Visual Literacy course • Action Research Project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff meetings • Playing around with things like ICT and the Literacy and Numeracy strategies • Observing others • Peer working |

Teaching Assistants

| | Formal | Informal |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| Teaching Assistant 1a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From teachers and what they expect • Courses • Nursery Nurse qualification • School INSET days • Local Authority courses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the job • Watching others |
| Teaching Assistant 1b | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TA qualifications • In previous work context – managerial courses etc. • First Aid • SEAL training • Staff Meetings and had ICT training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TA meetings which are a chat really • I'm hoping that I have learned as I've gone along |
| Teaching Assistant 1c | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epi-pen training • First Aid Training • Courses • In-house training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading stuff • Asking questions • Chatting to others |
| Teaching Assistant 2a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sent on courses • First Aid • Training at a local school • Staff meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observing other members of staff, particularly teachers |
| Teaching Assistant 2b | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My own private study, BTEC, foundation degree • Courses • First aid | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion groups at other schools • Observing others • Reading |
| Teaching Assistant 2c | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HLTA conferences • Courses • First Aid | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have been really fortunate in that I have had a lot of time with the SENCO. I have always been based in her class • Teacher days |
| Teaching Assistant 3a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Aid • Child protection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own research • Watching different teachers |

| | | |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal study – doing a degree • Internal training | |
| Teaching Assistant 3b | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff meetings • Courses • NVQ training • First Aid | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watching others teach • Visiting other schools |
| Teaching Assistant 3c | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses, a teaching assistant course over a period of days spread out was good • Staff meetings if it concerns us, I also help to make the drinks and such like • Teacher Days, I have a couple of friends who are TAs and they don't have to go | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shadowing previous Inclusion Manager |

APPENDIX 9 - The Impact / Influence of Staff Training

| Head teacher | Learning Organised | Impact / Influence | Success |
|----------------|---|--|---|
| Head Teacher 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ICT training for everyone including TAs via 6 twilight session - Leadership Pathways for 2 members of staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improved ICT skills and knowledge of staff - staff are motivated and enthused | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - because everyone learnt together people supported each other - competitive element - because 2 are attending together opportunities to discuss together |
| Head Teacher 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - guided reading training for everyone including TAs which started with Advisor followed up with staff meetings and phase meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more continuity throughout school - improved reading results of children - more confidence among the staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - because it was a whole school focus that had been identified collaboratively - high priority of SDP - people learnt together |
| Head Teacher 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - thinking skills training for all staff delivered initially by professional trainer, with follow up meetings over last 2 years and modelled thinking skills lessons for all teachers and super thinking skills days for children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - raised profile of thinking skills throughout the school - increased staff confidence and flexibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - concentrated approach - high priority on SIP - because everyone learned together |

APPENDIX 10 - Accessing Learning for Teacher and Teaching Assistant Respondents

| | Accessing Learning |
|------------|---|
| Teacher 1a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal investigation - take a course to the Head and ask to go on it - email the Head and say what do you think about this - for the last two years it has been quite tight and its all been linked to the school improvement plan - Well basically I would have to ask the Head or senior management or in terms of going through the annual system. I have asked for something in the past and not got it, through performance management |
| Teacher 1b | |
| Teacher 1c | |
| Teacher 2a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If I saw something in my pigeon hole that I thought would be of interest then I would go and see the Head or Deputy to see if we had the money to go on it. - I prioritise - I know we have the big files with course information in and people can look through those for things that might interest them. - I find things I want to do |
| Teacher 2b | |
| Teacher 2c | |
| Teacher 3a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I go on area network meetings with other colleagues and I find others things I'd like to do - We are quite fortunate here where we have lots of staff who are very interested in supporting each other - If I was interested in a course I would simply need to ask the Head - Through performance management. |
| Teacher 3b | |
| Teacher 3c | |

| | Accessing Learning |
|-----------------------|--|
| Teaching Assistant 1a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pamphlets sent through to say what is on offer - you can ask the Deputy or straight to the Boss |
| Teaching Assistant 1b | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is no set thing really - I think you are suppose to look at the courses and ask - Waiting to be asked |
| Teaching Assistant 1c | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You don't really - You can request but sometimes hear nothing - You are told |
| Teaching Assistant 2a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You look yourself and request - Staff meeting and training days are planned - Ask your line manager |
| Teaching Assistant 2b | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - find something in leaflets and things that come into school - Approach Phase Leader or Head Teacher |
| Teaching Assistant 2c | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Given something - Find something myself through the internet |
| Teaching Assistant 3a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Request from a senior TA |
| Teaching Assistant 3b | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I see courses in the brochure and feed to the other TAs - Through interest and hearsay - Request to the Head |
| Teaching Assistant 3c | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - one member of staff gets all the course information and shares it - we make a request for something we want |

