

**A critical exploration of a Professional Learning Community as a mechanism for  
developing whole-school approaches to literacy in Wales.**

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## **Abstract**

This mixed methods study sought to examine how a PLC could influence the work of literacy coordinators as they established whole-school literacy approaches in secondary schools in Wales. The area of focus came into view partly in response to a period of considerable and intense change in schools across Wales regarding the development of literacy skills per se and reading skills in particular. This research focused on how whole-school, cross-subject literacy could be managed and developed in secondary schools.

Five schools, of similar backgrounds, took part in the research, which took place over an academic year. This involvement included the participation of the literacy coordinators of these schools in a Professional Learning Community (PLC), lesson observation, teacher interviews and, at the start and the end of the year of the research, pupil data gathered from PISA Reading Literacy test papers.

The research was sociocultural in design and theoretical positioning. As such, the literacy approaches and practices in each of the schools were not pre-selected for efficacy but were developed by the literacy coordinators in response to a number of factors, including their increased engagement with theoretical positions on literacy and the approaches that emerged from this engagement. This research examines critically the link between literacy theory and how it impacts upon whole-school literacy policy, classroom practice and performance in PISA Reading Literacy tests in secondary school. It also identifies some of the challenges, benefits and assumptions regarding whole-school approaches to literacy in secondary schools and explores how these approaches present in the classroom.

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# Chapter 1

## 1.1 Introduction

The aims of this research are to:

- Explore the ways in which literacy is being developed through a PLC in secondary schools in Wales.
- Investigate and critically analyse whole-school approaches to literacy in secondary schools.

In this chapter, I introduce the context to the research that forms the basis for this thesis. I discuss the national landscape and context at the time of this research and how this acted as a frame and an impetus for this research into how literacy in general, and reading in particular, is developed, managed and manifested in secondary school subject classrooms in Wales. Following this, I outline how this research was structured and introduce how this fits within a sociocultural model of research. This includes a discussion of my own position and professional and academic interest as researcher, PLC member and university tutor with a responsibility for literacy. I then provide an overview of some of the tensions in theoretical positions regarding definitions of reading and reading practice. I also outline the testing regime found in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the place of teacher efficacy and whole school practices that inform part of this research. Finally, I discuss how my research responds to a gap in the field of secondary school cross-curricular literacy and how it is framed in secondary school practices.

## 1.2 Context

This study sought to explore the impact of whole-school literacy approaches in the development of reading skills in secondary schools in Wales. The area of focus emerged partly in response to a period of considerable and intense change in schools across Wales regarding the development of literacy skills per se and reading skills in particular. A key catalyst for this increased focus on literacy seemed to be Wales' results in the 2009 PISA tests (Andrews, 2011b). The PISA tests are produced and managed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in three year cycles and provide a table of comparison between participating countries in reading literacy, science and mathematics. The

2009 PISA test results placed Wales well below the other three home nations and below the OECD average in each of the three areas tested. For reading and mathematics, the results were significantly lower statistically than the OECD average (Bradshaw et al, 2010). Following these results, literacy and numeracy were asserted as two of three national priorities for education in Wales and considerable changes were introduced (see, for example, Welsh Government, 2012a, 2013a and ESTYN, 2011) so as to address the apparent deficit that was seen as evidenced in the performance of Welsh pupils in the PISA tests. Literacy practices in schools in Wales were placed under a much sharper and more centralised focus, as a ‘matter of urgency’ (Andrews, 2011a) and became firmly situated as a site of policy implementation, theoretical debate and political influence. Literacy and numeracy, and school practices relating to them, were moved to centre stage and made more visibly a part of school life than had been the case previously. Andrews (2011b) announced a 20-point plan that asserted that PISA- style assessments would be introduced for 15- year- old pupils and that pupils in Years 8 and 9 be prepared for them.

A number of key developments contributed to this. Most notable, perhaps, was the identification of literacy and numeracy as key parts of the School Effectiveness Framework and the inspection framework (Welsh Government, 2012a, ESTYN, 2011), and the introduction of a statutory literacy and numeracy framework and annual, nationalised reading tests (Welsh Government, 2012b). A system of tri-level reform was announced (Welsh Government, 2010) that would involve schools, local authorities and Welsh Government in improving literacy in Wales. This improvement was to be measured in a number of ways locally and nationally, perhaps most notably in Wales being placed in the top 20 countries in the PISA 2015 testing cycle ( Andrews, 2011b), something of an ambitious target from the placing of 38 in the 2009 reading tests.

This national context of a country experiencing a ‘wake-up call’ (Andrews, 2011a, 2011c) provides the critical background for this study. Schools and local authorities were preparing for a considerable shift in curriculum and expectation, which would mean that PISA- style tests, which focused on the skills and question types assessed in PISA assessments, were to be integrated into national assessment for pupils in Key stage 4 and into programmes of study in Key Stage 3 (Andrews, 2011b). The use of PISA reading literacy questions as part of this research is, therefore, relevant to this context of increased focus on the reading literacy

measure provided by PISA. An exploration of the responses of schools and teachers to this renewed and focused prioritisation of literacy is both timely and of considerable interest.

Estyn (2008, 2009) had explicitly stated that key to improving pupils' literacy skills in Wales was the sharing of good practice. This thesis is very much situated within this remit. The research sought to explore whole-school literacy approaches and the development of reading skills through the establishment of a PLC and research activity in five schools which would investigate the teaching and management of literacy across the curriculum. The PLC that formed as part of this study involved a partnership of university staff and teachers from schools in different local authorities. Importantly, the focus was on schools and teachers, rather than pupils. The interventions and approaches adopted by schools involved in the project were not imposed by university staff, but were informed by, for example, teacher discussion in PLC meetings and local authority priorities and programmes. I had undertaken smaller scale projects of a similar nature with schools in collaboration with maths colleagues from my institution.

Whole-school approaches to literacy have been a feature of the education landscape in the U.K. since the Bullock Review (Department for Education and Science, 1975), which asserted the importance of each school having a policy for language across the curriculum. The period of time between the Bullock Review and the period of this research seemed to see some awareness of a variety of approaches and non-statutory (in Wales) guidance regarding whole-school literacy across subjects in secondary schools, but, it would seem to have little impact. It was within the context of this renewed (and statutory) focus on literacy as a whole-school concern that a more focused exploration of literacy approaches that could be used in a number of subject areas on a whole-school basis began to develop. The study aims to explore how these approaches could be managed and developed in a sustainable way in individual schools at a time of pressure and flux.

### **1.3 Organisation of the research**

Within a context of this increased and explicit prioritising of literacy, the focus of this research is, broadly, to investigate how literacy is defined and managed in secondary schools in Wales and, then, to see if this practice could be seen to impact upon pupils' results in PISA tests. This research is mixed-methods in that it gathers and draws upon data from

observations, interviews and meetings, as well as an analysis of test results. The aims of this research are to:

- Explore the ways in which literacy is being developed in secondary schools in Wales
- Investigate and critically analyse whole-school approaches to literacy in secondary schools.

The objectives that inform the research are to:

- Critically examine the place of theory and research in practice and guidance in schools.
- Explore professional learning communities as a tool for managing and delivering teacher and whole-school change.
- Consider teacher practice in lessons in the light of theory and whole-school approaches.
- Evaluate the impact of practices and whole-school approaches to improve reading in the types of reading tested in PISA tests.

The research questions that frame the research so as to meet the aims are:

- RQ1 How does a literacy coordinator manage whole-school practice across all school subjects?
- RQ2 To what extent does an engagement with theoretical positions on literacy impact on practice?
- RQ3 Does involvement in a PLC change the behaviour of literacy coordinators?
- RQ4 Does participation in a PLC impact on school practice and results?

To this end, this study was conducted in five English medium secondary schools based in five different local authorities across Wales. The research includes lesson observations, interviews with class teachers and testing, and also the formation of a PLC group comprising the literacy coordinators of each of these schools. I, too, was a member of the PLC. The schools were selected using information from Welsh Government family groupings of schools in Wales, which take into account factors such as the percentage of pupils at each school who are:

- eligible for Free School Meals;
- living in areas classed in the most 20% deprived areas in Wales;
- identified as having additional learning needs;

- speaking a language other than Welsh or English as their first language.

The family groupings were established by Welsh Government to enable schools to compare their performance to that of similar schools across Wales. The schools in this research came from very similar family groups on the measures above and were all performing at the mid-range of their groupings.

During the year of the research, I met with the literacy coordinators from each of the schools in regular PLC meetings to discuss the various approaches being undertaken and share knowledge. Another member of university staff attended these meeting as a non-participant note taker, but my explicit role within the PLC was as a participating group member of the PLC. The larger part of the data comes from the qualitative information that was gathered by way of the PLC group meeting notes, semi-structured interviews with subject teachers, and the lesson observations in the research schools.

The theoretical framework for this research was sociocultural. My role within the PLC was not to ‘deliver’ literacy approaches or beliefs to the group, but rather to participate by way of sharing and interrogating theoretical positions, readings and research with the group, and consider how the various positions we explored would be played out in classroom approaches and strategies. This part of the research is concerned with how theory and research around literacy and reading could make its way into the practices of a secondary school. The sustainability of the approaches adopted by schools is a central organising principle in this study. The practitioners who formed part of the group would ultimately be the ones who made decisions about the literacy approaches that they felt would be most effective in their schools. To this end, the study has a sociocultural framework underpinning it. As such, the group engaged in discussion as the starting point of the study, defining terms in literacy and reading as the foundational principles for the approaches and structures they would develop in their schools. As is discussed in Chapter 3, my role within the group was that of participant, but this ran concurrent to my role as researcher and university tutor with a responsibility for literacy. The complexities of these concurrent roles will also be explored in more detail in Chapter 3.

A key part of the research is the literacy coordinators’ developing knowledge of literacy approaches in general and reading practices in particular, and some of the underlying ideas

underpinning these practices. This element of the study is largely met by way of the frequent meetings of the PLC group, where ideas and progress (as well as set-backs) were shared and explored. These meetings were noted thoroughly by the non-participant member of staff and then shared with the PLC. This developing knowledge was then explored in terms of the ways in which the research evidence and theoretical positions vis-a-vis how reading is best developed that the literacy coordinators used to frame the literacy in their schools are present (or in some cases absent) in the classroom practices in those schools. This engagement of the literacy coordinators (and some of the observed classroom teachers) with the ideas that underpinned their existing and subsequent practices is an important aspect of this research. This aspect was also a key feature of the lesson observations I undertook in the participating schools, which focused partly on which theoretical positions could be seen as informing the reading literacy practices I observed. The lesson observations also provide important qualitative information regarding some of the changes in reading literacy that were observable, but may not emerge in the quantitative data provided by the tests. The interviews and observations also provide valuable information regarding the place and management of whole-school practices and of PLCs as tools for managing whole-school approaches.

The research observed and explored what views of literacy developed from the literacy coordinators' membership of the PLC, how these could be seen to affect the practices they established in their schools, as well as the practices that could be observed in lessons and how this could be managed across a whole-school and in all subject areas. One of the aims of the study is to investigate and critically analyse whole-school approaches to literacy in secondary schools. The focus was for teachers to develop sustainable practices, rather than have a literacy model given to them for them to test in their schools, and to explore how teachers, with a whole-school responsibility, could affect change in practice. As such, explorations of teacher knowledge, efficacy and how school change can be implemented were as much a part of this study as reading. It was a key element of the study that the literacy coordinators involved felt part of the process and able to make informed decisions and implement change using whole-school approaches within their schools. A large part of this thesis explores how these whole-school approaches manifest themselves from the initial understanding to experienced practice in the classroom. This can be seen in the discussion of the practice-based elements of whole-school literacy that can be seen in the lesson observations and class teacher interviews discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

A pragmatic approach was undertaken within a theoretical framework that was sociocultural. This is examined in Chapter 3. Whilst quantitative data is used and examined in this thesis, a positivist framework is not the underpinning paradigm of the study. Instead, an interpretive, sociocultural approach is key to all elements of the study. Central to this was the development of an understanding of how the literacy coordinators who made up the PLC group collectively developed their decisions regarding literacy practices and management of those practices within the contexts of their schools. As such, much of this data is necessarily qualitative and a mixed methods approach is used to gather a richer understanding (Troudi, 2010).

My own position within the research was multiple and needs to be taken into account when gathering, exploring and discussing data. This complex positionality is discussed in Chapter 3. Whilst I was a member of the PLC group that formed part of this research and aimed to participate as group member, I am also a university researcher who was conducting research in their schools. I also had to navigate the relationship between my role as someone who works within the field of literacy and has written and delivered training in reading approaches and my role within the PLC as a participant rather than an 'expert'. I was, even as a PLC member, simultaneously outsider and group member. As noted by Foote and Bartell (2011), my positionality and the experiences that informed it, influence the research. This also needs taking into account when examining the PLC, in particular -with its focus on collaboration and shared responsibility -as a tool for teacher and school development. This is discussed later in this thesis and has some clear relevance to a discussion of school-university partnership working models.

The role I have currently and my history of work in school and at university in the area of secondary school literacy were part of the understanding that I used when exploring the data. It was this professional experience and interest that led me to explore reading comprehension in secondary schools. As a school literacy coordinator, as a teacher of English in secondary school and as a university tutor in education with responsibility for literacy, the ways in which theory and research can be used effectively in the classroom, how this could be developed on a whole-school basis and how this was articulated in the classroom were of professional as well as academic interest.

#### **1.4 Theoretical stances and definitions of reading literacy**

For the purposes of this thesis, the definition of reading comprehension and reading literacy that is adopted in that found in both RAND (2002) and PISA (OECD, 2009a) as these definitions are, respectively, influential in policy and practice in the USA, where much research regarding reading is situated, and worldwide. RAND (2002, p.11), defines comprehension as ‘the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language’. The definition found and assessed in PISA is ‘understanding, using, and reflecting on and engaging with written texts, in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s knowledge and potential, and to participate in society’ (OECD,2009a, p.23).

Whilst this research focuses on reading practices and theoretical positions in the main, in places this is explored within the wider context of literacy as a whole. This is partly due to expedience, but also because reading is situated theoretically and, in terms of school practices, within the broader domain of literacy. The term ‘whole-school’ is used in this research to define the organisation and delivery of practices, such as literacy, by way of common approaches and expectations across all subjects within a school.

Reading practices and the development of pupils’ reading skills are both contested and central to much current and contemporaneous discourse surrounding the ‘literacy crisis’ (Soler & Openshaw, 2006). Critical evaluations of notions of reading, what reading is and, subsequently, how it is best developed in a secondary school setting, along with the role of international assessments such as PISA in providing a public measure of the success of these approaches, are central to this research.

Reading has been and continues to be a much debated topic (Moats, 2007). Underpinning much research and academic writing on reading (as well as, crucially, underwriting policy, practice and expectations in school) are key assumptions about what reading is and, in turn, how it can be best developed. Once a pupil has entered secondary school, in particular, the ‘process’ of reading can seem spontaneous and traceless to more skilled readers and their teachers. The quite complex and multiple relationships between readers and texts are perhaps less visible and explicit as pupils progress through school than they are at the early stages of reading acquisition and development. As is discussed in Chapter 2, much debate and research

has focused on this earlier stage of reading, with, perhaps, less attention paid to reading as it is figured in the secondary school setting.

‘Reading’ as a topic of study covers a vast number of related, though quite distinct disciplines and debates, each of which has a considerable body of research related to it. For reasons of expediency, this section will touch upon some of the key debates and positions about reading acquisition and development in as much as they inform and frame ideas about and approaches to reading development as found in national statutory and guidance documents. A more detailed discussion of literacy theory and concomitant approaches to the reading in the secondary school is found in Chapter 2.

The position of reading in the classroom is at once central and complex – something highlighted by the Rose Report (Rose, 2006) which placed reading at the centre of learning, whilst recognising that it is multifaceted and hard to define. The ongoing, heated debates about the right approach to early reading (Smith, 2004; Rose, 2006 and Ellis, 2007) position reading as central to learning. In their analysis of the British Cohort Study 1970 data, Sullivan and Brown (2014) found that those pupils’ reading habits impacted upon their attainment, not only in English, but in Mathematics, too. The ability to read well, functionally and critically, also has ramifications well beyond the classroom. In terms of economic opportunity, adults with poor literacy skills are far less likely to be in full time employment by the age of thirty than their more literate peers (National Literacy Trust, 2013a, 2013b). The impact of weak reading skills, it seems, continues into adulthood. As noted by the National Literacy Trust (2013b. p.2), literacy is a ‘cornerstone for social mobility by virtue of its role as a foundation for educational attainment and access to employment’.

Reading skills, in particular, are recognised by many (Sullivan & Brown, 2014; National Literacy Trust 2013a, 2013b) as central to success not only in and across school subjects but also in adult life. However, despite, it would seem, a body of agreement as to the importance of reading to pupils’ success both in and out of school, it has been argued that reading, as such, has not been regularly or explicitly *taught* in most secondary schools (Dean, 2002; OFSTED, 2013a). Whilst pupils in secondary schools engage with a variety of texts across a number of subjects and *use* their reading skills to access knowledge or to explore ideas, the actual *specifics* of reading – what skills and knowledge are called upon in the process of engaging with text for particular purposes in specific contexts - are not necessarily explored

explicitly (Zigmond, 2006). The message that developing pupils' reading skills is important for their success in school and beyond can be seen in academic, professional, government and social conversation about school; *how* to best develop those skills is a discussion that seems both less frequent and more contentious (see Chapter 2).

The starting point of the PLC group that forms part of this thesis was to establish amongst the group some clarity regarding what reading actual means in secondary classrooms. It was important, then, to engage in the, at times, heated debates that surround definitions of reading and to consider the theoretical positions that can be seen in some school approaches and classroom practices. These contrasting views on how reading is developed are situated within the debates about top-down versus bottom-up models of reading. In the top-down model of reading, overall meaning is seen as constructed from the text as a whole even if individual words or sounds are not understood. Reading, in this model, is seen as being driven by the pursuit of meaning and emerges through the interplay between the text and the understanding and prior knowledge the reader brings to the text as they try to make meaning (Smith, 1971; Goodman, 1967). In bottom-up models, phonetic or word level understanding is a necessary first step toward meaning. In this model, meaning emerges from an understanding of the part to the text as a whole (Gough, 1972). The influence of each of these theoretical models of reading can be seen in classroom practices which either favour engagement with whole text and draw upon a pupil's knowledge and experience as part of a holistic approach to meaning making or which build up to engagement with whole text in taught, systematic steps.

The whole language theory of reading, whilst most commonly a feature in debates around early reading, has had some influence on the teaching of reading in secondary schools as an integrated process that draws simultaneously on different types of knowledge during textual 'experiences'. Independent reading practices, or silent reading, for example can be seen as giving pupil opportunities for the sort of textual 'experiences' outlined in whole language theory. The influence of whole language approaches can be seen, too, in the idea that reading can be developed through greater experience with a wider range of texts and can be seen in the range of reading experiences offered to pupils in secondary classrooms (ACCAC, 2008). The notion, too, that readers come to reading with a variety of different experiences and understanding, using different skills can also be evidenced in the documentation relating to the National Strategy (DfEE, 1998) and the NC Orders for English (DfEE, 2008; ACCAC, 2008).

Others, such as Allington (2002) and Shaywitz (2003), maintain that reading, unlike speaking, does not ‘occur’ without some form of instruction and position it as a *learned* (and taught) skill or series of skills. This framing of reading can be seen as influencing those approaches to reading that separate reading into discrete elements or skills (including, for example, Reciprocal Reading and Eight Reading Behaviours, which will be discussed in Chapter 2). These views can be seen in the teaching of reading through distinct strategies (Fisher and Fey, 2008). This identification of nameable, teachable skills that good readers use or need and, then, concomitant strategies that can be used as a means of developing these skills, forms another important part of the conversation about how to best approach reading in the secondary school (Fisher & Frey, 2008a, 2008b).

A body of research is available (RAND, 2002; National Reading Panel, 2000; Afflerbach et al, 2008) that suggests that certain strategies help support pupils engagement with text. This research seems to suggest that exposure to text is not enough to develop and extend pupils’ understanding of text and that strategies should be taught that pupils can draw upon when reading to help support their understanding.

Developing from this, a growing body of work (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Brozo et al, 2013, Moje, 2007, 2008) claims that the use of generic comprehension strategies may not be sufficient to develop the sorts of reading that pupils are expected to do in subject areas and that a more specific, contextualised approach is needed that looks at the particular demands of disciplines as users and producers of text. Others (Hirsch, 2006, 2016; Kalenze, 2014) go further and suggest that a focus is needed on background general knowledge, rather than on reading, as this provides the foundation of understanding that supports engagement with the ideas presented in texts.