APPENDIX 11 - How do Head Teacher, Teacher and Teaching Assistant

Respondents Learn Best?

| Head Teacher | I best learn when... | Learning is difficult when... |
|----------------|--|---|
| Head Teacher 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can relate what I am learning to work • When things are visual or auditory • I have desire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have to read • I have preconceived ideas and beliefs • I am inhibited |
| Head Teacher 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone talks to me • Someone shows me things • I try something I have been shown for myself • When I talk to other people • I have had good managers • When staff don't just accept something and make me articulate my opinions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am isolated |
| Head teacher 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visually • I like to see things written down • I have notes or handouts • I like to think about things • I am passionate about something | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am not clear about what I am learning • I am not in control • I am tired • I am not interested in the subject matter |

| Class Teacher | I best learn when... | Learning is difficult when... |
|------------------|---|--|
| Class Teacher 1a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its practical • Reading and taking notes • Trying stuff out | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject matter • I'm disinterested |
| Class Teacher 1b | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have time to reflect • I can discuss • I know the outcome | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't have time • I don't know what I am meant to be learning |
| Class Teacher 1c | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am given information • I can try things out • Being with other people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling tired |
| Class Teacher 2a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With other people • I can talk things through | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have a lot to do • I don't have much time |

| | | |
|------------------|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can put things into practice straight away • I have time to reflect | |
| Class Teacher 2b | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is practical • I'm passionate about something | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't see the point to it |
| Class Teacher 2c | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning with others but as an individual • Time to reflect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its just from books • If I'm forced to learn in a certain way |
| Class Teacher 3a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I am interested • I can see things • When I can think about something | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Things are presented too fast |
| Class Teacher 3b | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am engaged and enthusiastic • With the staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It doesn't interest me |
| Class Teacher 3c | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am inspired • I go into a colleagues classroom • I have time to digest information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I am frustrated • If I don't have enough time • If I'm not really interested |

| Teaching Assistant | I best learn when... | Learning is difficult when... |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Teaching Assistant 1a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I see somebody do something • When I do something • When I read something to memorise it • Having help from others or just seeing someone else do something | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When other people learn faster than me • When I am too busy |
| Teaching Assistant 1b | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By reading • Self teaching through research • When I am interested | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time really • When I'm not interested |
| Teaching Assistant 1c | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By doing • Having support from people • Getting feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure • No support • People being unapproachable |
| Teaching Assistant 2a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orally and visually • When we can discuss things | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too much information • Having to read and understand something in a staff meeting. I like to take it away |
| Teaching Assistant 2b | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hands on • Having support off others • Sharing ideas • I have time to reflect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It there is a lot to take on board |

| | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Teaching Assistant 2c | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short bursts with involvement • My attitude, I am willing to give anything a go and I will question things • Wow people / inspirational | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone just talking to me for long periods (in excess of 30 mins) • Light in room, position etc • Boring people • 50 things thrown at you at the same time. |
| Teaching Assistant 3a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visually • Hands on and with others • Support of staff members • Approachability of staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time constraints |
| Teaching Assistant 3b | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By doing something • By watching someone and then doing it myself • Being in a learning environment all the time • Because there is a nice atmosphere in school, people are prepared to share their knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just being told • Time |
| Teaching Assistant 3c | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By doing • Supportive colleagues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being tired • Time restraints |

APPENDIX 12 - Learning Climate as described by Head Teacher Respondents

| Head Teacher 1 | Head Teacher 2 | Head Teacher 3 |
|--|--|--|
| School Climate | | |
| <p>Varied. Where people are happy they feel good about themselves and come through the door and are motivated by the core purpose of their job and just get on with it. But there are also people who create a negative atmosphere because they don't feel that way.</p> | <p>I'd like to feel that everybody feels part of it and everybody feels that they can make a contribution. Climate is good</p> | <p>It depends on the time of year. At moment people are more stressed as we have just had a round of lesson observations. I think generally the climate is fine. For the most part they really are enthusiastic</p> |
| Do you take risks? | | |
| <p>Um, yeh. change is a risk I suppose and doing some things are risky. A simple thing that I changed was school uniform.</p> | <p>I don't know really. I try very hard to encourage everybody else in the school to take risks. So I suppose from that point of view I do.</p> | <p>Yeh. I do take risks and I do like to. I think the longer you have been in the job the more you feel you can take risks. Very early on in my Headship I arranged a teacher day at very short notice.</p> |
| Have you ever felt embarrassed in front of colleagues? | | |
| <p>Yes, sometimes I am ridiculously naive.</p> | <p>No</p> | <p>Yes, it was to do with a senior teacher contradicting me in front of staff and governors.</p> |
| Do these exist in your school? | | |
| <p>1 = definitely Transparency = 2 Integrity = 3 Issue Orientation = 3 Inquiry = 3 Accountability = 1</p> | <p>2 = mainly Transparency = 1 Integrity = 2 Issue Orientation = 2 Inquiry = 1 Accountability = 1</p> | <p>3 = occasionally Transparency = 2 Integrity = 3 Issue Orientation = 3 Inquiry = 1 Accountability = 1</p> |

APPENDIX 13 - Learning Climate in School One as described by Teacher and Teaching Assistant Respondents

| SCHOOL ONE | | |
|---|---|--|
| Class Teacher 1a | Class Teacher 1b | Class Teacher 1c |
| How would you describe your school climate? | | |
| I love teaching so I am fine to go into school... Climate depends on individuals. It's hard wearing so many hats. | There are times when I am happy and times when I am frustrated. We are trying hard to get an ethos of openness. The climate is improving maybe. | Staff currently are niggling. They are not supporting each other in the way they used to. I have been in schools where the climate is worse and I've equally been in schools where it has been better. It is a rollercoaster. I don't feel particularly valued these days. |
| Do you take risks? | | |
| I don't think I do actually. Maybe sometimes in the classroom. | I try with my teaching Where I impact on staff I don't think I take risks as much because of the nature of our staff. | Yes. I do with the kids. Definitely not when being observed probably because of the lack of confidence in myself now. |
| Have you ever felt embarrassed in front of colleagues? | | |
| Loads. Yes recently at a SLT meeting on curriculum development and „they left me for dead in the water’. | All the time. | No not really. |
| Do these exist in your school? | | |
| 1 = definitely | 2 = mainly | 3 = occasionally |
| Transparency = 3 Integrity = 3 Issue Orientation = 2 Inquiry = 3 Accountability = 1 | Transparency = 3 Integrity = 2 Issue Orientation = 3 Inquiry = 2 Accountability = 1 | Transparency = 3 Integrity = 2 Issue Orientation = 3 Inquiry = 3 Accountability = 1 |

| SCHOOL ONE | | |
|---|--|---|
| Teaching Assistant 1a | Teaching Assistant 1b | Teaching Assistant 1c |
| How would you describe your school climate? | | |
| We are like a family. There are always stressful times and you can sense when that is happening by the way some of the staff are reacting. It is a positive place to be most of the time. | I would say the climate is quite poor. We all put on a happy face but underneath there are a lot of people who have low morale. You have to know your place. You can't be expressive about what you want to do because it is beyond what you ought to be doing. I've never been more unhappy in a job. | You'll get different characters wherever you are. Generally we are a nice lot. There are all sorts of pressures. There are some things that I am not wild about but I am happy in my job and know that everyone has good days and bad days. The climate is up and down and communication is a bit iffy. |
| Do you take risks? | | |
| I don't think I do. I don't know really what kind of risks I would take. Obviously being a TA, whatever the teacher says you do. | No, I know my place. You know I have had teacher's shout across the room you know, remember I'm in charge in front of the children. I know my place. | I'm not a risk taker because I like my comfort zone. |
| Have you ever felt embarrassed in front of colleagues? | | |
| I don't think so, ah yes, when I first started in Year 6 and I taught decimals incorrectly. | Not embarrassed, upset but not embarrassed. I often do things and then feel uncomfortable and think was that the right thing. | Uh, yes. There have been a couple of times that particularly weren't very nice and you are dressed down in front of a class or in front of someone else which is inappropriate really. The senior management know because it is a verbal slap down in front of anybody but it's not addressed. |
| Do these exist in your school? | | |
| 1 = definitely | 2 = mainly | 3 = occasionally |
| Transparency = 1 Integrity = 1 Issue Orientation = 1 Inquiry = 1 Accountability = 1 | Transparency = 3 Integrity = 3 Issue Orientation = 3 Inquiry = 3 Accountability = 1 | Transparency = 3 Integrity = 1 Issue Orientation = 2 Inquiry = 3 Accountability = 1 |