Whilst the ‘reading wars’ (Kim, 2008) were, then, largely focused on early reading, the theoretical positions that supported each position impact upon reading guidance and practices in secondary school, too. As can be seen, reading seems to become something quite different to decoding in the secondary school and becomes increasingly concerned more with engaging with different types of texts for a variety of purposes. As such, debates which centre on whether reading is acquired or taught may seem to bear little relevance to reading as it figures in most secondary school classes. Nonetheless, these debates do matter as underlying the

various debates about and models of reading are fundamental assumptions about what reading is, how reading skills develop and what approaches work best in the secondary classroom. Echoes of these debates can be seen in practices in secondary schools as the underlying concept of reading, as sequential, with a foundation in teachable skills or as the interweaving of several systems of understanding which operate in implicit way, inform the ways in which reading is approached in school. The approaches emerge from a theoretical position on what reading is, which leads to particular positions regarding to what extent it can be taught and what that would look like. This understanding underpins the aims of this research. If whole-school approaches to literacy are to be explored and analysed, an understanding of the ways in which literacy in general and reading more specifically are defined and developed in the secondary school is a key starting point.

### **1.5 Teacher efficacy, Professional Learning Communities, and whole-school approaches.**

The PLC as a vehicle for school improvement had been a growing feature of a different way of organising school and teacher development (Bolam et al, 2005; Harris & Jones, 2010) at the time of this research. The PLC is structured as a collaborative group of professionals, who identify and explore issues so as to meet identified and shared goals. Much of this research was conducted with the five literacy coordinators from the five participating schools who had been given responsibility for developing whole-school literacy practices who made up the PLC group. As such, the research was as much about the role of the PLC as a mechanism for change and the journey of the literacy coordinators towards effecting change on a whole-school basis as informed practitioners as it was about the specific literacy practices they employed.

Teacher efficacy is, then, an element of this research in two key ways. The first is part of the focus on how whole-school practices can be implemented and managed by the literacy coordinators; how they develop their individual and collective efficacy so as to believe they can make school-wide change. The second is connected to the ways in which class teachers feel that they can then make changes in their practice that can impact positively on their pupils. Each of these efficacy beliefs is also situated within the wider school as a system, which can support and provide opportunities for these beliefs to be established.

McCaffrey et al (2004) situated teachers as the essential element in the success or otherwise of a policy as it is in their day to day work that policy is enacted. It would, therefore seem vital that teachers feel that they have the skills and knowledge, and are within an environment that enables them, to have impact. Teacher self-efficacy seems likely to play an important part of effective school approaches. Bandura (1986, 1997) claims that a person's efficacy beliefs, that is their own view of themselves regarding their capacity to successfully complete a task, impacts upon their success. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) expand this notion of efficacy to also explain a teacher's potential for success in delivering particular outcomes within a specific context. They find a strong correlation between the school context, system and structures and a teacher's beliefs in not only themselves but in the school as a collective able to affect change.

The notion of collective efficacy, that is the capacity of the group or organisation to realise goals, has been identified by Hattie (2016) as the top influence on pupil performance. If teachers feel they are part of a school that has the systems in place to support aims being achieved, their own personal efficacy beliefs seem to be impacted positively. In this research, collective efficacy is an important factor for both the PLC as a collective and also the individual schools.

The PLC as a vehicle for individual and collective efficacy can be seen as part of an increased awareness of teachers being key to their own professional development (Bolan et al, 2005). The refiguring of effective development as being best situated where teachers can learn collectively (Fielding et al, 2005) leads to ways of working that are collaborative and see teachers as the site of the construction of professional learning. This can be seen, too, in The McKinsey report (Barber & Mourshed, 2007), which identified the growth of PLCs as part of this increased emphasis on teacher collaboration as a powerful means of professional development.

The PLC that is part of this research was organised using the characteristics identified by DuFour et al (2008). These include a shared purpose, with explicit, structured targets and expectations, within a collaborative culture that seeks to affect practice at an individual and school level. It also includes the community drawing upon research and theory so as to inform their own growing understanding as they explore their own practice. These features of a PLC are, claim DuFour et al (2008), important if it is to have any meaning. The PLC

should not simply be a group of professionals discussing their own practice; it should be organised and work within the expectations of a PLC if it is to have the hoped for impact. The PLC as a place of professional collaboration fits within the sociocultural framework of this research in that knowledge is constructed socially through the interaction of the group. It is also seen as a potentially effective method of development in school and teacher practice (Hargreaves & Shirley (2009). The consideration of how the learning that was generated in the PLC could be shared effectively in school systems that were organised quite differently to the PLC is also an important element of this thesis.

### **1.6 Use of PISA tests**

The data in this thesis comes from lesson observations, interviews, PLC meetings and PISA tests. These tests provide quantitative information for each of the schools regarding pupils' attainment in reading literacy as defined and tested by PISA (2009) at the start and the end of the research. As already noted, the prioritisation of PISA tests as part of the national conversation about educational standards in Wales (Andrews, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c) is a key contextual element of the increased focus on literacy in schools that was one of the drivers of this research. The decision to use PISA tests as part of this research is both in response to this context and also for pragmatic reasons as the questions were drawn from the OECD sample test papers and, as such, provided a standardised means of assessing pupils' reading skills. The year 9 pupils in each of the schools involved in this research schools were tested using the PISA reading literacy tests at the beginning and the end of the project with a view to providing a considerable amount of quantitative data that is used to inform a post-hoc analysis of any correlation between the literacy approaches adopted by each school and the performance of the pupils in the tests.

As an assessment tool, PISA tests are open to criticism and evaluation. The role of international studies and tests in informing and framing national education debate (Sjoberg, 2012) is of relevance here. International measures of pupil achievement, such as PISA, TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) and PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) serve to inform professional and political discourse and, in turn, educational policy direction (Goldstein, 2004; Gove, 2014; Andrews, 2011b). The structural, curricular and assessment practices in schools in Wales since 2010 have certainly been informed by, in particular, PISA test regimes and results (ESTYN, 2011;

Andrews, 2011b, 2011c; Welsh Government, 2013a, 2015). As such, they are high stakes and have considerable impact on school practice.

As discussed in Chapter 2, there is much debate about PISA tests in terms of reliability and validity, as well as regarding their role in influencing curriculum planning and development. As some of the information gathered for this thesis is gathered from testing pupils using PISA style tests, it is important to recognise this debate. However, whilst these criticisms are worth examining, in the main, they do not apply to this context. Concerns and questions that have been raised about, for example, the Rasch model used for analysing responses in the tests, international sampling patterns, national cultural context and data analysis (see Grisay et al, 2007; Kreiner & Christensen, 2013; Kreiner, 2011, for example), have relevance when considering the gathering of test data for the purpose of ranking and comparing performance between countries. This thesis does not use PISA testing for those purposes. The study does not, as the OECD does, use the test results to provide a rank of performance, provide projected plausible scores for pupils or give pupils different sets of questions (Kreiner, 2011). Pupils in this research were from very similar cultural contexts, answered the same set of questions and *all* year 9 pupils in the schools involved in this research were part of the test sample. In this way, the problems outlined above were removed from the process. This allowed the focus to be far more sharply centred on the actual reading practices tested. It remains the case that the view of reading that can be seen in PISA is itself open to discussion. In the next chapter, some of these key features and concerns are explored, along with an exploration of some of the concerns about the test in Chapter 3.

## **1.7 Conclusion**

As outlined earlier, my own experience, in a number of contexts, had led to a professional and academic interest in how literacy theory could be applied in a secondary school context on a whole-school basis and the impact of this in actual classroom practice. Much of the literature available on different theoretical positions on reading and the subsequent approaches that could be seen emerging from these positions was more usually focused on an earlier stage of reading (RAND, 2002) or was based in contexts other than secondary schools in the UK. The journey of theory to practice in secondary schools in the UK has not been the focus of large body of literature, and with the national focus on literacy, this research fulfils a specific purpose that is timely and purposeful. The ways in which these approaches, once

decided upon, can then be delivered as part of whole-school practice is also an aspect of this thesis that raises and examines important questions about how to best define and manage shared expectations in secondary school settings. Additionally, the focus in this research on the benefits and limitations of PLCs as a tool for school improvement and teacher professional development is especially prescient at this time when collaborative working partnerships between schools and universities are likely to become a more regular feature of education in Wales (Welsh Government, 2017; OECD, 2017).

In the following chapter, the literature review examines some of the key positions regarding what reading is and, subsequently, how it is best taught. It also includes an exploration of whole-school approaches, as well as teacher efficacy and change, and the role of PLCs in school and teacher development and change. PISA testing, too, is critically evaluated in this chapter. In Chapter 3, I discuss the research methodology and methods for this study along with the role of participants in the study and concomitant ethical concerns. Chapter 4 is focused on the presentation of the qualitative and quantitative data gathered during the research. Chapter 5 explores and discusses the findings that are formed from the data, including any relationships that can be constructed between each element of the study, as well as the limitations of the research. The final chapter, Chapter 6, considers the implications of the study, including any recommendations for further research.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

This chapter first evaluates literature relating to theoretical and research positions regarding reading. It then explores ideas about teacher efficacy and the PLC as a mechanism for affecting change. It also examines some of the key issues relating to PISA testing.

This first section introduces some of the key positions regarding reading and then offers a loosely chronological critical evaluation of top-down and bottom-up models of reading and literature regarding strategy instruction approaches to developing reading comprehension, before examining the role of knowledge in reading for understanding and also disciplinary literacy approaches.

### 2.1 Reading

The centrality of literacy to much recent educational discourse in Wales seems to be indubitable (Andrews, 2011a, 2011b). What seems to be less clear is what the *subject* of these conversations actually is and if we can be sure that it is the *same thing* that is being discussed, condemned and celebrated. As has been touched upon, theoretical positions view reading as either context dependent, experiential and drawing variously upon multiple sources, or as a series of hierarchical steps that can/should be taught and learned as a body of discrete knowledge in its own right. Similarly, some of the practices discussed briefly in the last chapter, such as independent reading, suggest that reading is *acquired* largely by means of exposure and opportunity. In other documents, and in some instances the same documents but in different places within them (see Welsh Government ,2013a, for example), there is a suggestion that reading is explicitly *taught* through and as explicit, conscious knowledge (Gee, 1989a).

As outlined previously, the ‘reading wars’ (James, 2008; Kim, 2008) have been the site of much entrenched debate revolving around the best ways of teaching early reading. This particular discussion focuses on only those aspects of this debate that most pertain to the teaching not of reading or literacy per se, but to the ways in which those it is developed and refined once a pupil is in secondary school. As with the early reading debates, much of the discussion centres on notions (frequently presented as oppositional) of acquisition *or* teaching (see Krashen, 1982, Gee, 1989b, 2004) and concomitantly, perhaps, notions of knowledge and skill.

Krashen (1982), following his research on second language learners, claims that language ability is largely *acquired* implicitly and subconsciously through authentic language experiences and opportunities. Language ability is, he argues, refined or monitored (Krashen, 1982) through explicit discrete instruction, but it is acquired through other means. It is, of course worth noting that Krashen's work has had as its prime focus the development of language skills in second or additional language learners. Nonetheless, this distinction between language skills as acquired or learned and, in turn, the teaching approaches that best facilitate this underpins much debate regarding reading instruction. This distinction of Krashen's also has relevance to the stage of reading that pupils in secondary school might in terms of reading.

Reading and how it is viewed and experienced in secondary schools can be seen as emerging from the development in the early part of last century of what Leslie and Caldwell (2009) identify as the reading skill as a distinct element of the curriculum. For Leslie & Caldwell, the centralising of the notion of reading as a set of discrete skills, in the USA at least, although similar patterns can be seen in the U.K., can be traced to the concomitant emergence of testing regimes. They identify early iterations of this relationship between reading and assessment as early as Davis' (1944) categorisation of reading into nine discrete and identifiable (and hence testable) skills. Having identified these skills, thought to be features of good reading, they could be taught and tested. The skills identified by Davis are readily recognisable in classrooms today: summary, inference, sequence and so on are features of teaching and assessment in schools in Wales (Welsh Government, 2015) today. Davis identifies phonic understanding as the key first step, followed by eight additional skills or steps to good reading. From this early document, a picture emerges of a view of reading that is not dissimilar to that found in the Rose Review (2006): reading comes from a basis of phonics and is organisable into identifiable aspects. Importantly, once identified, these elements can be codified into programmes of study and targeted approaches that, if taught, develop the reading skills of pupils.

The skill as a key organising principle of reading, and indeed literacy per se, can be seen in the ways in which Programmes of Study are organised (the organisation of the Programme of Study for English in Wales (ACCAC, 2008) into 'range' and skills' is an example of this). What this does is create teachable moments and testable skills from a process that remains

elusive and contested. Williams (2014), for example, discusses the multiple ways in which a single skill, 'inference', is defined, interpreted and then applied in education policy and practice. It also provides the basis for the establishment in curriculum documents of identifiable skills, emerging from a first principle of word recognition, which define what constitutes reading (the lineage of this can be seen through policy documents including the LNF (Welsh Government, 2013a), but especially the NLS (DFEE, 1998) and The Rose Review (2006).

It is important to note that this defining of reading comprehension as an identifiable set of skills that can be defined, taught and assessed may present a simplified picture of a complex process. Reading comprehension, unlike decoding, is not necessarily so easily identified. Comprehension itself is not necessarily observable, some would argue, but is rather identified by proxies such as the skills identified above and in practices related to them such as questions related to text or discussions of key ideas (Pearson, 1974-5). Reading comprehension, how a pupil makes sense of a text is, suggests King (2008), an invisible process. Teaching may include approaches that are centred on aspects of reading such as those identified above, including the explicit teaching of strategies that are intended to develop those identified skills (Afflerbach et al, 2008), but, as noted by (King, 2008), this does not mean that it is 'comprehension' which is being taught, but rather the strategies that pertain to identified skills.

For King, (2008) comprehension is complex and hard to define as it is an internalised process, drawing on multiple factors and, therefore, the teaching and assessment of strategies is not necessarily the same thing as capturing comprehension. Pearson and Johnson (1978), too, identify reading comprehension as something not directly observable. As touched upon in Chapter 1, broadly, researchers and theorists present reading (and reading practices) using either top-down or bottom-up models. Top-down models (Goodman, 1967) instead see reading as engaging with whole text and context. In this model, pupils use their semantic and syntactical knowledge, as well as their word level knowledge to create meaning from text. This approach can be seen in its influence on, for example, whole class reading of a shared text or on approaches which focus on authentic whole texts in lessons. Bottom-up models (see, for example, Gough, 1972) suggest that children acquire reading skills in a linear, sequential manner beginning with pre-reading skills, followed by decoding skills and eventually the ability to comprehend complex text. This can be seen as the underlying

understanding that underpins, say, the Rose Review (2006), which places phonics as a first and necessary step to reading. It seems that approaches to reading and recommendations for best practice spring from the particular definition within which it is situated. Much of this section of this chapter is, then, concerned with exploring this definitional discourse of literacy broadly and reading specifically and its place as part of, and informed by, wider discussions of knowledge, skills and culture. For the purposes of this discussion of reading, the focus is, primarily, on reading comprehension as it is this aspect of reading that is most relevant both to secondary school teaching, as well as PISA tests, which define reading as ‘understanding, using and reflecting on and engaging with written texts, in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s knowledge and potential, and to participate in society’ (OECD, 2009a, p.23).

This shifting definition of reading comprehension has led, over the past eighty years or so, to a concomitant shifting set of approaches in the classroom. Reading comprehension has been variously viewed as something that needs to be taught explicitly and also as a natural language phenomenon and all places in between. Other theorists point to the need to engage with broader general knowledge rather than reading skills if pupils are to be supported as they engage with increasingly complex text that requires background knowledge rather than generic reading skills for understanding. What follows is a review, organised broadly chronologically, of these shifting theoretical positions and the positions and approaches they inform.

The evidence regarding how reading was defined and taught in schools in the late 1800s and very early twentieth century, can be seen in documents such as teacher training manuals (Pearson & Cervetti, 2017). The focus in these texts seems to be largely on fluency and teacher-pupil questions to prompt discussion. The understanding of text in this approach is not the focus of instruction, but rather is checked by way of discussion. Reading comprehension instruction seems to become more of an explicit focus in the 1930s, but it has as its focus the reader’s accurate interpretation of an author’s intended meaning. Knowledge or meaning here resides in the text and it is the reader’s job to interpret it accurately. Some early voices were present, such as Thorndike and Huey (Pearson & Cervetti, 2017) writing in the first two decades of the twentieth century, who sought to examine reading for meaning as a more active process that draws upon a number of elements. However, in the main, reading at this time was figured as an engagement with a meaning that existed outside of the reader and their context, which could be assessed through easily marked and administered

standardised tests (Pearson, 2000). Pearson and Cervetti (2017) suggest that this easy testability saw this view of reading become dominant well into the middle part of the century as ‘if a phenomenon can be assessed, then curriculum and pedagogy to teach it will follow’ (p.17).

The connection between the testing regimes and definitions of reading that compartmentalise it into teachable skills can be seen clearly in the work of Davis (1944). His work defined and classified key elements of reading that could be taught and assessed across schools in the USA. From Davis’ classifications, tests were devised so as to provide a measure of how pupils performed in each of these elements of reading. In response to the tests, support materials were also produced to support teachers in teaching each of the itemised elements of reading. The skills identified by Davis are:

- Knowledge of word meanings
- Ability to select the appropriate meaning for a word or phrase in the light of its particular contextual setting.
- Ability to follow the organization of a passage and to identify antecedents and references in it.
- Ability to select the main thought of a passage.
- Ability to answer questions that are specifically answered in a passage.
- Ability to answer questions that are answered in a passage but not in the words in which the question is asked.
- Ability to draw inferences from a passage about its contents.
- Ability to recognize the literary devices used in a passage and to determine its tone and mood.
- Ability to determine a writer's purpose, intent, and point of view, i.e., to draw inferences about a writer (Davis, 1944, p.186).

He also concluded that the first skill on the list was a necessary requirement prior to developing the other eight skills, suggesting an early instance of a bottom-up approach to reading development. Even in this early iteration, reading was broken into teachable (and testable) elements under two main headings –decoding or word level skills and then (and this sequence is important) comprehension. In this model, comprehension is seen as the end product of a pupils’ development of these skills which are identified as distinct elements and ordered sequentially. As noted above, the identification of separate, teachable and assessable

reading skills is articulated in the earlier part of the last century and was seen to influence testing regimes, teacher guidance and, hence, classroom approaches (Pearson, 2000). Many of these approaches saw reading as separable into two key aspects, with decoding positioned as a necessary first step to understanding.

A shift in how reading is theorised and, in turn, approached, occurs following on from this early identification of ‘reading’ skills or practices, as Chomsky’s (1957, 1959) work in linguistics emerged to influence how reading became identified and, in turn, what reading instruction became in secondary schools in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the work of theorists influenced by his position on language acquisition, the notion of identifiable skill or strategies changed somewhat into a more holistic view of how reading comprehension should be approached. Chomsky’s (1957, 1959) work in linguistics informed the influential work of people such as Goodman (1967) and Smith (1971). In their work, reading is seen as emerging from a general linguistic competence rather than from specific sets of learned skills. These influential ‘whole language’ positions on reading, following from Chomskyan (1957, 2006) notions of innatism, position language as a natural human faculty. In this view, grammar and language develop from an innate disposition. A core principle of this position is the notion that reading emerges through textual or language ‘experiences’ rather than through the formal teaching of discrete features Goodman (1967). This model posits the idea that reading develops in much the same way as speaking, through use, rather than through decontextualised, structured tuition in specific hierarchical skills, starting from the ‘bottom-up’ with decoding. The teaching of reading through distinct rules, skills and stages was criticised by Goodman (1967, 1986) and others (see, for example, Smith, 1985; Pappas & Pettigrew, 1998) as not reflecting the *experiential* nature of language development. This theoretical positioning of language is key to understanding the conceptual underpinning of approaches seen in secondary school classrooms in that it provides a conceptual framework that supports teaching decisions and approaches. If reading is, after all, positioned in this view as an innate disposition, then the teaching of reading will be approached accordingly (Daniels et al, 2000).

Goodman (1986) claims that there are three interrelated areas of knowledge or ‘cueing systems’ that play a part in the reading process: the graphophonic system (our understanding of sound-letter correspondence), the syntactic system (our understanding of the structural aspects of language) and the semantic system (our understanding of context). These ideas

were taken up by others, such as Clay (1985) in a move towards a holistic, context embedded model of reading. In this whole language view of reading, readers may draw upon these three (or four –sometimes the graphophonic system is sometimes divided into two) systems concurrently so as to secure meaning. The cues that Goodman outlines suggest that pupils draw understanding from a number of sources rather than simply from their understanding of the relationship between, and ability to decode, graphemes and phonemes. The graphophonic cueing system, that is an understanding about the relationship between sounds and letters, is still important to this view of reading as it enables pupils to ‘hear’ words and then make sense of them. It is, however, seen as just a part of the reading process, as important as the others. That is, reading in this model develops from an innate capacity for language and a drive for meaning.

Top -down theories, then, see reading as facilitated by an innate language capacity that develops through context and exposure, rather than through the teaching of identified skills as suggested earlier in the century. In this view of reading (see Smith 1978, for example), reading *is* comprehension. The distinction between word recognition and understanding simply does not exist in this model. In this model (Smith (1971, 1978), reading comprehension has meaning at its very centre. Rather than working from bottom (decoding) up, in this model, readers start with meaning. In top-down views of reading, therefore, reading only makes sense in terms of comprehension and understanding and, hence, the teaching of context-free, separable skills, including, importantly, the teaching of phonics separated from meaning, is seen as flawed. In this view, reading is developed largely through and in exposure to language experiences and engagement with authentic texts, without explicit instruction in reading skills.

This view can be seen as related to notions of language as a contextualised social practice which gained some prominence in the 1980s in that it externally situates language rules as imposed upon a more natural phenomenon. Gee (1989b, 2004) explores this distinction and presents ‘literacy’ as a social and cultural phenomenon. The status of the written word within our culture (which he argues can be seen in the educational focus on reading and writing) for Gee (1989b) places knowledge *outside* of the self, rather than as emerging *from* the self and its context. Rather than see literacy as a set of externalised, context-free rules, Gee (1998, 1999) positions literacy very much within a cultural discourse model, within which, he argues, language practices are judged simply as ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. Readers, in this model,

would select from varied and multiple cues as they look for meaning. The notion of ‘literacy’, he argues, is bound up in arbitrary external rules and expectations. This way of defining language practices is, he claims, unhelpful. Rather than focusing literacy practices on notions of right and wrong, focus should instead be on what is purposeful for particular contexts and purposes. As he claims: ‘what I believe is a useful definition of literacy: *Literacy* is control of secondary uses of language’ (Gee 2004, p.542). The importance of literacy here seems to be placed not in and of literacy itself but rather in use, as a vehicle *for* something else; to paraphrase J.L Austin, it is about how we *do* things with words (Austin, 1962). This positioning of literacy as language in action, as it were, seems to, at least partially, echo that found in the OECD definition of reading as assessed in the PISA reading literacy tests, which take into account ‘the constructive nature of comprehension’ whereby the ‘reader generates meaning in response to text by using previous knowledge and a range of text and situational cues that are often socially and culturally derived’ (OECD, 2009a, p.23). Here, it seems, literacy is placed in relationship with the reader – neither outside of the self, nor wholly inside, but emerging from a relationship between the two.

Importantly, particularly for the secondary classroom, these whole language reading approaches do not situate reading as a set of discrete skills. Rather, in this model, text is approached as a whole and meaning making is explored contextually. That is, meaning is seen as being produced and understood through the interplay of the cueing systems in reading experiences. Practices that decontextualise language, and teach language skills, including reading, as separable from the context in which the text is used and produced are criticised as not reflecting the context dependent nature of language. Instead reading is positioned as fluid and context dependent, with the reader central to the process rather than the text. It is this model, according to Ling (2012) that influenced many classroom approaches to reading during the 1980s and 1990s. During this period, there was an increased focus on how readers draw variously on their knowledge, skills and experience so as to make sense of texts as active participants in meaning making. Importantly, in this model, reading skills are explored and developed through implicit or indirect means rather than discrete and explicit reading instruction (Kozloff, 2002). In this view of reading, the reader is an active participant in the production of meaning (Collins, Brown, & Larkin, 1980), and engages with text in an active way using their own sets of experience and knowledge to bear in the meaning-making process. As such, the reader plays a central role in the reading process; it is top-down and context dependent and, in some iterations of this view of reading, meaning as a discrete entity

is elusive. Instead, due to the positioning of reading as dependent on the reader as much as the text, meaning is active, fluid and multiple.

Here, we see reading as related to experience; that is, as something that is constructed through being exposed to texts in a number of contexts rather than explicit instruction in a set of skills, starting with decoding. In this view reading, importantly, 'is the source of much of our vocabulary knowledge, writing style, advanced grammatical competence, and spelling. It is also the source of most of our knowledge of phonics' (Krashen, 2002, p32). That is, rather than build up reading from phoneme to word to text level, a reader's understanding of these elements can be developed through reading, rather than be required before reading for meaning can occur. As noted by Pressley (2006), readers do not need to understand each phoneme or word to understand a text in this model. In fact, their word-level understanding could be developed by way of their semantic or syntactical understanding of a text. The influence of this view of reading can be seen in several reading practices today, including independent reading.

Schema theory is another theoretical stance that emerged during the 1970s and can be seen to influence approaches to reading (Anderson and Pearson, 1984) that see meaning as existing in the relationship between a reader and the text, rather than simply inhering discretely in the text itself. This theory is not a feature of this thesis, but it is worth noting some of the key influential elements of its application to reading in schools. Schema theory claims that there are multiple ways of interpreting text due to the interplay between the new knowledge being accessed in the text and the already extant schema (their current knowledge) of the reader. Anderson and Pearson (1984) claim that some key elements of schema theory can be seen in classroom practices that centre a reader's prior knowledge as a more reliable indicator of comprehension than their reading skills or general knowledge. The role of prior knowledge in reading comprehension was seen as a key predictor of comprehension, more so than a pupil's performance in either reading tests or tests of general intelligence. This theory can be seen too in the increased focus in the 1980s on cultural background and the knowledge and experiences pupils bring with them as they engage in text activity, and how this might influence a pupil's engagement with a text. That is how the meaning they construct from the text might be influenced by their individual schemata (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). In this theory, comprehension does not exist as an external, fixed entity, but rather in the relationship

between text and reader, including all that a reader brings to the text. Understanding is constructed in this relationship, and as such, meaning cannot be fixed or stable. Meaning in this theory is ambiguous and inseparable from the reader; it cannot exist without the reader. As such, practices that are influenced by this position see meaning as constructed in the interplay between text and reader, rather than held solely within the text.

Goodman's (1967) ideas, influential as they might have been, are not, however, without flaws or detractors. Central to the top-down model is a notion of reading as an innate phenomenon, akin to Chomsky's views of innatism in language acquisition. However, Chomsky's views have themselves been subject to considerable challenge (Kessler, 2010). Also, those disputed views are concerned with the development of oral language. Critics of the 'whole language' approach such as Allington (2002) and Shaywitz (2003), contend that reading is not the same as spoken language and it is learned rather than acquired. Those favouring phonics-based or 'bottom-up' approaches, argue that reading primarily occurs through recognition of sound cues. The role of context is to affirm meaning gained through decoding, rather than form part of its creation.

The notion of reading as something that can be broken down into identifiable elements and subsequently taught and tested can be seen as a recurring influence in some influential work from the late 1970s onwards. Durkin (1979) identifies reading comprehension as an aspect of classroom practice that was not being developed through explicit instruction. She also (1981) explores the ways in which teachers are trained in reading comprehension approaches and found that this, too, was lacking. Specific approaches to develop pupils' reading comprehension were not a feature of teacher instruction as teachers focused instead on broader reading approaches as noted above. An early and influential review of reading comprehension and the approaches used to develop it in schools by Pearson and Johnson (1978) became an important touchstone for a growing body of research into how pupils' reading comprehension can be developed. This view of reading can also be seen in the model of the strategic reader (Paris et al 1984), whereby strategies and different knowledges are employed by the reader to negotiate text. These included declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge and conditional knowledge (Paris et al, 1984). This work brings back into focus an understanding of how a reader draws meaning from text using specific types of knowledge.

During the 1980s and 1990s a theoretical shift can be seen in a growing body of research that focuses on identifying strategies that can be identified and used in instruction (Pearson and Camparell, 1981; Palinscar and Brown, 1984; Paris et al, 1983). As noted by Pearson and Cervetti (2017), more research specifically into reading comprehension was conducted in this period than ever before. This research developed partly from schema theory (namely the importance of prior knowledge and the notion of meaning as constructed in the active interplay between reader and text) and metacognitive approaches (the recognition of active approaches that are deployed when engaging with text so as to create meaning) but focused more closely on strategies for developing reading comprehension in the classroom. This interest in identifying what effective reading comprehension instruction should include can also be seen in the 1990s work of Fielding and Pearson (1994), Freebody, (1992), Luke and Freebody (1997) and Tierney and Cunningham (1991). This work broadly identified key aspects that should frame a programme of instruction for reading comprehension and found that explicit strategy instruction is key to developing pupils' comprehension. Importantly, in this view, the reader is not a passive receiver of information, but nor is the text itself lost in a web of multiple meanings. Rather, reading is situated as active, with the reader able to draw upon resources to actively engage with meanings that are constructed within texts. This is an important distinction and can be seen to place strategy instruction, though initially teacher-led, in a constructivist tradition. Learning about reading comprehension strategies is not the intended end point of this approach. The end aim is to improve pupils' skills in engaging with text independently; for the strategy to become an internalised resource upon which they can draw and for them to make informed decisions when faced with a challenging text (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007).

Fielding and Pearson (1994) identified four elements that support reading comprehension: discussion of reading, time being given to reading text, instruction in comprehension strategies, working with peers that they felt would benefit pupils. Similarly, model of reading suggested Freebody (1992), (see also Luke & Freebody, 1999) identifies the following key areas of reading or 'resources' that readers need to draw upon in order to fully engage with text:

- Reader as Code Breaker: this involves engagement with the mechanics of reading text such as sound-symbol relationship, directionality and phonemic understanding.

- Reader as Text Participant: this involves drawing upon knowledge of the world, and understanding of how texts and types work so as to infer meaning.
- Reader as Text User: the ability to use and understand reading skills in social and other contexts.

These approaches, whilst not wholly disconnected from some of the key principles of whole language, begin to separate out distinct elements of the reading process. This framing of reading can be seen as influencing those approaches to reading that separate reading into discrete elements or skills (see, for example the Searchlights model in the National Literacy Strategy (DFEE, 1998) Reciprocal Reading or eight reading behaviours). In these models, even whilst reading is identified as a series of skills, the reader is still an active part of meaning construction. The reader actively participates in the act of reading, identifying where and which strategies may be employed so as to develop understanding.

A number of approaches that emerge from this period are focused on the explicit development of comprehension skills. These include an explicit focus on text structure or the specificities of the domain from which the text is constructed (Pearson & Camparell, 1981) and the conscious monitoring by pupils of their reading, drawing explicitly on strategies (Palinscar & Brown, 1984). The key message from this body of work was that explicit strategy instruction provides pupils with tools with which they can explore and construct meaning from texts. Another key element of this work was the role of the teacher. Instruction in the identified strategies was initially teacher-led, through explicit instruction, teacher modelling, towards more independent work guided by the teacher and then towards a more reduced role as the processes become more internalised in the pupil. This approach is coined the gradual release of responsibility model (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Fisher & Frey, 2007) and is notable in that the strategies are used to support engagement with text that a pupil may find too challenging without the support they provide. The corollary of this is, of course, that not all texts and not all readers will necessarily necessitate the conscious use of strategies in the quest for meaning. Fisher and Frey's (2007) research using this model in an elementary school found that it had considerable impact on pupil performance. Central to the impact, they suggest was the framework that was devised by the teachers which included explicit elements including guided instruction as pupils are moved towards independence.

Influential reviews and studies predominantly conducted in the U.S. have subsequently identified important components for teaching comprehension effectively (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Duke et al., 2011; Block & Duffy, 2008; Grabe, 2009; Kamil et al., 2011; NRP, 2000 and, influentially, National Reading Panel, 2000 and RAND, 2002). The move (or return) towards a curriculum of reading comprehension can be seen as emerging from this recognition that reading comprehension was not simply the transformation of the written word into spoken language through decoding practices. Some key documents helped to form part of a consensus on what effective strategies and approaches for the development of reading comprehension should include. If whole language views of reading situate reading, and in turn, reading as practiced in schools, as contextually mediated experience, the emergence of a strategies-based approach to reading can be seen as, perhaps, related to but, nonetheless, quite distinct from this.

The key findings of the influential NRP report (2000) suggest that pupils who had had no explicit instruction in phonics performed less well in tests that required them to read words in isolation. It also draws from thirty years of reading research and concludes that phonics-based approaches are the key starting point for developing reading skills which are identified in the report as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The report concludes that before a pupil can begin to engage with meaning through syntactical or semantic knowledge, they must have a degree of phonic understanding. In the model proposed by the NRP, which seems to be supported by the results of the tests that formed part of the evidence base for the report, reading is not an innate, context dependent relationship between the interior experiences of the reader and the text. Rather it can and should be taught, explicitly and with phonics as a starting point. Here we seem to come back around to the model of reading found in Davis (1944), which positions phonics as the necessary starting point of a number of identifiable and teachable skills. It could, of course, be argued that the test that is the basis of much of the NRP recommendations does not test the sorts of reading that pupils will do in school or in everyday life. Certainly, the kinds of engagement with text that we ask of pupils in secondary schools require reading for meaning on a whole text level, rather than as individual words. It is also worth noting that, whilst there has been considerable focus on whether phonic awareness is a necessary precursor to developing understanding of written text, much of the debate still leaves the question of *how* pupils develop their skills in reading comprehension of whole texts in subjects in secondary schools comparatively unexplored, particularly within the context of the secondary school in the UK.

In more recent years, strategy-based reading instruction has been dominant and the whole language approach has seen much criticism (Kozloff, 2002; Moats, 2007; Faust & Kandelshine-Waldman, 2011) and diminishing influence (whole language dropped off the annual survey of literacy practices ‘What’s hot and what’s not’ (see Cassidy & Cassidy, 2002 and Cassidy & Ortlie, 2013, for example). Nonetheless, the whole language theory of reading as an integrated process that draws simultaneously on different types of knowledge during textual ‘experiences’ *has* had considerable influence on the teaching of reading in secondary schools. Independent reading practices, or silent reading, for example can be seen as giving pupil opportunities for the sort of textual ‘experiences’ outlined in whole language theory. Nonetheless, the relationship of whole language approaches to reading comprehension is partial and indistinct, situated as it is in engagement with whole, authentic text rather than explicit strategy instruction.

The influence of elements of whole language can be seen in some documents that guide classroom instruction. National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998), in general and the ‘Searchlights’ model of reading in particular can be seen as drawing something from the ideas put forward by Goodman (1986), whilst also recognising that reading requires more than experience, most typically (and, interestingly, outlined in Davies, 1944), the re-figuring of the reading dispositions into teachable skills. The idea that reading can be developed through greater experience with a wider range of texts can be seen in the range of reading experiences offered pupils in secondary classrooms. The notion, too, that readers come to reading from different places, using different skills can also be evidenced in the documentation relating to the National Strategy (DfEE, 1998) and the NC Orders for English (DfEE, 2008; ACCAC, 2008). What is a key difference between whole language influenced, top-down views of reading and bottom-up models is whether cueing systems or aspects of reading are seen as internalised resources that can be drawn upon when reading a text or externalised as a series of discrete, teachable skills. Reading comprehension since the 1990s seems to have been most explicitly modelled on an understanding of comprehension as best approached through explicit strategy instruction.

The role of explicit strategy instruction in reading comprehension is a focus of this thesis, having been a significant feature of the lessons observed in this research and the focus of a considerable body of research. Much explicit reading strategy teaching has more usually been

found when engaging with literary text (Duke, 2000). The increased move towards explicit whole-school literacy expectations as outlined in Chapter 1 meant that this explicit focus on how to engage with texts moved out of the English or Welsh classroom and become adopted in a range of subject contexts where the literary text was not a feature.

In their meta-analysis of research on reading, noted above, the National Reading Panel (2000) concluded that phonics instruction was a key component of successful reading instruction and that reading for meaning was best taught by way of explicit instruction. Comprehension was identified as teachable through teacher instruction, modelling and support, and seven key strategies for reading comprehension were identified as successful: question asking, monitoring, summarization, question answering, story mapping, graphic organizers, and cooperative grouping (Shanahan, 2005). More effective than any of these single strategies, the panel concluded, was the use of multiple or combined strategies (ibid). The panel also concluded that teachers play a crucial role in comprehension development and they need to be equipped with relevant teaching skills in order to respond flexibly to pupils' needs for instructive feedback. The influence of this review, along with other influential studies that identified the benefits of teaching reading comprehension strategies (Gersten et al, 2001) can be seen in, for example, the National Curriculum in Wales in 2008 (ACCAC, 2008).

Others, too, (see Duke & Pearson, 2002), identify features of effective reading practices. These include making predictions, evaluating what is read, filling in conceptual of knowledge gaps by drawing on reading skills and understanding, shifting from one reading skill (such as skimming or close reading) to another as is seen to best fit the text and its purpose and so on. From these observations in the NRP (2000) of what it is that effective readers do, a set of teachable strategies and skills has been drawn out. It is, though, worth noting that the report does mark something of a return to a view of reading that is dominated by the decoding process, rather than by a model of reading in which multiple elements are called upon in a fluid way, a feature of the Rose Review (2006) in the U.K.

Duke et al (2011) in their examination of reading comprehension identified ten key elements that support understanding. These are: building disciplinary and world knowledge, providing exposure to a volume and range of texts, providing motivating texts and contexts for reading, teaching strategies for comprehending, teaching text structures, engaging pupils in discussion, building vocabulary and language knowledge, integrating reading and writing,

observing and assessing, and lastly, differentiating instruction. Here, the influence of a number of different theoretical standpoints can be seen. It is important to note that in these models, comprehension does not simply emerge from use or as a result of exposure, but rather through explicit instruction in a set of (variously defined but linked) practices that together are identified as leading to secure comprehension skills.

This model of reading comprehension as a range of explicit and teachable reading strategies can be seen in many classrooms. One of the reading approaches identified by the NRP as successful (Shanahan, 2003) was that drawn from ‘reciprocal teaching’ models – often referred to as Reciprocal Reading (Palinscar & Brown, 1984; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994). Reciprocal teaching is one of the approaches named in the NRA (2002) report as a successful approach to developing comprehension in pupils, drawing as it does from multiple strategies (Shanahan, 2003; 2005).

The reciprocal teaching approach fits within the model of gradual release of responsibility outlined earlier in this chapter (Duke et al, 2002; Palinscar & Brown, 1984; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994). In this model, the initial stages of Reciprocal Reading approaches include teacher-led explanation and demonstration of what a strategy is, how to use it and why it might help pupils in developing their understanding of a text. The next stage in this approach is for pupils to then move onto supported engagement with the text by way of, for example, modelling or being directed to use a particular strategy before pupils move on to gradually decreased support as they engage with text more independently. The overall aim of this approach is that the strategies used by good readers are introduced to pupils who are first supported in their use of these strategies by the teacher before they become skilled enough to independently select and use appropriate strategies as they engage with text (Palinscar & Brown, 1984; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994; Fisher & Frey, 2008a). These key reading strategies are, in the initial stages of this approach, often then given as roles to pupils. These are typically summarising, predicting, questioning and clarifying (Palinscar & Brown, 1984). Reciprocal Reading as an approach, then is structured, and identifies and explicitly instructs pupils in four specific strategies – generating questions, summarising, clarifying and predicting, as supports for pupils as they learn to develop and monitor their own reading. The importance of gradual release of responsibility and of modelled, explicit instruction and explanation are central to this approach.

In the locations in which the research for this thesis took place, an approach which drew from this body of work of skills-based strategies was emerging. The Eight Reading Behaviours is an approach where eight elements of effective reading are identified and then explicitly taught to pupils as a means of engaging with texts across subject areas (City & County of Swansea, 2011, 2013). This approach draws from the work of those such as Freebody (1992) and Reciprocal Reading in that it situates effective reading as a series of skills or behaviours. These behaviours are identified as: activating prior knowledge; self-monitoring; questioning; visualising; making connections; analysing and inferring; analysing and evaluating and summarising (City and County of Swansea, 2011; 2013). The research or evidence base for this approach is not made explicitly clear, but some clear lines can be drawn between this approach and some of the work reviewed in this chapter. The identification of the prior experiences a reader brings to text could be seen as an acknowledgment of schema theory, for example, and the notion of self monitoring could be placed within the work of Palinscar and Brown (1984). This approach also draws on multiple strategies, something identified by Shanahan (2003; 2005) as an element of successful strategy approaches. Importantly, it seems that a key element of the success of strategy-based approaches is that reading comprehension strategies are, eventually, moved from the explicitly taught to the implicitly used (Duke & Pearson, 2002). That is, independent, successful engagement with text is the end desired goal rather than the strategy itself.

Strategy instruction is not without critics. Critics of generic strategy based approaches claim that reading and understanding is limited when lessons are too focused on generic strategies rather than focused content and knowledge building (Hirsch, 2006). The line from strategy instruction to understanding is, perhaps, not quite as straight forward as is presented (Wilkinson & Son, 2011). Whilst the NRP (2000) found evidence that reading strategies are effective, most of the studies included in the review did not have a control group to act as a counterpoint. Wilkinson and Son (2011) also note that some of the studies reviewed found no difference between strategies in terms of effect size, suggesting that factors other than the strategy itself could have informed the positive results. Catts and Kamhi (2017) also argue that reading comprehension is not a one dimensional construct, and therefore, comprehension instruction should reflect the multiple dimensions it comprises. Having examined reading comprehension using the RAND Reading Study Group model (2002) that considers reading comprehension to be an interaction between the reader, the text, and the task within a sociocultural context, they discuss the implications of not fully appreciating the complexity

of comprehension by limiting comprehension to teaching general reading-comprehension strategies. Others, who accept broadly that generic reading strategies are effective as instructional models for reading comprehension, express some concerns that their usefulness may be limited, especially when pupils move towards exploring disciplinary or subject based literacy practices (Dole et al, 1996; Lee & Spratley, 2010; Moje, 2008; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008, 2012).