APPENDIX 14 - Learning Climate in School Two as described by Teacher and Teaching Assistant Respondents

| SCHOOL TWO | | |
|--|---|---|
| Class Teacher 2a | Class Teacher 2b | Class Teacher 2c |
| How would you describe your school climate? | | |
| Climate is not too bad. I think on the whole the climate is positive | Generally the climate is good. We are supportive of each other and I think people do get on. | Very mixed. I really enjoy working here. I feel valued 99% of time. There is a nice feel to the school. The ones that are not happy just can't see the positive things. |
| Do you take risks? | | |
| I am a cautious person but willing to take a risk if I can see the benefits. | Yes. I take calculated risks. | Yes. I take controlled risks. |
| Have you ever felt embarrassed in front of colleagues? | | |
| Yes. It was when I was leading a teacher day and a member of staff got upset during our warm up. | Yes. I went for promotion here and didn't get it. | I get embarrassed if I know I have taught something incorrectly. |
| Do these exist in your school? | | |
| 1 = definitely | 2 = mainly | 3 = occasionally |
| Transparency = 1 Integrity = 1 Issue Orientation = 1 Inquiry = 1 Accountability = 1 | Transparency = 2 Integrity = 1 Issue Orientation = 1 Inquiry = 1 Accountability = 1 | Transparency = 1 Integrity = 2 Issue Orientation = 2 Inquiry = 2 Accountability = 1 |

| SCHOOL TWO | | |
|---|---|---|
| Teaching Assistant 2a | Teaching Assistant 2b | Teaching Assistant 2c |
| School Climate / Morale | | |
| I think it is very good. I think we work well together. The climate is good. The Head Teacher has created a very good working atmosphere. | The climate was poor where I worked before but here it is completely different. It is very supportive and friendly. | Really good. I think this is the best school that I have ever worked at. I really feel valued and respected by my colleagues. |
| Do you take risks? | | |
| I suppose I do take risks in trusting my own judgement and stretching the children. | I wouldn't describe myself as a risk taker. I tend to play things safe. I have taken risks though. | Yes, I am a risk taker. |
| Have you ever felt embarrassed in front of colleagues? | | |
| I can't really think of a time. Perhaps in staff training days when you do those ice – breaker games. | I can't think of anything. | When I first came I was embarrassed about doing cover teaching but that has gone now, it was my confidence really. |
| Do these exist in your school? | | |
| 1 = definitely | 2 = mainly | 3 = occasionally |
| Transparency = 1 Integrity = 1 Issue Orientation = 1 Inquiry = 1 Accountability = 1 | Transparency = 1 Integrity = 2 Issue Orientation = 2 Inquiry = 2 Accountability = 1 | Transparency = 1 Integrity = 1 Issue Orientation = 1 Inquiry = 1 Accountability = 1 |

APPENDIX 15 - Learning Climate in School Three as described by Teacher and Teaching Assistant Respondents

| SCHOOL THREE | | |
|---|---|---|
| Class Teacher 3a | Class Teacher 3b | Class Teacher 3c |
| How would you describe your school climate? | | |
| The climate is better than it was. It had a bit of a dip when we had two weeks of lesson observations. It changes depending on the time of the year. When everyone is demanding things at the same time it gets too much. | Generally the climate here is very positive. I think the environment here is very positive | At the moment really positive. Morale is high at the moment. It has been up and down. When it is too hectic morale suffers. |
| Do you take risks? | | |
| I'm not a big risk taker but I did take a risk in my lesson observation. | Yes, lots of risks all the time in different contexts. | Probably not that often. I probably used to. |
| Have you ever felt embarrassed in front of colleagues? | | |
| I think I have said the wrong thing in a staff meeting before. | Yes, very early on in my career I wasn't aware of routines and missed a duty. Sometimes now when I ask questions I suppose when I don't know whether I am saying the right thing. | Yes when delivering INSET once. |
| Do these exist in your school? | | |
| 1 = definitely | 2 = mainly | 3 = occasionally |
| Transparency = 2 Integrity = 2 Issue Orientation = 1 Inquiry = 1 Accountability = 1 | Transparency = 1 Integrity = 2 Issue Orientation = 1 Inquiry = 3 Accountability = 1 | Transparency = 1 Integrity = 1 Issue Orientation = 1 Inquiry = 1 Accountability = 1 |