As pupils' engagement with text becomes, on the whole, more specialised as they move through secondary school, the efficacy of generalised approaches to reading becomes another area of debate from the late 1990s to the present day (Pearson & Cervetti, 2017). Content area reading, commonly seen in secondary schools as pupils' learning becomes more focused within subject areas, is based on the notion that all teachers are teachers of reading and that generalised 'reading skills' such as those identified above, can be used across subject-area lessons. The key difference between subject areas in this approach is in content. In this view, the same generic reading strategies are used across all subject areas so as to support pupils' engagement with text in all subject areas and across all types of text they may encounter in their studies (Meltzer, 2002). For secondary schools, then, it would follow that if all subject teachers were trained in the same reading strategies, they could apply these approaches to the content of their lessons.

This sort of approach can be seen in the 'literacy toolkit' approaches that can be seen in many schools (including those in the study, as is seen in Chapter 4) which have as an underlying principle the notion that literacy skills are generic and can be learned and then applied across domains. As noted already, there is (NRP, 2000) evidence to suggest that broad, generic skills instruction that teach pupils approaches they then employ across subject areas have impact in enabling pupils to organise thoughts and engage with text, even as it has met with some resistance from teachers (Hall, 2005); others, however, suggest that, after a certain level of engagement, this generic skills approach is not effective as 'strong early reading skills do not automatically develop into more complex skills that enable pupils to deal with the specialized and sophisticated reading of literature, science, history, and mathematics' (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008, p. 43).

Nonetheless, there seems to be some consensus that, broadly, generic reading strategies should be taught. As noted by Cain and Oakhill (1999) some pupils will benefit more clearly from generic strategy instruction, particularly if they find comprehension difficult or are

engaging with a challenging text. The teaching of comprehension through explicit, generic strategies can, claim Brozo and Simpson (2007) help foster deeper engagement with text by developing pupils' reading skills and, hence, lead to gains in their understanding of subject. There is, then, clear benefit in the teaching of reading comprehension strategies, even if, as claimed by Willingham (2006), the point of their usefulness is quickly reached and further thought needs to be given to how to encourage pupils to engage more deeply with more context-specific texts.

The two key elements explored so far, that is reading as developed through use or by explicit instruction are, then, added to by the additional element of the role of knowledge in the reading process. This third position centralises knowledge as the key element in developing pupils' response to texts. In this understanding, subject content and subject focused texts are key and comprehension comes *from* knowledge.

Hirsch (2006) goes so far as to contend that reading practices should be focused on developing and extending a body of knowledge rather than developing transferable reading 'skills'. He claims that reading comprehension is bound up in knowledge and that, without a broad knowledge base, comprehension of written text will suffer (Hirsch, 1987; 2003; 2006). The sorts of reading practices that are called upon as pupils engage with increasingly complex texts for increasingly varied purposes, are, Hirsch (2003) argues, influenced by three key factors: fluency, vocabulary and domain knowledge. These elements are not discrete but enhance and support one another. Fluency, for example, releases space in the working memory for comprehension, as does extended vocabulary. Importantly, Hirsch's view of reading and knowledge emphasizes the importance of building 'word and world knowledge'. In short, a pupil's broad, secure background knowledge will not only have given them access to language domains but give them existing knowledge with which to understand new knowledge. As noted by Chall et al (1990), and picked up by many current thinkers on the subject of reading comprehension (see Lemov, 2016, for example), written texts presume a degree of understanding of the world and, if pupils do not have ready access to broad world knowledge, then their understanding of and access to text will be compromised. At a glance, this focus on broader knowledge can be seen to fit in some aspects of schema theory, with its prioritising of prior knowledge and also, albeit partially, the work of, for example, Freebody (1992) and the notion of reading as drawing from a number of resources, one of which involves the reader drawing upon their knowledge of the world.

The key difference between these positions, however, seems to be the role of knowledge. In the work of Luke and Freebody (1999), knowledge of the world was one of four systems that readers draw upon to make sense of text; for Hirsch and others who the role of knowledge is much more central. Hirsch recommends teaching pupils ‘skills by teaching them stuff’ (2003, p.23). For Hirsch (and, increasingly, others such as Lemov (2016) or Kalenze (2014) for example), by focusing on deep engagement with content, the skills of reading comprehension are embedded in a more sustainable way. This focusing on content and knowledge as a central principle in developing comprehension can also be seen in the research of Guthrie et al (1999, 2004), who found that an increased, coherent focus on developing pupils’ knowledge of a given domain resulted in reading gains including vocabulary development, fluency and confidence. Kalenze (2014) takes up this position and expands, claiming that it is a mistake to define reading as a skill. For him, much reading instruction comes from a misapplication of Bloom’s taxonomy; in Kalenze’s understanding, the role of knowledge is far from ‘lower order’; it is essential. Research conducted by Elbro and Buch-Iverson (2013) drew similar conclusions. In their study, reading comprehension in grade 6 classes was impacted upon in a sustained way by securing background knowledge.

The notion of disciplinary literacy, a feature of debates on the curriculum in the U.S.A (see, for example, Moje, 2008; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012), also take as a central organising principle the increasing role of distinct bodies of knowledge as users *and* producers of increasingly particularised discourse. As pointed out by Fang and Schleppergell (2010, 2008), the texts of different subjects are, by the time a pupil is engaged in study at secondary school level, not only distinguished by content differences but by differences in language. As such, generic literacy skills may not provide sufficient access to the different types and purposes of texts with which pupils engage daily, nor may they allow pupils to fully encounter the concepts and specificities of particular bodies of knowledge (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). The knowledge/skills debate, it seems emerges as a central principle in the reading debate, influencing not only *what* reading is but also *how* it should be best developed in schools.

The ways in which reading is figured, and the place of knowledge within that understanding has a concomitant impact upon the role of the teacher. If reading is seen as a set of generalisable skills, the role of the teacher can, it may be argued, disappear. Biesta (2014)

explores the role of knowledge and teaching within the constructivist paradigms that inform much of the literacy discussion. If, as suggested by Gee (1990) amongst others, literacy skills develop overtime through exposure and authentic opportunity and purpose, then it may follow that this knowledge inheres within the pupil. That is, knowledge is situated as immanent, and the teacher is merely the facilitator who provides the opportunities and environment for these skills to incubate and develop (Biesta, 2014). Instead, Biesta suggests that teaching should be viewed in terms of the transcendent, in that the teacher brings something new to the pupil, something that is *outside* of them and their experience. In line with the understanding examined in, say, Hirsch (2006), Kalenze (2014) or Chambers (2018) that something is knowledge – an extant, externally recognised body of knowledge of the language and content of their subject (and the world).

This distinction is important in that it situates the teacher and their practices in particular ways. Reading comprehension may, depending upon the theoretical framework employed, be viewed as a set of skills that can be drawn out of a pupil by way of engaging with context; it can be seen as inhering within the pupil as an extension of their a broader (largely oral) language skills; it may be seen as a set of knowledge about language and language approaches that needs explicit instruction and it may be seen as supported by deep and broad content knowledge. This impacts not only on teacher-practices but also on organisation at a school, local and even national level. If, for instance, a pupil is taken out of subject area lessons to develop generic ‘reading skills’, Kalenze (2014) argues, they are taken away from the very thing that will actually help develop their reading. In this understanding, ‘comprehension skills’ cannot be taught outside of content area knowledge. This echoes the thoughts of Hirsch (2003, 2006) and others, who point to evidence, such as the review of research undertaken by Rosenshine and Meister (1994) that suggests that the teaching of comprehension strategies such as prediction, sequencing, and so on, may have only an initial impact, and that further repeated teaching of those skills (often the pattern in secondary school; see Hall, 2005) yields no further results, particularly for those readers with secure reading skills (Rosenshine& Meister, 1994). As noted by Moje ‘strategies, absent some level of purpose ...and an identification with the domain or purpose will not take readers very far’ (Moje quoted in Lent (2016, p.3). This point is also echoed by Shanahan (2014) who claims that comprehension strategies are only helpful if a pupil cannot understand a text automatically, something he feels is not typically the case in high schools.

This is, however, in need of some qualification. Shanahan et al (2010) point out that, whilst there are limitations to strategy instruction as the sole approach in secondary schools, there are some gains to be seen through the teaching of reading strategies. In fact, key strategies such as summary and focused questioning, can be seen to have considerable effect on pupils' comprehension skills (NRP, 2000). For Shanahan, one of the key issues is not necessarily or only the teaching of strategies per se, but rather that the texts used in schools are not sufficiently demanding to warrant the use of explicit comprehension strategies and that the move to more discipline-specific reading approaches and the building of domain knowledge is not prioritised. Interestingly, in both the knowledge-focused approach advocated by Hirsch (2006), Willingham (2013) and Kalenze (2014) and the focus on the effective teaching of strategies advocated by, for example, Palinscar and Brown (1984) or, partially at least, Shanahan et al, (2010) the teacher remains central to the process. Knowledge, whether of the content of the text or the approaches the pupils may use to draw meaning from that text, lies outside of the pupil, at least initially. Shanahan also goes on to explain how the knowledge-reading relationship is, however, not a simple causal one. The benefits of background knowledge can, in part, he claims be explained by the effect that prior knowledge has on memory.

Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) explore the notion of using the specific literacy found within disciplines as a key focus on teaching and approaching texts within subject focused contexts. In their research, they find that engagement with text was discipline specific. In this view, the literacy practices of a subject are bound up in the knowledge of that subject. They found that the historians in their study, for example, engaged with text with a clear focus on author in a way that did not happen in other disciplines. The ways in which a discipline or subject is organised and the kinds of texts it produces and uses are bound together in this view. Shanahan advocates for a move beyond generic literacy strategies and into disciplinary literacy, with an increased focus on texts that are authentic to the subject studied. The premise of this model is to 'apprentice' pupils in the discourse of a discipline. This approach can be seen echoed in some prominent voices in education in the UK (Barton, 2012; Didau, 2014), who centralise the importance of subject specific literacy in secondary school.

Disciplinary literacy is not necessarily wholly separate from a strategy based approach. Many, as noted earlier, agree that these approaches are valuable, if limited. The changed focus onto subject specific, rather than whole-school and generic, reading is often seen as

something that is used in addition to a generic approach. Importantly, in this model, the subject is not separated from the text, with the text seen merely as a vehicle. Rather, the ways in which the subject or topic is constructed through the text and how the boundaries and expectations of a discipline impact upon the language of that discipline becomes centralised. The principles behind disciplinary literacy (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008) can be seen as recognising key elements of a number of these positions and shifting focus dependent upon context and purpose. Whilst it is a distinctly different approach from generic reading skill teaching as outlined above, the move to disciplinary literacy is not wholly incompatible with some of the other positions outlined previously. Shanahan is clear about the benefits of generic reading strategies and also of the role of knowledge in a pupil's understanding of text (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). He is, however, also explicit about the limitations of reading strategies approaches, particularly in their usefulness in accessing already accessible text, claiming 'comprehension strategies are only useful for helping readers to make sense of text that they can't understand automatically. Many texts are easy for me to read; they are comfortably within my language and knowledge range. This morning I read USA Today and didn't feel the need to look up a single word or to stop and summarize any of the information' (Shanahan, 2014).

Additionally, the evidence regarding the efficacy of strategy instruction that can be seen in the National Assessment of Educational Progress review in the USA, suggests that the intense focus on strategy instruction approaches had not improved the reading of high school pupils (Lent, 2016). Much of the research reviewed by the NRP (2000) for example, which evidenced the efficacy of strategy instruction was focused on pupils at earlier stages in their education, suggesting that a more discipline appropriate approach might be needed as pupils progress through school.

The focus of disciplinary approaches is, then, on the specific ways in which language is used and produced within different disciplines (Moje, 2008). Shanahan and Shanahan (2012) describe the approach as exploring the tools that an expert might use that are domain specific and focus on what is specialised about a subject and its practices as opposed to what is generic and shared across different subjects. The reading that pupils may encounter outside of school and, indeed, the texts they could encounter in a PISA Reading Literacy paper may draw from any number of disciplines. It makes sense, then, that pupils are exposed to multiple ways of expressing and producing knowledge. It could be argued that disciplinary

literacy ties language with knowledge in a powerful way; that within disciplinary literacy language is bound with the *construction* of the discipline whereas content area literacy approaches suggest the subject or discipline is just ‘there’, discoverable through the application of generic tools. Disciplinary literacy is a distinct approach which aims to look more specifically at the very particular literacy practices of disciplines once pupils move beyond the general. In this, it does not negate other approaches, be they experience, skills or knowledge based, but instead serves to understand the particularities of the literacy practices that pupils face in secondary school settings. For teachers of subjects, notes Gillis (2014), this approach is important too as she asserts that all teachers are not actually teachers of literacy, but are teachers of their subjects and are experts in the language practices of that domain.

The factors that make someone a skilled reader seem to be complex, multiple and hard to define. Duke et al (2011), for example, claim that a skilled reader can not only draw upon more strategies that enable them to access and engage with text, they also have more understanding of language and the world that they can use. Others, such as Guthrie et al (2004) suggest that skilled readers establish a cycle whereby the more they read, the better they are at reading. That is, the more a pupil reads, the better they become and the more their knowledge base of the world and of language is expanded. The relationship between each of these elements of reading is not easily defined. Even in 1992, Block claimed that the debate on ‘whether reading is a bottom-up, language-based process or a top-down, knowledge-based process’ (p. 319) was no longer relevant. The interaction of bottom-up and top-down processes is, he claims, an increasingly common view, as is an acceptance of the role of content knowledge in enhancing a reader’s understanding.

It is important to note that this literature review centres on texts from the U.S.A in the main. Strikingly, there appears to be a lack of large scale studies conducted in the U.K. that explore what teachers in British schools do when teaching comprehension. This gap in research becomes even more apparent with regards to the teaching of specific strategies. Parker and Hurry’s (2007) research is U.K. based and focused on interviews with and observations of literacy lessons Key Stage 2 teachers in primary schools in London. The teachers were asked to identify approaches that they found supported the teaching of reading comprehension and their lessons were observed with a focus on the literacy elements of the lessons. Their research found overwhelmingly that the key method used reading comprehension was teacher-pupil questioning. The use of strategies to develop pupils’

reading comprehension did not figure as an instructional approach. This suggests that the strategy-based approaches that were documented in U.S studies were not, or not yet at least, a feature of the schools in this research and approaches more connected to whole language models of reading dominated. It is, though, important to note when considering the findings of this study and studies in the US, that they are also focused rather more narrowly than the typical secondary school. Language Arts teachers in American high schools and KS2 teachers in the UK have the teaching of reading as part of their programmes of study, although interestingly, strategy instruction is no longer explicitly required as part of the Common Core State Standards in U.S schools (Shanahan, 2014).

In Wales, inspection guidance makes reference to pupils being able to use complex reading skills, such as making connections, drawing conclusions, summarising and so on, but strategies for developing these complex skills are not named (ESTYN, 2017). The guidance also states that inspectors should consider how well teachers ensure pupils develop effective reading strategies and that consistent approaches to the teaching of strategies can be observed. This seems to suggest that what is being recommended in this guidance is a generic strategy-based approach that can be used across subjects, although this is not explicitly stated, nor are strategies named. This is reinforced by reference to ensuring that the literacy skills pupils develop in their English and Welsh lessons are used and developed in other subjects (p.6). Throughout the document, ESTYN (2017) make reference to the importance of developing pupils' reading skills; these are a feature in a number of strategy-focused texts discussed in this chapter (Brozo & Simpson, 2007; Afferbach et al, 2008; Paris et al, 2009, for example). The strategies that could be used are not named, but seen as a key element to the development of the named skills.

In other places in the guidance, the influence of approaches that could be seen within a whole language model appears. These include ensuring pupils have opportunities to participate in trips to places like libraries or museums that serve to 'enhance the literacy curriculum' (p.6). Drama clubs, and visits by writers and actors are also cited as examples of activities that support literacy in schools. These sorts of experiential approaches seem to draw from a view of literacy that focuses on language as experienced. The emphasis on the guidance on talk-based approaches such as group work, discussion and role play, too, seem to come from a model that has its roots in whole language, even as skills and strategies are featured in other parts of the document. In the Literacy Framework in Wales (Welsh Government, 2013a)

strategies are identified, for example, skimming and scanning, prediction and, by year 10, identifying key ideas. Exemplification is provided, too, regarding how these strategies can be used in lessons. Interestingly, the organisation of the literacy framework places reading strategies within the element of ‘locating, selecting and using information’ (Welsh Government, 2013a). Again, the model that seems to underpin this guidance found in the statutory framework is generic and strategies are applied to content area text rather than drawn from them. The question of how reading comprehension is approached across secondary school subjects in typical UK secondary schools – particularly in the advent of statutory documentation that specifies that all teachers must develop these skills in their subject teaching is key here.

Much of the work that can be seen emerging in schools as a result of key documents that guide classroom practice (ESTYN 2008; ESTYN, 2017; Welsh Government, 2013) seems to be situated within the framework of reading as a set of identifiable and teachable skills that can be applied across subject areas within the secondary school. Several shared messages can be seen in these documents, which include the teaching of specific, if not always named, strategies that readers can purposefully choose to use as appropriate when trying to extract meaning from text, making good use of developing pupils’ oral language skills. Less present seems to be any emphasis on the role that general and specific content knowledge and texts used in subject lessons might play in developing comprehension of specific types of texts.

Despite the extensive evidence base in theoretical knowledge about reading comprehension development and effective instruction, few studies are focused on the secondary school nor have they have explored the extent to which teachers incorporate the evidence base into their classroom practice. Durkin’s (1979) findings that reading comprehension is not an explicit feature of classrooms, seem to have been borne out in more recent work, such as that of Concannon-Gibney and Murphy (2010), who conclude that exploring the ways in which meaning is produced in text is not an explicit or regular feature of classroom practice. Ness (2011) in a study of elementary school language arts classroom instruction also found that explicit instruction in reading comprehension was not a significant feature of lessons and, where it did feature, a narrow range of strategies was used. Ness suggests that this might be due to teacher confidence leading to over-reliance on a small range of prescribed or suggested approaches. Similarly, a study of reading comprehension in Norwegian language arts lessons (Anmarkrud & Braten, 2012), found considerable variation in teachers’ understanding and

use of comprehension strategies. These findings have support in the work of others (Lester, 2000; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008) that suggest that secondary teachers, particularly subject teachers, are resistant to literacy instruction and ‘fail to recognise the influence literacy instruction can have on learning in the classroom’ (Lester, 2000, p. 11).

Reading literacy in the PISA tests is figured as ‘understanding, using, and reflecting on written texts, in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s knowledge and potential, and to participate in society’ (OECD, 2009a, p.23). The aspects of reading that are tested in the papers are the ability to: ‘access and retrieve; integrate and interpret, and reflect and evaluate’ (ibid). The types of texts that would be used moved beyond the continuous prose most commonly explored in the English or Welsh classroom and incorporated non-continuous texts, more commonly seen in other subjects. As such, it seems that these elements would be likely to inform the approaches taken by schools in developing their reading practices. The exploration of the data that was gathered from the testing of pupils – at school and question level – forms part of this thesis. As such, the possibly contentious nature of this type of testing needs to be explored.

## **2.2 PISA tests and reading literacy**

International testing regimes in general, such as TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) and PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) and PISA in particular have become influencers in national education (Andrews, 2011b; Welsh Government, 2013a) and also the site of some debate (Sjoberg, 2012; Baird et al, 2011) is of relevance here. The tests can be seen to have direct influence on educational policy in the UK and elsewhere (Andrews, 2011b, 2011c; Gannon & Sawyer, 2007; Goldstein, 2004; Gove 2014) and, as such, the view of ‘reading’ encapsulated in these tests, becomes that of our school and national policies and practices. Some of the exemplification material for the Literacy Framework (Welsh Government, 2013a) for instance makes direct reference to assessing pupils using questions based on PISA reading literacy tests. The structural, curricular and assessment practices in schools in Wales in since 2010 have certainly been informed by, in particular, PISA tests regimes and results (ESTYN 2011, Andrews, 2011b, Welsh Government 2013a, 2015). As such, they are high stakes and have far reaching influence on school practice.

International studies such as the above produce data regarding pupils' attainment in tests of their skills in (variously) reading, science and mathematics. This data is used to form international comparisons of school systems. The information produced by such studies claims to allow for comparison between national systems and across a period of time (OECD, 2010). This, in effect, provides information as to the effectiveness of school systems in relation to these tests. There is some political investment in comparisons such as these. As noted by Jerrim (2013) amongst others (Gannon & Sawyer, 2007), such test results can be used as measurements of success or otherwise of policy and practice. This can be seen in the explicit referencing of the PISA 2009 results as a key influencer in the new focus on literacy in Wales (Andrews, 2011a).

The use of information from international tests to inform national policy and practice is itself not quite a straightforward relationship. Different tests, for example, measure different things and, as a result produce varying pictures of national success in comparison to other countries. The performance of pupils from the UK in TIMMS, PIRLS and PISA produce a quite varied picture. The UK ranks in the top 6 of international education systems as identified by the Pearson Report (Pearson, 2012), whilst languishing far further down the ranking in PISA (OECD, 2010). The UK position in the 2011 TIMSS and PIRLS rounds sees a ranking for reading skills amongst those countries 'statistically above' the centre point for the study (Mullis et al, 2012). This discrepancy in rankings suggests that straightforward comparison with other nations is more complicated than a simple league table format might suggest.