| SCHOOL THREE | | |
|---|--|---|
| Teaching Assistant 3a | Teaching Assistant 3b | Teaching Assistant 3c |
| School Climate | | |
| It's a very caring school. The staff are supportive. I'd say the climate is good. | It is a happy school. I am happy here and feel confident that if I had a worry I could speak to someone. | Like a rollercoaster. We all pull together though. I would say the climate is o.k. I wouldn't say it is fantastic. |
| Do you take risks? | | |
| I don't think of myself as a risk taker. I suppose I do with the children. | I'm not a risk taker no. I have occasionally taken risks. | I think I show initiative. I wouldn't take a risk if I thought it would put the school at risk. |
| Have you ever felt embarrassed in front of colleagues? | | |
| When I have to talk about a child in celebration assembly. | Yes when the CD wouldn't work in a Christmas Production. Staff meetings too, I would probably know the answers but I wouldn't volunteer them because I would be terrified I was wrong. | Yes, through lack of recall. I can think of an example this morning when one of the staff pointed out a mistake I had made to the Head. |
| Do these exist in your school? | | |
| 1 = definitely | 2 = mainly | 3 = occasionally |
| Transparency = 1 Integrity = 1 Issue Orientation = 1 Inquiry = 1 Accountability = 1 | Transparency = 2 Integrity = 2 Issue Orientation = 1 Inquiry = 2 Accountability = 1 | Transparency = 3 Integrity = 2 Issue Orientation = 1 Inquiry = 3 Accountability = 1 |

APPENDIX 16 - An Example Transcript (Class Teacher 1c)

Background Info *Not included to ensure anonymity. Where any information in the transcript may have led to identification it has been deleted and replaced with *****

Organisational Learning in Practice

Interviewer **Tell me about the formal and informal adult learning that you have been involved in.**

Interviewee Formally obviously there are courses that I have been on from ****, and curriculum things um; informally I have not done any Open University or anything like that. So I have not taken anything on new but obviously there have been things that have impacted on what I have been doing whether they be **** from the past. So informally probably a lot but I wouldn't even think it was learning. It was just me having picked up from one thing following on and finding out more or doing more.

Interviewer **Have you been on any courses since you have been employed here?**

Interviewee Internally? There have been courses where for example a computer course or where we have had internal training for white boards and internal courses. Courses run by the authority or externally, I have been on SEAL courses but that is it externally.

Interviewer **So how is the learning you are generally involved in organised?**

Interviewee Can you re-phrase that? What are you after?

Interviewer **Say for example that you had identified that you weren't very confident in teaching investigative science and you needed support how would that support be organised?**

Interviewee Well basically I would have to ask the Head or senior management or in terms of going through the annual system. I have asked for something in the past and not got it, through performance management.

Interviewer And in terms of the internal learning like staff meetings etc how is that generally organised?

Interviewee Um, sometimes it is organised by a particular member of staff, other times it is organised, like when we had the whiteboards, through the firm that installed them. Same with the computers, RM have come and done things. So some are staff generated and some is because of the school and the things that have been brought into the school and so in a sense the senior management team have initiated that.

Interviewer How do you access learning opportunities here other than asking the Head?

Interviewee Through school no. Because if school don't sanction it then I can't do it. I mean other things that I can do that is not actually getting on courses and things is to contact people like the advisor and such like to get advice but that is not going on a course. That is just finding things out from contacts.

Interviewer Of the learning that you have taken part in, which has had the biggest impact on you and why?

Interviewee I can't think of one thing. There have been lots of things. The ones that have had the biggest impact in the main were early in my career but equally the things that have had a major impact are things like I can now use a computer, when I started, that has had a major impact but the learning for that is basically self taught. Um, saying how do you do this and getting someone to show me. It has not been constructive learning it has been something that I have had to do for the job. And then we had the whiteboards in and my whiteboard malfunctioned for the first half term and they had to come to replace everything which meant that I was behind in a sense I couldn't learn with other people and staff were talking about doing this and I was just getting shooting stars on mine. And so I actually spent the half term holiday, the February half term holiday and I literally on my own laptop which had the Promethean stuff on there, and I literally spent 5 days, 8 hours a day working with it. Creating flip charts and all sorts of things. It was very difficult for me but it would have been nice to have learned it bit by bit with everyone else.

Interviewer Look at this description of different types of learning (adapted from West-Burnham and Ireson 2005). Does one description or an alternative of your own, best describe your learning? Why?

Interviewee I suppose I would have to go with memorisation because the other things in essence come from it. We spend so much time in that. I had to memorise what to do with the whiteboards for example especially as I had that set back in the beginning.

Interviewer In your opinion how do you learn best?

Interviewee I would say a whole combination of things. Having an input of information, having a chance to try some things out whether they work or not and then solve around them and then try to link it back to the information. So a whole range of things.

Interviewer So do you have opportunities to learn with others?

Interviewee You are left to your own devices in terms of planning you haven't got anyone to plan with and bounce ideas off. I have got a Teaching Assistant but she doesn't get PPA with me because she doesn't work when I have my PPA because she is not a full time teaching assistant. She is actually with me all day Monday, all day Wednesday, Thursday morning and most of Friday unless she is taken away because of problems in other areas because in the main she is first port of call because I have the least number of pupils in my class with SEN. Um, so my class is regarded as the easiest one this year. The class I had last year, the same probably wouldn't have happened. She would have probably been the last person asked to go so it depends but now she is first choice.

Organisational characteristics that act as aids or barriers to learning

Interviewer What makes learning difficult for you?

Interviewee Um, feeling tired. I get quite knackered, yes I do and because of that there is a point where I have finished my marking, it is 9 o'clock at night, what do you want me to do now? I just want a cup of coffee and go to bed. And so from that view point, and my age has something to do with that I suspect, but it is tiring. So that is one aspect. Because of the time that is given up to doing things in the evening there is a point where, I have actually pledged now to do no school work on a Saturday. Saturdays are just for me now. But as a consequence there are times when I have not been as well prepared as I should have been

because of that. So hard for me to learn, tiredness is one thing because I then haven't got the motivation to want to do that. I suppose my memory is not as good as it was. And I think in terms of learning my personal interests are more orientated now towards things that I want to do rather than for the school. And so if it is learning for the school's benefit my priorities have changed which make that learning difficult for me as I want to find out about some other things now. More personally. ****

Interviewer What makes learning easy for you?

Interviewee Um, I thoroughly enjoyed being with other people and ****. So I would much rather learn with other people than learn on my own. You know if you said you have to give a lecture in Germany in 3 months in German. Rather than me go on my own little furrow to find out how to speak German in that time, I would rather go in a group to do it. It's just a personal learning style.

Interviewer Does anything else make it easy for you to learn if you think about the learning that takes place for example in staff meetings?

Interviewee Um, partially if I have not got my mind on other things so that I can actually concentrate properly on what we are doing. Um, so being able to go into it fresh in that sense would be helpful. But that is hard to achieve. It does happen sometimes. Um, just thinking, so I prefer to do things when we are doing it together.

Interviewer How do you feel in school and how would you describe your school climate?

Interviewee Um, it makes me reflect back on climate in all the different places I have been in. Staff currently are niggling a little bit with each other. They are not supporting each other in the way that they used to and I think part of that is because of pressure of time or lack of time. Um, I think, a number of staff in a sense try to rise above it and put on certainly for the children a brave face when they might be feeling down in the dumps one day. They paint it on and staff will do that so that they are not letting the side down. Staff will, although I have just said that they are not supporting each other as much, they will support each other but they are not able to give the same amount of time that they would have previously because of the pressures that everybody is under. Um, I have been in schools where morale is a lot lower than this, a lot lower than it is here, and I've equally been in schools where it has been higher. I would say it is a rollercoaster and I think part of

that is due to the demands of a particular term or half term or whatever. And um as in all schools it tends to build up and staff get tired towards the end of term and so they tend to niggle about things more. But I think the nature of the job is up and down and you go through times when things hit home and swell all around and times when things are lovely.