There are, of course, some key differences in and between these international testing systems. The nations involved in each test vary in number and GDP (Grisay et al, 2007), for example. Also, the ages of the pupils tested in each system vary. PISA, for example, tests 15 year old pupils, whilst PIRLS tests pupils based on years of schooling. TIMMS tests pupils' 'children's ability to meet an internationally agreed curriculum' (Jerrim 2013, p.64) whilst PISA has as its focus on functional ability in 'real world contexts' (OECD 2010, p.45). In reading too, PIRLS and PISA have slightly different aims. PIRLS has as its focus the efficacy of common approaches to literacy teaching as a pupil 'reads to learn, to participate in communities of readers in school and everyday life' (Mullis et al 2006, p.15), whilst PISA has as its focus the impact of these approaches as pupils prepare to leave compulsory education. PIRLS is based upon 'international communality in school curricula' (Baird et al 2011, p. 4), whilst PISA assesses 'real life' skills outside of agreed content (Baird et al, 2011;

OECD, 2010). The reading literacy tested as part of this thesis is that defined by PISA tested by PISA. Partly, and pragmatically, this is because it is this particular measure that has been the explicit driver for educational change in Wales (Andrews, 2011a, ESTYN, 2011). Perhaps more importantly, however, the *type* of reading tested by PISA is very much of language in *use*, beyond the curriculum, focusing on the ‘interaction between reading skills and their application’ in real life contexts (OECD, 2002, p. 2), that is, whether the literacy practices and approaches used in schools impact upon the sorts of reading skills that pupils may be expected to call upon when they leave school.

As befits its influence, PISA is the subject of some critical discussion (Kreiner & Christensen, 2013; Sjoberg, 2012). The debates can, in the main, be reduced to two key areas – those connected with the test itself and those concerned with the analysis of the data provided by the tests and the conclusions drawn. In terms of the tests themselves, a number of key issues come in to view. First, the pupils taking the test across each country do not, in fact, sit the same test, but rather a selection of questions from a number of possible test items. For example, Kreiner (2011) claims that, in the 2006 round of PISA, about half of all pupils participating in the test did not answer any reading questions and of the remaining pupils, only 10% were required to provide responses to all 28 reading items on a test paper. Across the cohort of pupils sitting the tests in a given country, there will be a spread of responses and, within that spread, each aspect will be tested. Nonetheless, individual pupils may not answer on a given aspect at all.

It is, perhaps, understandable (and desirable) that something that carries such weight (Gove, 2010; Andrews, 2011b) should be open to such scrutiny. The results and, perhaps even more so, the resultant rankings that come from each round of PISA bring the tests firmly into the public and policy arena, and the critical spotlight. The OECD provides detailed and comprehensive analysis of its findings (see, for example OECD, 2010, or Bradshaw et al, 2010) and claim that the PISA surveys are intended to provide information and insight into worldwide education systems; to stimulate and provide a basis for educational reviews in participating countries. It is, however, the rankings that attract media and political attention (Guardian December 3rd, 2013; Daily Mail December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010; Gove, 2014; Andrews 2011a, for example). It seems that PISA tests have the public profile and political influence that merits their place as a site of considerable interest for educators (Sjoberg, 2012).

As perhaps befits a survey established by an organisation that explores economic drivers and barriers, the PISA surveys claim to explore the ‘real life’ skills in using ‘authentic texts’ (OECD, 2009a) rather than attainment against a national curriculum. There are, of course, questions to be raised here, too, about just how ‘real life’ and ‘authentic’ these texts and tasks can be across such differing cultural contexts (Sjoberg, 2012). As noted by Kreiner (2011), the fact that these skills are seemingly outside of national curricular frameworks, focused instead on how pupils are able to respond to tasks that require them to apply their skills in ‘real life’ contexts is in itself interesting and worth exploring. There is, after all, more to PISA than international ranking and sampling and context may be problematic when making international comparisons, but not necessarily when exploring a school’s performance in reading literacy ipsatively as this thesis sets out to do. It is also worth noting that the intended aim of PISA tests to test pupils’ skills in engaging with texts outside of the curriculum may well be changed as countries adapt and reform the curriculum to more closely fit the testing regime.

As some of the information gathered for this thesis is based on information gained by testing pupils using PISA style tests, it is important to recognise that PISA surveys are open to criticism. However, whilst these criticisms are worth examining, in the main, they do not, as noted in Chapter 1, apply to this context. This thesis does not use PISA tests to provide a rank order of attainment, but rather to look for any patterns of correlation that might be produced when examining the qualitative data that is constructed in the research with the quantitative information provided by the tests. Pupils sat the same test papers and all pupils in Year 9 of the schools involved in the research sat the tests. As such, some of the concerns raised by critics of PISA testing (Baird et al, 2011; Mullis et al 2006; Sjoberg, 2012) were omitted from the process. This allowed the focus to be far more sharply centred on the actual reading practices tested. The view of reading that can be seen in both PISA tests and accompanying documentation is itself open to discussion. In the next section, some of the key features and concerns are explored, along with some discussion of the type of reading that can be seen in PISA tests.

As PISA style questions are a source of quantitative data for this thesis, the view of reading that can be seen in PISA, along with where and how this fits in with research, policy and practice needs to be explored. Reading literacy as identified by PISA is ‘understanding, using, and reflecting on written texts, in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s

knowledge and potential, and to participate in society' (OECD, 2009a, p.30). The texts that are used in PISA tests include continuous or non-continuous texts including, for example, tables and graphs as well as prose. Participants are also often asked to draw their responses from multiple texts. This could be seen as being in keeping with the stated aim of testing pupils' skills in 'everyday life' contexts where information may be drawn from two or more texts, not necessarily prose texts, to provide an overall answer. This view of reading is very much an active one of language in *use*. Mullis et al (2006) argue that the use of the term 'reading literacy' implies an expanded view of reading (Mullis et al, 2006), which situates reading as an active process of construction that may take multiple forms in multiple contexts for a variety of purposes:

It means being able to use reading skills to perform a wide variety of tasks in various situations, both within and beyond an educational context. This dynamic interpretation of reading literacy emphasises the interaction between reading skills and their application (OECD 2002, p. 2 - 4).

This in part echoes Hirsch (1987, 2006) who identifies literacy as an 'enabling competence' (1987, p.137) and comments that valid and reliable tests of reading skills should draw from a number of text possibilities from a number of knowledge domains. Hirsch claims that valid and reliable reading tests do not simply assess what a pupil has been taught, but rather test pupils' engagement with a number of diverse texts from a range of types, purposes and content areas (2006). However, the identification of reading skills by the OECD (2002) also lends itself to the strategising of those skills.

Hirsch (1987, 2003, 2006) identifies some key concerns about some commonly found approaches to the teaching of reading, namely that it is removed from notions of content and knowledge, and that the framing of reading as a strategisable phenomenon fails to capture its dependence on a body of knowledge. There are, however, recurring themes and approaches that can be seen in and across government recommendations in a number of countries regarding the teaching of literacy in general and reading in particular. These include the explicit teaching of systematic phonics; an insistence that literacy is a cross-subject concern that should be addressed by teachers of all subjects; the identification of a skilled and knowledgeable literacy lead in each school and the teaching of reading comprehension in terms of comprehension *skills* (Rose, 2006; ESTYN 2011; EACEA, 2011). The most commonly found approaches (EACEA, 2011) to developing reading comprehension in pupils include vocabulary development and the teaching of reading comprehension strategies.

Post-PISA 2009, there has been considerable international focus on the teaching of reading (EACEA, 2011). Some of the key features of reading instruction reform include:

- an extension of taught time on reading (Spain and Hungary);
- reading as a cross-curricular objective (Belgium : German-speaking Community, Denmark, Spain, France, Austria, the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland) and Norway);
- early reading at pre-primary level (Denmark, Italy, Austria, Portugal and the United Kingdom (England));
- teaching methods: interdependence between reading and writing; high quality phonic work (France, Austria, the United Kingdom (England) and Norway).

(EACEA, p.47)

These recent reforms, seen in a number of countries, suggest an increased focus on the development of reading per se and also as a tool for learning. Countries such as Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France, Austria, the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland) and Norway have put into place clear, centralised expectations regarding the development of reading skills across the whole curriculum (EACEA, 2011). In keeping with the message sent out regarding the introduction of the LNF in Wales (Welsh Government, 2013a), reading literacy is also seen as central to learning since, by developing reading skills, techniques and strategies, pupils equip themselves with the learning tools to accomplish different tasks and solve problems.

What seems to be agreed, internationally, is that *something* needs to be done about reading. Less clear seems to be agreement about what that should be. This is tied up with questions about what reading is and, subsequently, how it can best be developed. Importantly, several key aspects of reading development seem to be features of the reading landscape. These include the focus on comprehension skills as a way of structuring instruction and assessment and the positioning of reading comprehension in terms of explicit, nameable skills in statutory and guidance documentation (ESTYN, 2017; Welsh Government, 2013a). It also includes a relative lack of explicit guidance as to how these skills can be developed through strategies and why and when these approaches have been seen to be effective. There is also a

paucity of debate and research regarding how to approach teaching reading for comprehension at secondary school level within subjects and a relative paucity of research as to the impact of the various approaches employed in and across schools in the UK in general and Wales specifically if we are to look forward to evidence-based instruction and move away from a belief that reading comprehension will simply happen (Durkin, 1978, 1981; Pearson, 2002).

### **2.3 Teacher efficacy and change**

This research examines whole-school literacy and, as such, the roles of the literacy coordinators in effecting whole-school policies and practices, as well as the class teachers' roles in implementing practices in their lessons are central to the research. Much of this research was conducted with the five literacy coordinators from the five participating school who had been given responsibility for developing whole-school literacy practices that made up the PLC group. As such, the research was as much about the role of the PLC as a mechanism for change and the journey of the literacy coordinators towards affecting change on a whole-school basis as informed practitioners, as it was about the specific literacy practices they employed. Teacher efficacy is a central element of this research, which is, after all, aimed at exploring sustainable management of effective practice in schools.

Teachers are, claim McCaffrey et al (2004), central to work regarding the efficacy of policy or pupil performance, as it teachers who make decisions about teaching and learning in their everyday work; it is in the classroom that policy is enacted. It seems, therefore, pivotal to ensure that teachers have the secure knowledge and skill base to affect purposeful change in their practice. The knowledge and skills required to best implement, in this instance, reading practices in their classrooms aside, teachers need to be able to affect change; to feel they have the agency and efficacy to utilise the skills and knowledge that they might have gained. Factors, then, such as self-efficacy may also be important in the effective understanding of and utilisation of whole-school approaches and structures that may help develop the reading of pupils across all subjects.

Studies into teacher efficacy emerged in the 1970s (see Armor et al, 1976, for example), focused on measuring the extent to which teachers felt they were able to influence pupil achievement. Bandura's (1986, 1997) work on self-efficacy claims that a person's efficacy

beliefs, that is how their own judgements regarding how skilled or capable they are at a particular time or at a particular task has an impact upon their success in that task. Bandura (1997) goes as far as to suggest that a person's efficacy beliefs, what they think about their own abilities, have a greater impact upon their achievements than their observable abilities. Importantly, Bandura suggests that self efficacy is domain specific rather than general. That is, it is linked to particular tasks or aspects within an area of a person's competence. For the purposes of this research, a teacher's self efficacy beliefs may fall within the specific domain of literacy or reading instruction or the teaching and management of whole-school literacy development. A central principle of Bandura's (1997) work in self efficacy is that success can be impacted upon through a cycle of self reflection and subsequent changing of behaviours in response to this. This is a key element of the research process for this thesis.

Bandura (1997) names four sources of self efficacy. These are enactive mastery experiences, that is a person's experience of success in the mastery of a task or skill within a particular domain of focus; vicarious experiences, namely observing others' success in a task or skill; verbal persuasion from others regarding one's potential for success in a given task; and emotional and psychological states which might influence a person's success in a task. For Bandura, it is mastery experiences that exert the greatest influence on a person's self efficacy, which suggests that positive experience in an aspect of teaching helps develop the efficacy beliefs of a teacher.

Whilst Bandura's work has been influential in the realm of teacher efficacy ( see Klassen et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran et al , 1998; Wyatt, 2015) it is important to note that the evidence base for this is not substantial and sometimes ignores some important questions, including those surrounding the domain and context specificity of teacher efficacy beliefs and also the relationship between teacher efficacy and measurable, observable performance (Wyatt, 2015) .Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) refined Bandura's model and suggested that teacher efficacy centres on a teacher's 'capability to organise and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific task in a particular context' (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p.233). This definition itself was refined (Tschannaen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001, p.783) to include specific reference to a teacher's capability in bringing about 'desired outcomes'. This change in definition, claims Wyatt (2015), moves the focus from the teacher's behaviours to the end product of those behaviours – the pupils' performance –and does not provide information regarding how those outcomes might be achieved. For this

research, this distinction, between where efficacy is situated and measured, whether in self-belief about behaviours or about performance, needs to be considered. The literacy coordinators and class teachers in this research were, of course concerned with both their ability to affect change in practices, across a whole-school and in their own classrooms, but with an end purpose of improving pupil performance.

Concerns regarding the position of positive teacher self efficacy beliefs as in and of themselves could have also been raised. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2007), for example, claim that whilst there may usually be a correlation between teacher self efficacy beliefs and teacher ability, this is not always the case, particularly with newer teachers who might overestimate their efficacy. Tschannen-Moran et al (1998) also claim that as newer teachers would have had less experience of mastery experiences, they might rely on others sources for their self efficacy beliefs such as vicarious experiences through observing more experienced others or verbal persuasion. Lampert (2010), too, discusses that high self efficacy beliefs might not be necessarily conducive to self improvement, and need to be balanced.

In Tschannen-Moran et al's (1998) integrated model of teacher self efficacy, the external contexts of the teaching are given more explicit focus, alongside the four elements identified by Bandura (1997). This includes an awareness of the role that factors such as leadership expectations, teacher involvement in decision making and so on will have on teacher efficacy beliefs. It also includes factors such as resource availability that might impact upon a teacher's belief in their ability to be effective, particularly for new teachers or for new tasks or expectations. In this model, the sources of efficacy beliefs outlined by Bandura combine with the external elements of context and the teachers' beliefs about their current level of competence to produce their self efficacy beliefs; the belief that they are able to execute and organise action for a particular task in a particular context.

The importance of effective teaching has been the site of much recent conversation, perhaps most influentially in Hattie (2009a; 2009b). Any correlation between improved self efficacy and teacher performance is, then, a valuable area of investigation. Whilst the relationship between teacher efficacy and performance is complex, as noted above, Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) found having analysed over one hundred studies that there was some clear correlation between work performance and efficacy. Klassen et al (2011), however make the case for

caution as they found an insufficient evidence base for claims about the efficacy beliefs of a teacher and the subsequent performance by outcome of their pupils. Judge et al (2007) also found little clear evidence of a simple correlation between efficacy and performance, a finding challenged by more recent positions, such as that of Hattie (2016).

Collective efficacy, that is the ability of groups to see themselves as affecting change, draws from the Tschannen-Moran et al (1998) model outlined above in that school context is seen as a key element of the degree to which teachers feel they are able to make decisions. As noted by Adams and Forsyth (2006), whilst Bandura's (1997) four sources of self efficacy might provide some insight into how teacher efficacy beliefs might come about, the place of the school in which the teaching takes place needs to be considered. This can be seen too in Bandura's (2000) views on collective agency in organisations. Here, collective efficacy is seen as being 'about the capability of the group to bring about desired ends' (p.3). The strong reciprocity they find between school context and teacher efficacy beliefs, lead them to claim that collective efficacy in a school is bound up with teacher self efficacy beliefs. That is, the belief (or otherwise) in the potential agency of the collective informs the beliefs of the individual. Goddard and Goddard (2001) also claim that a teacher's beliefs about themselves are influenced by their beliefs about the collective within which they belong.

For the purposes of this research, this notion of collective efficacy can be seen to be an important factor for the PLC as a collective and also for the individual schools. Importantly, as noted by Klassen et al. (2011), the most successful schools tend to have positive collective efficacy beliefs and may have more positive pupil outcomes. This claim is supported by previous research that has shown collective efficacy beliefs are positively correlated to pupil achievement (Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Goddard et al, 2010), as well as by Bandura's (1993) work which proposed that self efficacy operates in academic success at three levels: pupils' beliefs, teacher beliefs and the beliefs of the institution. Cogaltay and Karatag (2017) also suggest that collective efficacy can impact positively on pupil achievement. The efficacy beliefs in the instance of this research were within the PLC group as a body, their schools and the individuals within these groupings.

Collaboration lends itself to the notion of collective efficacy, tying in closely with the development of self efficacy as group members collaborate and learn from one another. Ross et al (2004) found that school cohesion and systems have a greater impact on collective efficacy amongst teachers than pupils' prior attainment. This included features such as shared

goals and teacher involvement in decision making. Importantly for this research, they also claim that collaboration might be a tool that supports teacher individual efficacy as well as group efficacy as they develop and support one another's development. Van Dall et al (2014) found that teachers with high self efficacy are more likely to reflect upon their teaching and experiment with different approaches. This can be seen to link with the findings of Wheatley (2002) that teachers need to believe that any perceived needs in their practice can be improved through professional development. The importance of professional development, and its connection to a model of teacher change, is noted too by Robinson et al (2009) who suggest that successful schools see professional development as an important part of their role.

Professional development in itself is based on notions of improvement and change. In the majority of cases, the class teachers involved in this research had participated in some form of professional development regarding literacy practices. This was most typically in the form of half-day whole-school training, although a small number of teachers had undertaken additional training by way of, for example, an MA module. Opfer and Pedder's (2011) research into professional development found that the most successful models of engagement with professional development seemed to be of mid-to long term and had a focus on collaboration and the construction and sharing of practice. Henson (2001), too, notes that short term training or professional development may not be sufficient to effect change in beliefs or practices. Whilst Opfer and Pedder's research found that teachers themselves do not necessarily value professional development that is collaborative, it was a feature of successful schools. This notion of long term professional change and development can be seen, too, in Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) and Bruce et al (2010) who claim that short term, strategy focused development activities are not as effective as longer term collaborative development. Importantly, for this research, Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009) found a negative effect on teachers' efficacy beliefs when teachers were not given sufficient training in or time to embed reading strategies in their practice.

### **2.3.1 Teacher beliefs and cognition**

The efficacy beliefs of teachers in this research, and therefore the capacity for professional change and development, can be seen as linked to what Borg (2003, 2006) describes as teacher cognition –that is what teachers know or believe. This cognition rests on the notion

of teachers as ‘active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalised, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs’ (Borg, 2003, p.81). Teachers, therefore, bring with them multiple factors that impact upon their decision making in the classroom. Whilst some of these factors include the school systems within which the teachers work and the training given in support of these systems, other factors, some explicit and others tacit, also need to be taken into account when considering teachers’ enactment of policy and approaches in their teaching. Claxton (2000) claims that teachers often act intuitively in the classroom and that these implicit, tacit forms of knowing require recognition and reflection if teachers are to become fully involved in the construction of understanding that will inform their practice. Teachers do not, argues Borg (2006, 2009), simply enact policy, they are active agents who make decisions in their classrooms; decisions that are based upon multiple factors that inform and influence their beliefs and actions.

Phipps and Borg (2009, p.381) identify some key features of teacher cognitions. These include:

- The long-term and persistent influence of teachers’ own experiences as learners.
- The ways in which teacher beliefs can be more influential in their practice than subsequent training or education.
- That teacher beliefs interact in a bi-directional way with experience (that is, beliefs influence practice and practice can influence beliefs).

Importantly, Phipps and Borg (2009) also claim that teachers’ beliefs are not necessarily seen in their practices. Factors that might affect the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their practices include the system, local and national, within which they work, (Phipps & Borg, 2009; Borg, 2003) It is important, therefore, to take into account those factors that might inform a teachers’ beliefs and, hence, teaching decisions. This includes being aware of the impact of early experiences in key areas of teaching that help shape teacher cognition, as well as the role in teacher education and training in shaping or replacing those beliefs.

Importantly, Borg (2003) suggests, training that does not take into account teachers’ existing beliefs is likely to be less effective at changing practice. That is, training which aims solely at changing practice is less effective than that which explores teacher cognitions. For Borg (2006), an understanding of teacher knowledge is indubitably tied up with an understanding

of how their beliefs influence teacher practice and the development of new understandings. Changes in cognition, rather than simply in behaviour, he claims should be the aim of teacher education, if meaningful impact on teaching decisions and practices is to be seen. For this to occur, the tacit beliefs held by teachers should be examined and cognitive shifts seen as key to change in practice. Teacher cognitive development should be seen as more than ‘a simple process of aggregation of new ideas’ (p. 241). In this thesis, this applies to the types of training offered in the participating schools and the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their practices in enacting whole-school literacy in their lessons.

Jaworski (2003), too, examines the relationship between teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice, claiming that these factors act as influences on one another. For Jaworski, positioning teachers as ‘thoughtful professionals’ (2003, p.257) should include recognition of the importance of the ‘exercising and intellectualising (of) their voice’. It is through this listening to teachers’ own reflections, rather than prioritising external voices, that real action-orientated reflection occurs. In this view, a practice of critical self-evaluation, in which teachers examine their understanding, can lead to meaningful change at the level of beliefs, rather than simply practices. In this thesis, the cognition of the class teachers whose practices were being observed, the possible influences on this and the role these might play in their practices, as well as in their self efficacy beliefs are part of the qualitative data that was gathered during the interviews that followed each observation.

#### **2.4 The role of PLCs as mechanisms for staff and school development**

The PLC can be seen as linked both to the notion of individual and collective efficacy and also, as suggested by Bolam et al (2005), an increased interest in teachers as the site of their own development. In their report into what was then an emerging area of research, Bolam et al (2005) defined the PLC as a body that has the capacity to promote and sustain the learning of all professionals in a school, with the collective purpose of enhancing pupil learning. The shift towards teacher professional learning was also a factor in the growth of the PLC in the 2000’s. Fielding et al (2005) also identified the potential for teachers to learn with and from one another and identified the benefits as being beyond development in a specific skills but was a way of working that encouraged construction of new ideas and work methods, a sentiment that is echoed by Lieberman and Miller (2011) who claim that PLCs can develop professional trust amongst the members. Hattie (2009a) stated that teachers need to be

learners if they are to become more effective and, coupled with an increased interest in practitioner enquiry (Stoll et al, 2012), the PLC seemed to be the vehicle for this work. The McKinsey report (Barber and Mourshed, 2007), too, found that the expansion of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) is indicative of the increased emphasis on teacher collaboration as a powerful means of professional development.

The PLC should not, though, be mistaken for a meeting or group sharing of practice (Graham & Ferriter, 2010; DuFour et al, 2008). Hord (2004) suggests five key elements of a PLC. These are supportive and shared leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning, supportive conditions, and shared practice. DuFour et al., (2008) build upon these and identify characteristics that should shape a PLC and make it an effective tool for teacher and school change. The first is a clear and stated shared mission that is established by way of structured direction with explicit timelines, targets and group and individual roles and is centred on learning. The second characteristic is the necessity to develop a genuinely collaborative group culture that impacts upon the practices amongst the group members and also, importantly, the school. The third characteristic is collective enquiry into existing best-practice in the area they are exploring. The next characteristic is that group members should use their growing understanding to question and explore their own practice. They should also use data and research in cycles of inquiry into these practices to inform next steps collectively for group members. Finally, the focus of the work of the group should be goal orientated (DuFour et al., 2008). DuFour et al (2008) suggest that the term has been so overused by naming any assortment of professional groupings as PLCs that educators are in danger of making the term meaningless.

The PLC, then, whilst it is the site of collaboration and professional sharing, is established as a purposeful phenomenon that has clear, pupil focused aims (Stoll et al, 2012). Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) also see the PLC as being an effective potential mechanism for change and development in schools. They do, though, reinforce the key focus on the teacher's self efficacy as part of this process.

The PLC is seen as both an effective tool for constructing and affecting change in school practice in focused, results orientated way and also as a way of changing the ways in which teachers see themselves and their potential to develop (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Harris and Jones (2010) also focus on the importance of the learning that happens as a result of PLC

membership, suggesting it can be something beyond the agreed end goal of the group, and claim that it is the reflection and dialogue, the changed habits, that can have most impact. They do, though, make clear that the key purpose of the PLC is to create innovation and change which is related to pupil outcomes. It is through this, and through the practices and habits that change in the members as a result, that PLCs can also act as agents of change within their schools. The PLC is not individuals learning within a community, but rather learning *as* a community for a particular end.

Welsh Government's (2013b) guidance on PLC working reflects this principle. In the document, PLCs are situated clearly within the context of the School Effectiveness Framework (Welsh Government, 2012a) and the national priorities of literacy, numeracy and disadvantage. The PLC, in this guidance, is situated as a vehicle for continuous, sustainable school improvement and defines as 'a group of practitioners working together using a structured process of enquiry to focus on a specific area of their teaching to improve learner outcomes and so raise school standards' (p.5). The goal orientated PLC model as seen in Dufour et al (2008) and Harris and Jones (2010) can be seen in this iteration. The PLC as a method of teacher development or improving self efficacy, which can be seen in Harris and Jones (2010), for example, is not an explicit feature in this definition. The Welsh Government (2013b, p.6) identify the following (the list below is taken directly from the guidance document) as the key elements of a PLC:

- Group of professionals working as a team to address specific learner needs arising from the analysis of data/ evidence.
- Chooses the focus of enquiry and the membership of the group.
- Imperative to generate new ideas and new practice.
- Operates within a clear cycle of action enquiry.
- Leadership is widely distributed and the group chooses its own facilitator.
- Each member is accountable for the outcomes of the PLC – there is reciprocal accountability.
- Disbands and reforms with a new focus on enquiry and changed membership.
- Assesses its impact directly on learner outcomes and has a responsibility to share these outcomes with others.
- Independent and interdependent learning. Reflection upon individual and collective learning based on evidence.

- Active community of learners.

The notion here of the PLC as a tool for teacher change is not explicit. What is explicit, however, is the importance of a shared, explicit focus with a view to create innovative practices (Harris and Jones, 2010), based on best evidence with measurable performance outcomes.

It is important to recognise that whilst there seems to be evidence of PLCs being positioned as valuable tools for teacher and school development, there is also some evidence to suggest that PLCs are not without criticism. Research conducted in Massachusetts (Boston Consulting Group, 2014), for example, found that whilst teachers express a need for professional development that focuses directly on their classroom practice and value collaboration as a tool for development, they rated PLCs with a score of -45. This was the lowest score of all named approaches. Teachers felt that the PLC was seen as an opportunity to talk, but not to change. This might suggest that the role of the PLC is not understood or implemented as outlined in the literature and supports points made by DuFour et al, (2008) and Harris and Jones (2010) that the PLC should not be used as a broad general professional dialogue but must be focused and orientated on classroom change if it is to be, not only effective, but a PLC at all.

The place of knowledge within a PLC structure is of something that is constructed through the practices of the group. It is not about, or not only about, the utilisation and testing of an externally selected approach, but about a process where group members explore ideas, use available evidence and then operate within cycles of application and revision as they reflect in a focused way upon impact. For the purposes of this thesis, the Inquiry Model as defined by Tillema and Imants (1995) is also situated within this notion of knowledge as socioculturally constructed by teachers. In this model, teachers construct their own knowledge and use it for their own purpose of studying classroom events or practices. They contrast the Inquiry Model with the Dissemination Model, in which teachers are presented with information so that they can then implement this new knowledge in their practice, and the Interactive Model, in which the teacher works with a researcher or expert to build their understanding. In each of these models, knowledge exists externally to the teacher, whereas in the Inquiry Model, the teacher is situated as a producer of knowledge. It was the Inquiry

Model that most closely aligned with the aims of this research and which can be seen most closely in the work of PLCs.

The PLC as a tool for educational change has some clear support. The matter of what then happens to the changes or development that might be made in PLC groups is relevant to this thesis. The PLC group were, after all, working within the PLC with a view to transforming practice within their schools. Hattie (2016) identifies collective teacher efficacy as the factor with the potential to have the most significant impact of pupil achievement. He claims that it has more impact than feedback, which was positioned at the top of the list of effect sizes (Hattie, 2009b) and is a more powerful indicator of pupil achievement than pupils' prior attainment, their motivation and persistence, or their socio-economic situation. He claims that teachers' collective efficacy beliefs about the school in which they work are most strongly correlated with achievement; a view that ties in with the findings of Goddard et al (2010), who point to the role collaborative work within a system that supports positive collective efficacy beliefs can have on pupil performance. Collective efficacy is a powerful tool if the mechanisms are in place to support it.

Fullan (2001a, 2005) points to the positive potential of collaborative work such as that organised within PLCs, but warns that it should be part of a collaborative school culture that sees these practices as an embedded part of a school's ethos and systems. Successful, purposeful collaborative working, and the collective efficacy that could result from this, depends, says Fullan (2005), to a considerable degree on the culture of the school. Adams and Forsyth (2006) also stress the importance of school structure in establishing effective collective teacher efficacy, claiming that the organisation and management of the school has considerable influence on how teachers feel about their school as a place that can make positive impact. This suggests that it is important for a school's management team to create the necessary conditions and environment for this way of working to succeed. That is, whilst some aspects of a school might not be within a school's control, such as national expectations and systems, the school level structures can be organised in such a way to provide the necessary conditions and expectations for efficacy growth. , also, provide systems that inhibit this.

Newmann in Fullan (2001a, p.14) names five aspects that could influence the potential for developing strong efficacy beliefs in a school. These are teachers' knowledge; skills, dispositions; professional community; programme coherence; technical resources and

leadership. The first of these can be developed through individual professional development, which can impact upon practice within a particular teacher's classroom or within a department. This individual professional development is more valued by teachers when it is viewed as a genuine, focused opportunity for growth that is connected to improving their practice, rather than something seen as only vaguely connected to them (Bruce et al, 2010; Boston Research Group, 2014; Evans, 2014).

There also needs to be school wide development aimed at developing the organisations, shared relationships and understandings that are an important element of school improvement. Importantly, claims Fullan (2001a), individual development needs to be an embedded element of a school's own development. This means that it needs to be shared in a meaningful way rather than held discretely. There should, he says, be structural mechanisms in place to enable shared understanding and review. The importance of the necessary resources in the form of not only instructional tools but also time for development and sharing, feature not only in Fullan (2001a) but also in, for example, in Tschannen-Moran et al (1998). The final element noted by Newmann (Fullan, 2001a) is on the role of school leadership. This features, too, in Elmore (2000) who claims that a key feature of the role of a school leader is to create the environment and expectations in a school that afford opportunities for teachers to develop their skills within a shared culture of collective improvement.

The role of school policy as a vehicle for creating and sharing common beliefs and practices within a school features here, too. Harris's (2002) claims that the move from policy to implementation is complex and influence by a variety of elements that will impact upon how a policy is interpreted and then implemented. The line from policy to practice is not necessarily straight and obstacle free. Harris (2002) found that teachers often have negative views towards policy or might have differing perspectives based in their own knowledge, experience and beliefs. This, too, connects with Borg's (2003) views on teacher cognition and the role this plays in teacher practice. They also have multiple sometimes competing demands that will influence their practice in the classroom (Brindley & Schneider, 2002). Ball (1994) suggests that the ways in which policy might be acted upon are difficult to determine, dependant as this is on myriad factors. This is likely to include the school culture within which a teacher works and the level of genuine participation they feel with regards to

school policy and implementation. For Ball (1994), there is no straight line between policy and practice.

## **2.5 Performativity**

Teacher efficacy, collective and individual, does not exist, indeed cannot exist, outside of the contexts within which teaching takes place. The particular context within which this research is situated is one of national change as a response to global measures in the form of PISA results. This context is itself situated within what Ball (2003, p.215) identifies as a ‘policy epidemic’ that has been a catalyst for widespread educational reform. For Ball, this spread is informed and defined by a number of global bodies, including the OECD. The prioritising of an educational focus on producing a workforce for a global market (Ball, 2003) has led to what Ball terms a culture whereby education is figured as something that can be performed and measured. The reform agenda, informed by a neo-liberalism which marketises education (Jeffrey, 2002), can, claims Clarke (2013) be seen in a number of ways including centrally determined content and pedagogy, seen by way of curriculum reforms and statutory frameworks, as well as the use of performance management systems that serve to provide visible data regarding teacher efficacy. This reform situates educators within a field of measurable value; hence, the control over what it is that is seen as valued is central. In this research, this concerns not only what is seen as valued in terms of literacy practices, but also the processes, at a national and local level through which this is managed, including the roles played by all involved in the production, dissemination and measurement of practice.

MacFarlane (2015) discusses the notion of teacher performativity within this culture as made manifest in the framing of teacher effectiveness in terms of measurable, and hence surveillable, performance. Within this culture, teacher performance becomes public and regulated through technologies of accountability, including local and national measures. The efficacy of a teacher’s work in this system is seen in terms of compliance to defined measures which inform both content and teaching approach (MacFarlane 2016, 2015). Within this system, those who are entrusted with its management are the ‘technicians of transformation’ (Ball, 2003, p.219).

In this view, a culture of constant reform creates insecurity and de-professionalises those who operate within the system (Braun et al, 2010), as they strive to perform within a predefined

set of success markers that necessitate continual improvement (Ball, 2003) as the market of education dictates. It creates a culture of ‘inauthentic behaviour(s)’ (MacFarlane, 2015, p.347) as actors seek success by conforming. As such, not only the system changes, but the roles of those within it change, too. Cain and Harris (2013, p.343) describe a system whereby teacher efficacy is defined in terms of ‘measurable outputs’ that are defined at an organisational (national and local) level. As such, teachers are situated as producers of data that is itself placed firmly within pre-defined parameters. This, claims Furlong (2004), destabilises teachers’ perceptions of their own professional knowledge, judgement and self-efficacy. If, as noted in the previous section, teacher efficacy is a key element in school change, then the role of performativity, especially in relation to policy enactment needs to be considered.

Braun et al (2010) claim that the role of the individual school, and indeed the local education authority, has been subordinated to and by national policy imperatives. Rather than increasing meaningful collective and teacher efficacy, the role of national governments in response to international comparisons such as those found in PISA testing regimes has been to determine school practice by way of the implementation of a succession of initiatives and policies which have been designed centrally to raise standards and reform schools. The ways in which teachers are situated within the enactment of such policy and reform, and in turn how their identities are constituted, are multiple and complex.

Ball et al (2011) identify two types of policy: imperative and exhortative. Imperative policies like those involved in the standards agenda (that is the drive to continually raise the level of pupil or student performance in tests and examinations) produce, they claim, a ‘primarily passive policy subject, a technician whose practice is heavily determined by the requirements of performance and delivery’ (p.612). In this type of policy, little reflexive judgement is required of the teacher, indeed it could be claimed that the role of the teacher in this type of policy enactment is to deliver rather than participate. In this view of policy, teachers are seen as deliverers of policy rather than as instrumental agents in its conception. Here, teachers are reactive rather than creative, and enactment is constrained, even as possibilities might remain for potential individual input at a micro/class level (Braun et al, 2010).

School policies and practices are situated as products rather ‘productions’ (Ball et al, 2011, p.613) and teachers are consumers not producers of the policy texts. Policy in this form is

framed as having a focus on external outcomes by way of test scores or the performance of key elements as assessed via performance and monitoring systems. Policy here is put in place to respond to a defined problem –in this instance poor literacy scores in PISA tests and resultant national imperative to see measurable improvement by way of defined actions. In effect, a performativity discourse is put in place where teachers are judged by their performance of pre-defined actions. Policy within schools is situated as a mark of visible action in response to external, national, centrally-identified need and is made manifest by way of an audit culture (MacFarlane, 2016) through which enactment can be measured. Here, the role of the literacy coordinator is decisive. They define what literacy will look like within their schools and how it is to be measured.

Policies such as those described above operate through what Ball et al (2013) see as a focus on delivery rather than informed professional judgement; teacher efficacy in this view is subsumed to a culture of compliance. This, notes MacFarlane (2015, p.347) can lead to teachers spending time and effort on managing expectations and impressions, of ‘ playing the game’ rather than focusing on developing and utilising their professional expertise within their own contexts.

Exhortative policies situate the teacher as part of production. In this view, teachers are situated as part of the process of policy making and are encouraged to use and develop their professional understanding as part of the process of developing and enacting policy. In this figuring, the teacher is an ‘active policy subject, a more ‘authentic’ professional who is required to bring judgement that has originality and ‘passion’, as some teachers put it, to bear upon the policy process ‘ (Ball et al, 2011, p. 615). Whilst this would, perhaps, necessitate a move away from easily measured accountability systems as policy enactment becomes more contextualised and, hence, less systematised, it places the teacher as a key actor, rather than a subject (Ball, 2016).

Clarke (2013) identifies a sense of dislocation amongst teachers connected to a sense of their performing tasks that seemed to be connected to accountability or ‘cooperation’ (p.218). That is time pressures are seen as linked to performativity by way of the completion of tasks that serve to provide an audit trail or to comply with performance measures. Fullan (2001b), too, notes that schools and teachers are under pressure from an overload of measures, projects and innovations that are put in place as schools feel the need to demonstrate their action on

shifting centrally identified priorities. This can also contribute to what Clarke (2013, p.231) terms the 'emotional cost' of teaching as the impact is felt of an additional layer of work concerned with accountability is added to the demands of the classroom. For Ball (2016) this amounts not just a change in what teachers do, but who they are.

For Fullan (2001b) a key aspect in school change in response to a marketisation of education has been in meaning and meaning making. The discourses that construct the realities of teaching operate on multiple levels, often removed from the site of practice; directives and policy changes are often presented to schools as expected changes in behaviours when for effective change to occur, says Fullan (2001b), it must happen at the level of belief as well as practices or resources. How policy is made and then put into action is a key element of this. Braun et al (2010) claim that enacting policy is always contextualised and the extent to which teachers and others are viewed as active players or as passive subjects is one that needs to be considered. If policy is seen simply as 'as an attempt to 'solve a problem'' (ibid., p.549) in the form of nationally derived priorities and actions, then it is situated within a top-down performative culture. If, on the other hand, it is seen as comprising multiple elements, including the above but also taking in to account local, contextual elements then policy can become less a product and more of a process where all actors participate in policy rather than are measured by performance in relation to policy.

Ranson (2007) claims that accountability tends to take the form of 'events' (p.207) rather than as changed principles or systems. These might take the form of performance measures including lesson observations or the scrutiny of pupils' work. These 'events' often themselves become proxies for systems – they become the system itself or at least what it comes to mean in practice. Braun et al., (2010) suggest that it is important to reposition policies as processes, as texts that can be 'worked on and with' (p.558) They also suggest that policy practices are specific to and informed by the context of each school and of the policy actors involved in those specific contexts. For Braun et al (2010), policies inhabit spaces that are formed in the relationships between key figures working within local and national networks: 'between government and each local authority, the local authority and each of its schools, and within, as well as between schools' (ibid, p559).

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In summary, although the definition of reading comprehension remains a topic of intense

debate (Leslie & Caldwell, 2000; Paris & Hamilton, 2009) reading comprehension can be broadly defined as the process of constructing meaning by coordinating a number of complex processes that include language, word reading, word knowledge and fluency (Paris & Hamilton, 2009). Comprehension is highly interactive, such that readers use a variety of skills and processes when encountering text. These processes are complex and consist of multiple components. A variety of cognitive models have been developed to lend support to the various skills and processes thought to impact comprehension (Goodman, 1967; Paris & Hamilton, 2009; NRP, 2000). Key features of these models are multiple and include seeing the text as a discrete set of rules or a context dependent or produced entity. Another central feature to be considered when exploring the lessons and approaches that form part of this thesis is the belief that there are common strategies that can, and should to a degree, be used across all subject contexts to support engagement with text (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). This approach suggests that text is text and can be engaged with in the same way regardless of content.

A counterpoint or development to this, which seems especially pertinent to the secondary school sector in which this research took place, is the identification of disciplines as having particular types of engagement with particular types of text for specific purposes. This focus in on the literacy of given subject area can be seen in not only the work of Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) and Moje (2008), but also in the Common Core Standards that guide literacy instruction in the USA . The role of subject knowledge and where literacy fits with the teaching of subject is a key consideration, too. In some models, literacy is deliberately placed as outside of the subject; it is situated as a means of accessing it. In approaches influenced by this model, generic, context independent strategies are used with little focused linking to the text or the subject. This model, a common feature of many of the observed lessons, is discussed later in this thesis. The lesson observations and subsequent interviews will explore and reveal the models that were seen in school practice and how teachers made decisions about how to develop reading in their classrooms.

The test data in this thesis serves as an additional factor. It provides some information regarding whether the literacy practices seen in the classrooms have any impact upon an external standardised measure such as the PISA tests. As these tests are designed to measure reading in an active, 'real life' sense, as opposed to testing a curriculum as such, the use of these tests will provide some information regarding where impact can be seen and if any

particular school's approach can be seen to have a greater impact. There are, as noted, some factors that need to be taken into consideration when using PISA tests as a measure of attainment in a given area. These have been discussed in this chapter and, in the main, do not impact upon the use of these tests in this context.

Reading aside, a central focus of this thesis is teacher efficacy and the role of PLCs in developing teachers' practice. As has been discussed, the PLC as a tool for teacher development was a feature of this research. Whilst the literature presents a compelling picture for the place of PLCs as effective tools for change and some clear evidence that their use has been promoted as mechanism for school improvement, there is some evidence that PLCs are not seen as effective by teachers or that they are not following the principles that allow them to function as learning communities rather than discussion spaces (Boston Consulting Group, 2014). This research then examines not only factors relating to what literacy practices can be seen in secondary schools and how theory influences that practice, but also on the practicalities and effectiveness of PLCs as a tool for development, and how whole-school approaches fit with ideas regarding effective teacher development.