Interviewer **And how do you feel in school?**

Interviewee About me, um, how do I feel? I suppose because I would prefer to be with the older children that has altered how I feel generally because I am not getting the satisfaction and I am not getting the feedback from the kids because of their level of maturity um, where I know other staff would say they wouldn't want 5 or 6. It is personal preference isn't it? Um, in terms of the staff here, I am quite happy being with the staff and so in that sense I am not coming into school and thinking oh God I have got to meet so and so today. And so I am quite happy with that. Although that is not true of all the staff as you may well have heard. There are odd staff who really have an issue coming to school because of other staff. But that is a minority. I am sure that is true of every school probably.

Interviewer **Is it known about and dealt with?**

Interviewee It is known but no it is not dealt with. No. I think it is probably perceived that it is too difficult to deal with and it would be difficult to deal with don't get me wrong it would be. In terms of my feelings, I don't feel particularly valued these days. Um, and this is not getting at the Head but I think the Head would just like to see me retire and go away quietly. The Head would like to have new, young blood in the school and I can understand why. So I don't necessarily make the contributions that I ought to now in staff meetings because I think well is there any point. Which to be fair I don't think is good. It is something I shouldn't be doing. Um, but when you start to get the feeling that I'm not going to listen to anything that person says you then are reticent about contributing. I am sure that some of the things I say are seen as negative. They are not meant negative at all but I feel that I tend to see the global picture and not just necessarily the narrow view. I think you also have to think about the effect on A, B, C over there and I tend to throw in don't forget you have got and I think that is seen as a negative. It is not meant to be that way but I think it is perceived in that way. I think the Head somewhat sees me as stopping things, well not stopping things but slowing the pace of things down.

Interviewer Have you talked to the Head about the way you feel you are perceived?

Interviewee I haven't spoken personally about it no. But I have spoken to senior management about it. They have done nothing really, it is just taken as a comment I have made. And so perhaps they see it in the same way. I don't think that they do actually and I may be totally wrong with the perception that I have about the way the Head sees me but I haven't spoken to the Head about it and so I don't know.

Interviewer So what would make you feel more valued?

Interviewee Um, I suppose it is about feeling that it is worth me saying something. I have no objection, at all to what I say being disagreed with or not thought important in that particular situation. I have got no problem with that at all and so I suppose it is the impression that I have got now is that it is not even considered and so if I say something it is not actually thought about and then oh yea, I like that idea or part of that idea or no I don't think that is right. I think there is a wall up even before I say anything.

Interviewer So thinking about the climate how does it impact on you as a learner and other staff as learners?

Interviewee Impacts on me as a learner? Um in some ways it obviously has a detrimental effect but I would hope that in many ways I overcome the bulk of it and just get on. In terms of the other staff and their learning from what they have said to me, I don't think it has any impact. Me, personally doesn't affect them. Because nothing is on a personal level, if things were on a personal level it would be very different. I think the staff here are open to learning I don't think that there is anyone who isn't. It is a positive staff, it is not a negative staff and I do think they are open to learning. As I say the pressures increase over time like a rollercoaster at a particular time take their toll.

Interviewer Do you take risks? Tell me about them.

Interviewee Yes, I would take risks. Um, I can't think of something recently but generally I am prepared to take risks, certainly with some of the things I do with the kids, they may go belly up but I am prepared to have a go and occasionally it does go belly up but I am prepared for that.

Interviewer Do you take risks when being observed?

Interviewee Definitely not, um, probably because of the lack of confidence in myself now. ****

Interviewer Do you get the opportunity to go and observe others teach?

Interviewee I've asked to do that in my performance management but it has not happened. When I was told I was going in Year * one of the first things I said was can I go into a local school just to see what a Year * classroom looks like and what the strategies are for control of little ones and things like that. But that hasn't happened. I was prepared obviously because I know people to say could I come across and whatever but I was told in performance management no, we organise what goes on. So... I haven't been and that is a niggle of mine that one because I have now been in there 3 years and I have never seen a Year * class in operation. And I can't speak to the teacher who had them before me because they left um so you know it is not as if it is easy.

Interviewer Do you have opportunities for team teaching?