In the next chapter, the theoretical framework, research methods and tools that were used in this research are discussed.

## Chapter 3

### Research Design and Methods

#### 3.1 Introduction

The aims of this thesis are to explore the ways in which literacy is being developed in secondary schools in Wales and to investigate and critically analyse whole-school approaches to literacy in secondary schools. This research was conducted in part through a PLC made up of literacy coordinators from five schools. Lesson observations also took place in these schools as did semi-structured interviews with class teachers following the lesson observations. Qualitative data was gathered through these PLC meetings, lesson observations across a range of subjects in the literacy coordinators' schools and interviews with the observed class teachers. Quantitative data was gathered by way of PISA reading tests that were administered to year 9 pupils in each of the schools.

In this chapter, I begin by discussing my use of a mixed methods approach. Next, I provide an account of the research design and justification for the research tools and approaches I used for this thesis. Finally, I evaluate the research credibility of my thesis by discussing the reliability, validity, and generalisability of the results, and how these concepts sit within research of this type, as well as ethical aspects regarding participation, including my own.

#### 3.2 Theoretical Framing

The epistemological stance which underpins this thesis informs the theoretical perspective within which it is positioned and, in turn, the research methodology and tools that were used in this research. The three key types of research – qualitative, quantitative and mixed – have a concomitant relationship to knowledge. The epistemological underpinning for this study and its theoretical perspective is sociocultural, a theoretical position which posits that knowledge and meaning are constructed through a process of social interaction (Crotty, 1998), and within which learning is situated as socially constructed. In this model, knowledge is not just 'out there' waiting to be discovered (Crotty, 1998, p. 9), but rather, is constructed between and among individual participants within a particular social context. In this case, the context was my work with the group of teachers who were involved in the PLC that operated at the

centre of much of this research, as well as in the observations and interviews that also formed part of this research and in their work within their schools. This understanding informs the use of qualitative research tools, such as interviews and observation, which explore the meanings that are constructed from the research. This type of knowledge is fluid and contextualised. It exists in and through its construction; the literacy coordinators' developing understanding of reading instruction and the ways in which they chose to apply this understanding their school contexts was not known prior to the research and was fluid and developing over the course of the year of the research. The types of knowledge tested in standardised tests, such as the PISA tests used in this research, suggest a different kind of knowledge, one which is externalised and static. Possible corroboration of data between these two paradigms is an area of exploration in this thesis and necessitated a pragmatic research design. For the purposes of this research, the quantitative data gathered from testing provides information in and of itself, but also is used so as to explore any relationship between the qualitative research and quantitative findings. Methodologically, then, the thesis uses a mixed methods approach to study the qualitative and quantitative aspects of practices involved in developing reading comprehension, as well as to explore the ways in which teachers inform and extend their own practice.

The mixed methods approach that underpins this thesis comes from a pragmatic view of the research. The central crux of this research design is to consider the aims and answer the research questions in the most efficient and practical way, hence a pragmatic approach that focused on a methodology and design that best suited the purpose of the research was selected as most suitable (Darlington & Scott, 2002; Newby, 2010). In this thesis, I make use of several research strategies whose fitness for purpose (Denscombe, 2010; Creswell, 2013) is a key reason behind their selection for this research. As Brannen (2005) suggests, it is often pragmatic reasons and concerns that inform much research, and methods and approaches are often selected for practical rather than philosophical reasons. This pragmatism is often connected to mixed methods research, as researchers select research methods and tools that best suit their research aim and context (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009).

The mixed-method research approach is also explored by others (Bryman, 2006; Holloway & Todres, 2003; Mason, 2006) who claim that mixed approaches can provide richness in response to research questions. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2009), also suggest benefits for mixed methods research as the multiple elements and views it allows for can allow for a

concomitantly increased level of insight. Bryman (2006, cited in Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2010), too, asserts that mixed methods research can allow for a number of benefits to research, including using data gathered from one method to be used to explore that found in another.

Whilst decisions made about research methodologies and tools, when using a mixed approach, might be pragmatic, it is important to consider whether the qualitative or quantitative elements have priority or emphasis (Brannen, 2005; Cresswell, 2013)). This is informed by view of knowledge that frames the research. Mason (2006) positions qualitative theoretical underpinning as key to mixed method research. In this research, the aim is to examine how whole-school literacy is developed; to explore the ways in which teachers could construct their understandings of literacy practices and how this understanding could be played out in their schools. It was not centred on the degree to which the pupils' (or a pupil's, for that matter) test results would be improved, but rather on the teachers as leaders of literacy in their respective schools. As such, the knowledge underpinning it was not stable and tangible, but fluid and constructed during the research. This meant that, in line with Mason (2006), qualitative data formed the larger part of this study, with quantitative data providing an additional and vital element.

From this, and from the sociocultural theoretical underpinnings of this research, an interpretivist view is adopted. The central beliefs underlying the study within this understanding are that knowledge is not wholly available apriori, but is instead constructed during the research (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). This approach also ties into the Inquiry Model of teacher development (Tillema & Imants, 1995), as described in Chapter 2.

This research is, then, mixed method, but with a weighting and separation between its elements. That is, I have used the qualitative research paradigm and associated methods for the interview, PLC meetings and lesson observations that form the majority of this thesis and a quantitative research paradigm and methods for the tests. This mixed approach can provide opportunities for corroborated findings, should the data from the qualitative and quantitative data show points of congruence, which can provide support for each set of data. Mixed method research might also show where findings provide spaces where further investigation might be necessary. The use of test data responses in conjunction with interviews, group data and lesson observation allowed for both breadth and depth of data to make better and greater

informed inferences (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2009), but it is nonetheless important to note that, in this research, the use of qualitative data and quantitative data was not to provide support from one set of data to another. Whilst the quantitative and qualitative results are used, in part, to look for any correlation or shared patterns that could be seen, they are also explored in their own right.

The choice of methodology for this research is, of course, informed by the aims of this research, which are to explore the ways in which literacy was being developed in secondary schools in Wales, and to investigate and critically analyse whole-school approaches that were used across subject areas in secondary schools.

The objectives of the research in line with the aims are to:

- Critically examine the place of theory and research in practice and guidance in schools.
- Explore professional learning communities (PLCs) as a tool for managing and delivering teacher and whole-school change.
- Consider teacher practice in lessons in the light of theory and whole-school approaches.
- Evaluate the impact of practices and whole-school approaches to improve reading on the types of reading tested in PISA tests. Critically examine the place of theory and research in practice and guidance in schools.

Evaluate the impact of practices and whole-school approaches to improve reading on the types of reading tested in PISA tests.

The research questions that structure the ways in which the aims are met are:

- How does a literacy coordinator manage whole-school literacy practice across all school subjects?
- To what extent does an engagement with learning about theory of literacy impact on practice?

- To what extent did collaboration within a PLC change the behaviour of the literacy coordinators?
- To what extent did participating in the PLC impact on school results?

### 3.3 Research design and participants.

The research was conducted with five English medium secondary schools in five local authorities in Wales during the academic year 2011-2012. As noted in Chapter 1, the schools had been identified through an examination of publicly available data as having key similarities on a number of measures and were approached in June 2011. The head teachers from the schools attended an initial meeting to establish the aims of the project and the ethical procedures which would be followed. These included guarantees of anonymity for schools and teachers. It was agreed that any teachers observed would give free informed consent and that any data collected during lesson observations would remain confidential between the teacher and the observer. The research was to be conducted through the establishment of a PLC consisting of the literacy coordinators from each of the school, of which I was also to be a member; two rounds of lesson observations of two teachers in each school from subjects other than English; two interviews with each of the subject teachers following the lesson observations and PISA literacy tests that would be sat by the year 9 cohort in each of the schools at the start and end of the research. The timeline for the research is summarised in the chart below:

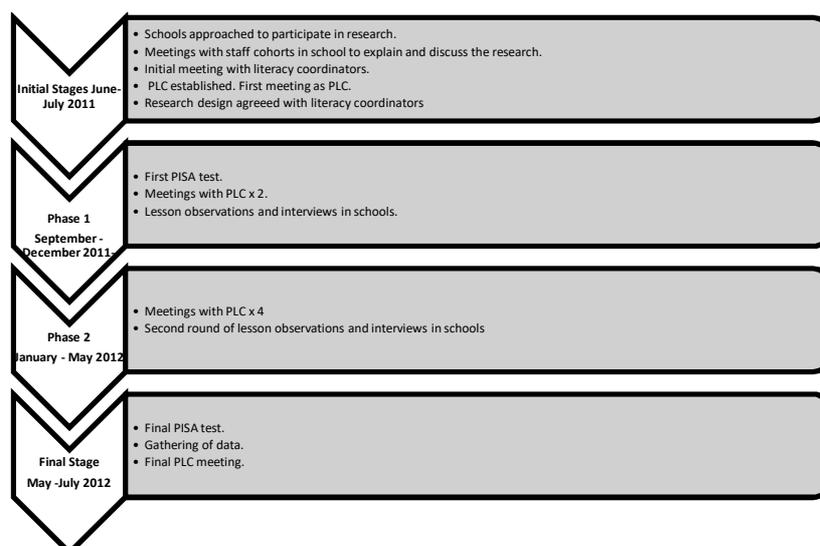


Fig 1: Research timeline

The PLC was identified through the literature (Dufour et al, 2008; Harris & Jones, 2010; Welsh Government, 2013b) as seen in Chapter 2, as an approach that could be used to explore and construct professional critical dialogue and informed action regarding literacy in the secondary school. The literacy coordinators from each of these schools were invited to an initial meeting where the research was explained and adapted. The PLC would focus on developing understanding of literacy theory and practice and consider how to best use this understanding in the development and management of whole-school approaches to literacy within their schools. I was a participating member of the PLC, contributing readings and ideas for the consideration of the group, as well as listening to ideas and approaches brought to and shared with the group by the literacy coordinators. The complex nature of my multiple roles as a PLC member, as well as researcher and literacy specialist are discussed later in this chapter. The PLC met eight times during the course of the research, after the initial establishing meeting. Each meeting lasted for three hours. A non-participant member of university staff attended each meeting to take notes and create tally charts that measured participation of each member; the instances of members presenting to the group; the initiation of discussion and the direction of communication within the group.

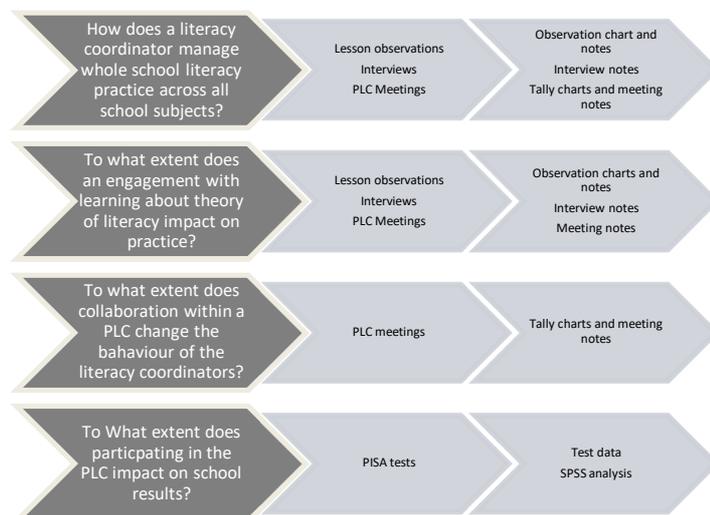
The literacy coordinators used the ideas they had shared and explored in the PLC as stimulus for their work as literacy coordinators in their schools. To explore the effectiveness of this move from the PLC into the subject classroom, I undertook lesson observations in the early and later parts of the academic year with two volunteer teachers in each of the schools from a range of subjects. Each observed lesson was followed by a semi-structured interview that explored the observed lesson but also, more broadly, literacy practice and expectations. The spacing of the observation and interviews allowed for me to explore any changes in the practice observed, as well as teachers' views regarding literacy in their lessons. This allowed for an analysis of the relationship between the theoretical and practical ideas engaged with and shared by the literacy coordinators in the PLC meetings and the ways in which these influenced the lessons in their schools. The findings of the lesson observations and interviews were not shared with the PLC group. This was an important factor in maintaining a separation between the work of the PLC and the integrity of the research.

The lesson observations provided opportunities to observe the practices that could be seen in the subject lessons of teachers who were not literacy or language specialists. The line from discussion to practice is not always clear. The semi-structured interviews post-observation

allowed for further elaboration on the literacy decisions that could be seen in the lessons; how teachers made decisions regarding which approaches to adopt and how they positioned literacy within the context of their subject.

Quantitative information was gathered in the form of PISA tests that took place at the start and the end of the research. This allowed for an exploration of any corroboration that could be seen between schools' approaches and performance in the tests.

In the next section, each of the research tools is discussed. The relationship between each research question, the site of the data gathering and the tools used for data collection can be seen below:



**Fig.2 Research questions and tools.**

### 3.4 Interviews

Interviews featured as a research tool at several stages during this research: in an unstructured form in the group meetings with the literacy coordinators who made up the PLC group and at two key points during the year with classroom teachers from a variety of subject areas following lesson observations. Importantly, and in line with the sociocultural and interpretivist paradigms underpinning this research, knowledge is not found but constructed through the process of these interactions. To that end, I, too, am a participant and co-creator in the interviews (Kvale, 1996, 2007). As discussed later, however, reflexivity is

important here as the roles played in the interview process *were* different for me, as researcher, than for the teachers who were interviewed. The knowledge was constructed during those interviews, but I decided the focus, if not the direction, of conversation. As Hammersley (2012) notes, the researcher in this position needs be cognisant of their position to the research and to those participating in the research.

Mason (2002) identifies key components of qualitative interviews as a research tool. These are the exchange of dialogue between two or more people; an approach whereby the researcher has pre-identified topics or questions that are to be examined within a fluid, dynamic structure and the situating of knowledge as contextual with meaning constructed interactively between participants. In this understanding, the interview is a site for the production of understanding for both parties (Holland and Ramazanoglu). In this research, the interview is as much a tool for the teachers' examination of literacy in their lessons as it was for my examining of literacy practices in their school.

The teachers who are interviewed in this research were chosen pragmatically. They had all expressed some interest in the literacy practices put into place by the participating literacy coordinators and, importantly, volunteered to be observed and interviewed. This is an important factor to consider when examining the lessons and interview data. The teachers involved are volunteers and, so, may be seen as being more predisposed to including literacy in the teaching.

As noted above, these interviews were analysed in an interpretivist way, taking into account the contexts, perspectives and understanding of the participants (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). This approach places knowledge as fluid and informed by the interpretations of those involved; that is, explained and explored rather than discovered. This view of the interview process was an important component of the data gathered for this thesis. I was not interviewing to test responses against an externalised, objective truth, but rather to explore the knowledge that was generated. This interpretivist approach, where the construction of knowledge occurs through the interaction between interviewer and interviewed fits closely with the sociocultural theoretical position of this research (Kvale, 1996).

I also took some influence from some of the underpinning ideas of emancipatory research paradigms, most notably the emphasis on research as the collaboration between researcher

and participants whose lived experience is the site of the research. In this paradigm, the research participants are situated as co-constructors of knowledge rather than subjects of research (Edwards & Holland, 2013). In this research, the literacy coordinators who were part of the PLC were placed in this position, as to a different extent were the class teachers. However, as the researcher who was, after all, designing and writing the research, I had to be aware of the position I held as a researcher. Therefore, whilst the discussions in the meetings and the interviews with the teachers were dialogic in nature and intention, the conversations were instigated and structured by me as researcher.

The key purpose of the semi-structured interviews in this research are to provide a space for dialogue regarding of the experiences, understanding and perceptions of the class teachers and to see what is constructed by way of the dialogue regarding the practical application of reading approaches on a whole-school basis. This was structured by way of an interview schedule (Appendix E) that was co-constructed with the PLC group and piloted in a non-participating local school before being used for this research. The schedule allowed for some key common points related to the research questions to be asked, and therefore, analysed. It also afforded some space for the interviewee to add additional information that may not have been pre-planned. Each interview began with some general conversation and then the interview opened with questions related directly to the observed lesson, followed by further questions about literacy, school approaches and teaching. Each set of interviews used the same basic interview schedule to help focus the interview around the research questions. Most of the questions on the schedule asked were the same each time, although some probes were altered for the second round of interviews that centred on any changes in thoughts or practice since the first round of interviews and observations. The schedule was constructed in collaboration with the literacy coordinators in the PLC.

The qualitative, semi-structured interviews that form part of this research are exploratory and based in a sociocultural theoretical position that sees knowledge as partial, contextualised and constructed through the process. The interviews themselves were, however, influenced by me as researcher by way of the schedule, questions and positionality. Cohen et al (2007) amongst others, identify key ways in which an interviewer can use probes and prompts to help guide an interviewee to expand upon a response or to elicit a response from them. These include such things as echoing, redirecting and so on. Once again, the relationship between the participants in qualitative interviews needs to be taken into account if what is to be

produced from the interview data is to be the co-construction of the participants. The richness provided by probes and prompts, however, does also mean that the interview as a research tool is time consuming for both parties. The weight of data produced and the time needed to analyse the data also needs to be taken into consideration (Cohen et al, 2007).

### 3.5 PLC meetings

This PLC group and the schools from which the literacy coordinator members were drawn, had a shared professional interest in being part of a collective exploration of how to manage literacy across all subjects in their schools and had committed a considerable proportion of staff time to the research and its aims. Each school and PLC member had expressed their commitment to focusing on how each literacy coordinator could best develop literacy in general and reading in particular in their schools. The school members of the PLC can be seen in the table below:

| School   | Name    | Time teaching | Time as Literacy Coordinator |
|----------|---------|---------------|------------------------------|
| School 1 | Litco 1 | 8 years       | 1 Year                       |
| School 2 | Litco 2 | 10 years      | 18 months                    |
| School 3 | Litco 3 | 9 years       | 5 months                     |
| School 4 | Litco 4 | 17 years      | 7 months                     |
| School 5 | Litco 5 | 6 years       | 1 year                       |

Table 1 Literacy Coordinators

As can be seen in the table above, there was some variety in terms of length of time in the profession. The position was, in all instances, a responsibility which was paid and had some defined expectations including the writing of literacy policy, the training of staff in literacy approaches and the monitoring and analysis of data. What can also be seen is that each of the literacy coordinators was quite new to their role.

As this research focused on the capacity of the literacy coordinators themselves to affect change in their schools, the PLC with this focus on collaboration and assumed collective responsibility for their own professional development (Jolly, 2008; Harris & Jones, 2010), was identified as the best tool. Welsh Government (2013b), too, identified the PLC as an

important approach in their drive to an improved system. Key to this research was that the literacy practices and approaches that the literacy coordinators who were part of the PLC and who were responsible for literacy in the schools involved on this research chose to develop would surface through discussion, sharing theory and research, and exploring approaches. To that end, it was key that my role in the PLC was not to ‘train’ the literacy coordinators in literacy, nor give them my own views on what good literacy practice is or could look like. Rather, it was for us to explore some key ideas and principles as a group and for the literacy coordinators to then make professional, informed decisions as to what view of literacy they felt was most close to their own, and what practices would be seen in their schools as a result of this.

The dynamic of the PLC was intended as one of group exploration and construction and, as such, it was important to note the role taken by me in each of these meetings. As outlined earlier, I was extremely aware of my role as part of the PLC and also as researcher of this research. A core principle of this research was that the literacy approaches adopted in the schools should come from the literacy coordinator for that school rather than from me as an external ‘expert’. The PLC was a key mechanism for this as it was established as a place where ideas could be shared and explored rather than as a training-based event where literacy approaches are passed on. To that end, it was important to record the exchanges that took place within the group.

The participation of the members of the PLC group members was a key focus of this research as a whole with its overarching theme of sustainable literacy practices in secondary schools. It was also a key feature of several other questions explored in this thesis, including how literacy coordinators manage literacy practice in their schools; how theory impacts upon literacy practices in secondary schools and also the effect of PLCs on teachers’ professional behaviour. As such, a non-participant member of university staff attended each meeting and made notes recording markers of participation and cohesion by the PLC group. Tally charts and participation charts were used, along with meeting notes, to record participation patterns in these meetings. In the main, the tally charts noted duration of time for each pattern type. The meeting notes, with full knowledge and consent of the group, recorded what was discussed and by whom. These included how often the discussion was initiated by PLC members other than me; how often PLC members presented and shared ideas or approaches to the group and to who questions and discussion were addressed. Each meeting typically

lasted for three hours, although many went beyond the official time slot by way of continued discussion, questions and so on. The tally readings were contained to the three hours that made up the main part of the PLC meetings to allow for comparison between members across the meetings.

The PLC met approximately once every six weeks during the research period. The data that was constructed during these meeting was invaluable, both in terms of exploring teacher change and also in looking at connections between what was discussed during these meetings and what was observed in classrooms. As this thesis is concerned with teachers' own professional development, the role that I took during these meetings was important. As a key part of this research was to explore teacher efficacy, an important aspect had to be engagement with my group of teacher colleagues so as to provide opportunity for them to lead literacy within their own schools. I felt it important to situate myself as part of the group, rather than as external 'expert'. The research was, after all, focused in on how these teachers manage and inform the literacy practices in their schools.