Interviewee Um, with the ****. I suppose technically when she comes and takes my class I could go out but I don't I just join in and so it is a bit of, well it is still very much directed by her and so it is not what I would call proper team teaching.

Interviewer Can you remember the last time you felt embarrassed in front of colleagues? Tell me about it.

Interviewee Not really. I suppose because I am prepared to be a bit of a risk taker, this happened just the other week, in singing assembly with the KS2 there was myself and other staff and she wanted them to sing in three groups and it was all to do with hand clapping rhythms and such like and I made a mess of the end. I couldn't get the ending at all but I wasn't bothered. You know, where I can think of in every school where I've been I could think of a member of staff who would be distraught at that. It would wreck them. Again the other day, in assembly, I sat on a chair and just kept going down and down as the legs spread open but it didn't bother me at all whereas some staff um, that would actually, because it was in front of the whole school, feel really embarrassed and I just thought oh and got another chair.

Interviewer Look at these statements. Thinking of your school in relation to these statements where 1 is definitely; 2 is mainly; 3 is occasionally give each one a number and tell me why (adapted from Lipshitz et al, 2002).

Interviewee Transparency 3, definitely not. Um, teachers would feel happier at doing it than TAs. Um, Integrity 2, I would have said that teachers are fairly open about their errors. I think there might be odd issues with accurate feedback over things simply where at times someone will take it personally when it actually isn't meant personally. If it is taken personally it will cause issues obviously when it is not meant that way whatsoever. I would say issue orientation was a 3. I would have said that has become more of an issue now. I think the rank has become more obvious in this Head Teacher's time here. For a whole range of different reasons, some being very simply while others, a silly one as it might sound but there were a number of, and I am not talking teachers here, I am talking parents perceptions, dinner ladies, the wider community, ****, the talk that went on about that, it was parents that first mentioned it to me and that was, it was a very small thing that, wasn't discussed with people before it was done, it appeared there. But that was something that people said oh! And that was a very simple thing but I would say that there has been a change in emphasis on that one. Because I think within school everyone accepts that there is a rank. That isn't an issue. It is almost the way in which it comes across that is the issue. I think up to a point yes to inquiry but overall a 3. Accountability I would say is a 1. I think staff have started doing that because of what has been thrust upon them, I am not just talking school, I am talking national level, local level. I think teachers have always felt accountable but have not felt the pressure of being accountable, well not like the same pressure that everybody feels now about accountability.

Radical organisational learning – the benefits

Interviewer How do you encourage work place learning for others?

Interviewee There are times, I am talking recent now as opposed to going back over time, I would say that I don't encourage a great deal now. When I hear people say things, I might say, oh have you had a word with so and so. If I know where they might be able to make a contact to help them out I would encourage that but I don't go up to them and say do you want... Although I do stroll round to staff at times and say are you alright, do you need help with anything?

Interviewer Could you outline how you think adult learning could be further developed in this school?

Interviewee I think that the fact that we have had TAs come in has made a considerable difference. I don't know that it will show you know. There is so much emphasis on data and you can only get data on certain things and this will show up in other ways, you haven't got data for it. But the TAs have certainly had an impact. As I have said seeing other classes would have helped me considerably in terms of my self worth as much as anything else. Physical space and storage would also help, it would take the hassle out of things.

Interviewer Is there anything else that you would like to say about adult learning?

Interviewee I think it would be great if we could have a system where people could be seconded for blocks of time to work on specific things maybe for half a term you could work on something, preferably for me with some other people. But if there was a system built in for teachers to have blocks of time to work on something and do a good job on it and not end up doing little bits piece meal all the time and not feeling that you have actually fully achieved something. That is something I would have liked to see happen. I think it is difficult really because you talk about having twilights for certain things but in order to do that there is always something else and it has to be built into the system because you have so many people doing other things. To make it work it is hard. I also think it would be useful to have times, some staff wouldn't feel comfortable with this but to have times to do something that is not specifically related to the job of teaching. You know an hour, couple of hours of an INSET day as a staff, having a bit of fun together. I suppose some people would say bonding exercises or something like that, it would be nice to just do something together but in a totally chilled out way and it doesn't matter at the end what you have achieved. You have not got these set goals that you have to achieve in a set time but actually enjoy each others company and be able to loosen up and mingle and mix.

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