During the initial meeting with the PLC group, various ways of organising the group and the relationships that the group had to knowledge were explored. The group felt that that an inquiry group gave them control over their own professional development by involving them in decisions about what they needed or wanted to learn, in this case about how to best develop reading literacy in their schools. Part of this structure meant that, within the group, my initial role was to suggest, research, and model the strategies that they wanted to learn more about, rather than offer literacy training or to arrange for the group to implement a reading strategy programme of my own choosing. The way in which the group developed their group and individual understanding of literacy, how that changed and how it was made real in the literacy practices in their schools will be discussed in the next chapter. For this discussion, the inquiring nature of the PLC was a key element in how this research was organised.

### **3.6 Lesson Observations**

The lesson observation can afford the researcher some distance in that they are not actively participating in the event they observe (Cohen et al, 2007). In the PLC meeting and in the interviews, I was directly participating in the construction of the knowledge, whereas in the

lesson observations, my role was much less direct. This not, however, to suggest that lesson observation is wholly neutral. The fact that the lesson is being observed needs to be taken into account. It has been noted (Blease, 1983; Bailey, 2001; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) that some aspects of teacher behaviour are altered when teachers are observed, and that the lesson can have an adjusted audience in the form of the observer. The research focus of the observation may also lead to teachers emphasising those parts of their teaching most connected to the research focus.

Different degrees of participation are available when using observation as a research tool (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Whilst my role in the PLC was as a group member, for the lesson observations, it became the 'observer as participant' (Kaluwich, 2005). This stance situates the researcher as part of the group activities, but not an active participant in the activity of the lesson. In this position, the research is a known activity, the participants are informed and aware of the observation activity, and the main role of the researcher within this stance is to collect data, rather than participating in the lesson. This allows for the researcher to have an authentic position and to take contemporary observation notes (Merriam, 1998). This position falls within the participant observation approach, within which the researcher is the primary instrument for observing and collecting data (Creswell, 2013).

During the observations, and in keeping with this theoretical position of this thesis, I aimed to note what was observed rather than apply preconceptions to what was being observed. There was space on the observation proforma to note where certain key literacy approaches were used in lessons. These categories had been pre-agreed with the literacy coordinators in the PLC, in line with the research aims of this thesis. This was not, though, to suggest any notion of correctness or judgement, but rather to look for links between different elements of this study. The remaining parts of the observation notes were unstructured, in keeping with Merriam's (1998, p.97) observation that 'where to begin looking depends on the research question, but where to focus...cannot be determined ahead of time'.

The data collection processes for the lesson observations were open. Teachers were informed in advance about what data would be recorded and were given the opportunity to examine the observation notes after the lesson had taken place. The observation notes informed parts of

each interview, too, during which each teacher was asked questions regarding the lesson that had been observed.

Literacy reading research that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s moved into the classroom and placed more focus on the practices of teachers. While these studies are, in the main, based in the USA, and often in elementary education, they provide helpful foundations for the recording, interpreting and analysis of classroom practice (Moje, 1997). There have been several studies that aim to analyse and note instructional practice by way of observational instruments (Taylor et al 2000). These have, in the main been situated within US elementary schools. There are relatively few studies that observe literacy practices for secondary school aged pupils, particularly outside the U.S.A. For the purposes of this thesis, much of the existing research was not directly relevant to the particular context of whole-school literacy practices in subjects in secondary schools in the U.K, as they were predominantly focused on language arts classes and/or elementary school-aged pupils.

Contemporary notes were taken using the observation capture proforma sheet that had been co-constructed with the PLC. It was decided to include a section of tick boxes to note instances of key literacy approaches that the group agreed might be seen in lessons, along with space for free notes. With the observation sheet, my main goal was to capture the sorts of literacy practices, particularly those relating to reading, which took place in the observed lessons. I tried to avoid theoretical bias (Norris, 1997) by using the observation sheet to simply note instances of particular literacy reading practices, to note who was initiating them (teacher or pupil) and to record the position of literacy in the lesson (as a part of subject teaching or as a generic, separate set of skills, for example). My focus was on what the teacher was doing, rather than on the work of the pupils. This is due to the research questions being focused on the practice of teachers (and literacy coordinators) rather than the performance of pupils. These were then followed up and discussed in the interviews and also compared to the data gathered from the PLC meetings regarding the view of literacy each school's literacy coordinator had.

As noted, the key purpose of the observations was to examine how reading was approached in the lessons so as to provide information about how whole-school literacy is made manifest in the classroom. During the group meetings, I asked the coordinators to organise a schedule of lesson observations for me in a variety of subjects for each term of the study. The group

agreed that lesson observation raw data was to be shared with the class teacher and that only general observations were to be shared with the group. As an observer (Johnson & Turner, 2003), I had a developed knowledge of reading instruction and reading strategy use in each lesson, which helped enhance my semi-structured interviews with the classroom teachers. As Johnson and Turner (2003) claim, observation can provide insight that may not come from other means as ‘people do not always do what they say they do’ (p. 312). Nevertheless, I was aware that the teachers might plan their teaching differently than they would otherwise have done, since they knew I would observe their lessons, an aspect of reactivity which I reflect on later in this thesis.

### **3.7 PISA reading tests**

The reading tests introduced a shift from the qualitative measures found in the rest of this research. Their inclusion was, in the main, to see if the literacy practices adopted by schools would impact upon pupil performance in the sorts of reading tested by PISA. The test scores were collected from a paper-based test conducted in September and in June of the research year. The test papers were constructed using existing PISA reading literacy test questions (OECD, 2009b). As such, the reading tests used in this research are standardised, with closed items only, in terms of all questions having no more than one fixed answer to choose between and no open-ended rubrics. PISA reading test questions are separated into three reading skills: interpret, retrieve information, and reflect and evaluate, and use continuous or no-continuous texts. The OECD (2009a) provides a reading literacy scale for the reading questions, which is constructed using a mean of 500 as the average of correct responses. A question with a scale number of 356, for example, is seen as a question that would provide a high number of correct responses and one of 637, fewer correct responses. These scales are used to generate a range of difficulty of tasks, which in PISA 2009 (2009a) ranged from 1-6. The questions in the tests are of different level of difficulty based upon the numbers of pupils from participating OECD countries who would be expected to answer each question correctly. The questions used in this paper were drawn from levels 1-5. The papers were devised so as to ensure the same types of reading were tested to the same level of difficulty in each test. In the tests pupils retrieve, interpret, and reflect on information in various text types and formats (OECD, 2010), including tables and charts as well as prose. Each test in this research included a set of items that together measure the range of reading and text types as outlined by the OECD (2009a; 2010). The test items were matched across the tests by text

type, reading skill and level of difficulty to allow for comparison. In the table below, the tests' question categories and levels are described:

| Question no | PISA scale | Level | Skill              | Text type for the section |
|-------------|------------|-------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 1a          | 356-360    | 1     | interpret          | continuous                |
| 1b          | 480-487    | 2     | retrieve info      |                           |
| 1c          | 402-410    | 1     | reflect & evaluate |                           |
| 2a          | 478-484    | 2     | retrieve info      | Non continuous            |
| 2b          | 540-542    | 3     | retrieve info      |                           |
| 2c          | 600-598    | 4     | reflect & evaluate |                           |
| 2d          | 397-395    | 1     | interpret          |                           |
| 3a          | 521-525    | 3     | interpret          | continuous                |
| 3b          | 562-559    | 4     | interpret          |                           |
| 3c          | 637-640    | 5     | reflect & evaluate |                           |

Table 2 Test question types

As can be seen, question 1, for example, in each test focused on the skill of interpretation and was of a level that would be expected to be answered correctly by 85% of respondents.

The test data was initially also to be gathered by a school that was acting as a control. Unfortunately, some unavoidable circumstances in the school meant that they had to withdraw from this role. This meant that the tests were not easily comparable with those of a school that had not participated in the research. The results are used to explore the ipsative improvement of each school in each question type and also to look for any patterns or corroboration. Maturation, though, needs to be taken into account when examining the data.

### 3.8 Analysis of qualitative data

The analysis of qualitative data is situated contextually. The data that is presented in this thesis is analysed within the sociocultural framework that underpins the research. To that

end, the findings are constructed from the data rather than discovered within it. As noted by Cohen et al (2007), there are a number of possible purposes of qualitative data, including to generate themes, explore commonalities and interpret information that is constructed. This research explores the beliefs and practices that are generated by the data. As can be seen in fig. 1, the data that is generated by the research tools is used in a collaborative dialogue to answer research questions 1 and 2.

### **3.9 Interview analysis**

The interviews were undertaken at different stages of the research process. This resulted in a considerable amount of data that needed to be ordered and evaluated (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). The data needed to be explored in different stages to see what would be constructed from the teachers' views. This involved reading each interview transcript for a general overview before conducting initial coding processes to describe any key features on a line by line basis. This line by line coding helps to transform the raw information and begin to identify and construct an understanding of any common concepts, understanding or repeated themes (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The same analysis method is used for each of the interviews. Responses from different teachers to interview questions are grouped for evaluation, analysis and comparison (Cohen et al, 2007) under initial codes relating to comments regarding areas such as school policy, training, use of approach and so on (see Appendix F). The main coding methods I use in this research are *in vivo* coding initially, (See Appendix F for an example of the initial coding of an interview transcript) followed by thematic codes. *In vivo* codes take individual words or phrases from the interview transcript data itself and allow for the participants' voices to be presented in the coding of the interviews (Charmaz, 2006). This is relevant to this research as it enables key terms and phrases particular to the class teachers' experiences to be discussed and allows for any differences in individual teacher's reported views to be noted. Thematic codes were used to identify any common themes that were generated in the interviews.

In the initial stage, the interview transcripts were annotated and coloured for phrases or responses around loose categories. Whilst the research questions were not used in this initial phase so as to allow for a more free engagement with the actual words of the teachers, the interview questions themselves acted as a part structure (Creswell, 2007). Some elements, such as teacher confidence, did not form an explicit part of the interview schedule, but were

generated directly through the teachers' responses. Themes were compared across the interviews for not only commonalities but also any differences in response.

During the interviews, questions were supplemented with probes and prompts to allow for further development of interview responses. This provides the opportunity for additional factors, such as the views of the teachers regarding training and expectations, to be discussed. This meant that each interview presented some different elements as participants offered their own experiences and views in response. These, too, are coded, but where commonality or thematic links are not found, these views are used to form a richer picture of a particular teacher's understanding. This is important as the knowledge that is produced through the interviews is not valuable only where it voices sameness of experience; the identification of a single new truth is not the aim of this thesis.

As outlined earlier, each of the teachers was interviewed twice, once early in the research cycle and once later on; each time the interviews took place after a lesson was observed and focused to a great extent on the lesson itself. Interview data for each round of interviews is presented in Chapter 4. The interview schedule, as noted, earlier, allowed for some key questions to be asked of all observed teachers. As the quantitative results were not yet collected, the main focus of these interviews was to explore the key aspects of how reading as co-constructed with the PLC group manifested in the classroom and to explore further any approaches or strategies observed during the lesson. Another aim was to examine the ways in which key messages came from a literacy coordinator about what literacy is and how it should be approached across subjects in a secondary school.

### **3.10 Analysis of PLC meetings**

The interaction between participants in groups working together in this way is a valuable source of data (Kitzinger, 1994). Each of the meetings took place at the same allotted time, which allowed for the tally chart to measure participation at each meeting. Unstructured notes were also taken during each meeting by the non-participant university staff member. These were checked by the group members for accuracy. Once general business had been dealt with, the initial part of each meeting between the PLC was organised so as to provide opportunity for key ideas or questions to be explored at the start of each meeting. This was used, for example, to generate ideas about beliefs and viewpoints about reading literacy; to

explore any approaches the group or members of the group had tried and to evaluate results. In the main, however, the group worked collectively to generate knowledge(s), through inquiry, rather than dissemination.

The initial meetings early on in the research with the literacy coordinators have a dual unit of analysis, both the individual coordinators and the group. The group's discussions developed in detail, depth and involvement during the research process, as measured by the tally chart. The instances of PLC members' participation, recorded in the tally charts, are summarised in charts (see chapter 4), which allow for an overview of participation patterns over the course of the year. The details of the PLC discussions are recorded in unstructured, contemporary meeting notes and are analysed using the same processes as the interview data. The meeting notes do not benefit from the structure of the interview schedule, as the meetings differed in structure, purpose and membership. They were necessarily unpredictable. The coding for the meeting notes does though find some common threads that are generated in the meetings, along with some individual views. The meeting notes for each meeting also act as sources of data that serve as prompts for successive meetings, allowing for common threads to be picked up and explored for clarity and more details (Johnson & Turner, 2003).

### **3.11 Analysis of lesson observations**

It had been agreed with the PLC that the observed lessons would not be filmed. This suited my stance as a researcher as I hoped to capture the lessons in as unobtrusive a way as possible. The lesson observations were analysed using the lesson capture proforma that had been constructed with the PLC group (Appendix C). This consisted of a tick chart section and a free space for writing observation notes. Instances of particular approaches that had been identified by the literacy coordinators as ones they had either focused on in their schools noted in a tick chart and then analysed on a school by school basis, as well as across the cohort. This part of the analysis explored what was happening in the lessons in a simple way, allowing for comparison to be made between teachers' lessons. This was supplemented by the contemporary notes that were taken (see Appendix D for a sample of a completed lesson observation proforma). Importantly, the notes regarding what was observed by way of the tick boxes, only noted what approaches were observed, rather than provide any value judgement about the approach itself nor whether these approaches were used appropriately or with understanding. The capture proforma was just that; it captured what was observed

without judgement. This was, in part, to try to mitigate against the subjectivity of notes as a research tool (Denscombe, 2010).

The lesson observation notes are analysed according to the descriptive data which allows for any observations regarding common observations regarding, say, the timing of episodes of reading instruction, the explanation of strategy, or links to subject content, for example, to be analysed. The data from the lessons is concerned with what went on and how it happened, rather than why it happened (Goldbart & Hustler, 2005); as such the notes are descriptive in nature and coding is relatively limited in its usefulness, as the teaching episodes are not semi-structured events in the same way the interviews are. The coding does, however, provide a means of exploring any commonalities. The coherence between the literacy coordinators' stated views of the literacy and reading approaches used and the ethos in their schools could be compared using simple coding with the observed practices. Of key importance to me was that I was constructing as complete a record as I could, including, for example, notes on the resources used, the language used in explanation and instruction, the subject focus of the lesson, how talk was organised and so on. The method has some links to field note in the sense of recording descriptive detail in situ, This approach enabled me to gather what Johnson and Turner (2003, p. 314) labelled relatively 'objective firsthand' information that was supplemented with self-reports from the coordinators, regarding the literacy and reading practices and approaches they prioritised in their schools, and the teachers, who were interviewed immediately after the observed lesson.

### **3.12 Analysis of quantitative test data**

Although no data is fully objective, the test scores are less open to interpretation than the qualitative data examined in this thesis. Questions had one permitted correct answer which was recorded as a 1 in the collection of data, with no ambiguity in the scoring. The scoring is based on right/wrong answers, with no ambiguity in the scoring (Brantmeier, 2004). Intra-rater reliability was mitigated by the use of a single marker for the test papers. This marker used the mark scheme provided – which was itself taken from the OECD official marking guidelines for the particular question used in the test (OECD, 2009b). As noted above, I conducted the analysis in the statistical programme SPSS. To ensure consistency, all analyses were conducted several times. The pre and post reading tests were merged, to be able to identify the pupils' reading proficiency across the period of the research, using frequency,

reliability, and regression analyses. I analysed the reading test scores using the quantitative software SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

In line with Brantmeier (2004), the aim is to select appropriate statistical procedures driven by the research questions. The data from each of the tests was analysed for improvements within and between schools using SPSS. T-tests and ANOVA analyses were used to compare the mean test data results and to look for any patterns or differences. The data for each question type was also analysed using t-testing to see if there were any impacts on specific types of reading as tested by the PISA literacy tests.

### **3.13 Pilot**

The relationship of pilots to qualitative research, as noted by Samson (2004), is not straightforward. Pilots are more commonly associated with quantitative research and tools, as the qualitative research itself is iterative and context informed. This research is mixed methods, with clear qualitative and quantitative elements. In this research, the study as a whole was not piloted, but rather, and in line with Baker (1994) and others (Cohen et al, 2007; Denscombe, 2010) it was agreed amongst the PLC group that key research tools would benefit from piloting prior to use. Whilst the PLC group constructed much of the lesson observation proforma and semi-structured interview questions, these were piloted in schools of similar background to those involved in the research. This allowed for similarities between the pilot and target group. Also, using similar, but different schools for the piloting of research tools and processes meant that contamination was less likely.

As noted above, the instrument or tools were piloted in this research, as the nature of the study – collaborative and socio cultural -would have made replicating the study impossible. Similar work had also been undertaken with another group of schools which allowed for processes to be refined as part of my own developing professional understanding. Lesson observations were conducted in the pilot schools and the lesson observation form was refined by way of the addition of the tick boxes in response to the pilot, to allow for a more specific and efficient way of noting methods used in class in addition to a free space for observation notes. The key interview questions that made up the interview schedule for the interviews remained the same following the pilot, although the number of questions was reduced as there was some overlap. Following the pilot, and similar work with a number of different

schools, it was also decided that observed lessons should be of subjects other than English, as this was obscuring the focus on whole-school literacy. The test papers were, as noted, comprised of questions taken from existing PISA sample papers. These, too, were also piloted, which allowed for some testing of the timing, range of question types and skill levels used in each of the papers. Pilots were, then, aimed at testing the research tools (Cohen et al, 2007)) prior to use in the research itself.

### **3.14 Positionality**

Positionality and reflexivity are important considerations for this research. They are closely connected: reflexivity is manifested in the ways in which the researcher engages in critical self-reflection throughout the research process regarding their positionality and how this affects the research and its outcomes (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). Here, I consider my positionality and in the next section my reflexivity is discussed. In a pragmatic sense, mechanisms such as member checking of research tools like the interview schedule and observation capture proforma are used in this research, but this approach is not wholly suited to much of this research, as the data is constructed within the specific context and circumstances of the research. In this thesis, my shifting position in relation to that which is being researched is a key consideration. Merriam et al (2001) explore the notion of the positionality of the researcher, claiming that the qualitative researcher should openly negotiate and acknowledge their position within the research in terms of factors such as knowledge and status.

My role as researcher and my relationship to the research is important to my understanding of the knowledge that is generated by it; I am, after all, part of the research process in multiple ways. My understanding of my own experiences and positionality as part of the research is crucial to my understanding of the effect I have on the research process (Foote and Bartell , 2011) at all points including the research questions, the tools selected, the analysis of data and conclusions generated. As well as tensions that might arise from roles within the research, Bourke (2014) identifies the importance of recognising the multiple identities we bring to research and how these in turn might include biases or standpoints that could influence how we relate to or interact with participants. Whilst I separated out elements of the research from others, the data I chose to collect, the way in which it was collected and the ways in which I interpreted that data required vigilance. To this end, the lesson observations

data was descriptive in nature. It served to record what was observed, rather than judge or scale. Similarly, within the interviews, I was focused on gathering the views and experiences of the respondents and to allow the themes to emerge from these.

A key element of this research centres on the PLC as a mechanism for effecting school change. My multiple roles within this research - particularly those of PLC member, and researcher exploring the work of the PLC – are complex and central. My position in this research is, at least partially, that of PLC group member. Some of the qualitative data that makes up a considerable proportion of this thesis is co-constructed with my fellow PLC group members. It remains the case, however, that I am also positioned as the researcher conducting this research and, as such, observing lessons in their schools and exploring the practices linked to their work as literacy coordinators. The delineation of my positions in relation to different elements of this research necessitated a marking out of those parts which fell under my role as a PLC member, and those elements which were the research into the ways in which the work of the PLC were realised in schools. There are elements of the research (the lesson observation and interview data) that are separated out from the work of the PLC and to which the members of the PLC are not privy. Not only is this element of the research separated out, my role itself and my position within the research is altered. I am at once inside and outside the PLC group and this is something that is taken into consideration throughout this research.

Others factors also inform my positionality within the PLC itself. I am, for instance, a person known within the school communities within which the research is conducted as someone who has written and delivered courses on literacy. My context is different to theirs in that, whilst I had been in their role, I am not currently a school literacy coordinator looking to develop whole-school literacy in a secondary school. My work does involve a responsibility for literacy, but in a quite different context, with different needs, demands and structures. Whilst the PLC group is the site of a constructed understanding of literacy, it is undeniable that my position within the group vis-a-vis literacy theory and research is different to that of my PLC colleagues. My role in this research is, perhaps, most complex in the dual roles I hold within the PLC, but my role as researcher and as an observer of lessons also impacts upon the lessons themselves. They are different because I was there. As such, lesson observation must be understood with this in mind. It is important, therefore, that positionality is given careful consideration. This includes a consideration of the role of insider and outsider

in research of this kind and the separation of elements of the research, including how these boundaries were drawn up, shared and established. This can be seen, for example, in the explicit separation of research elements such as a lesson observation and interview data from my work with the PLC.

The roles I had within this research saw me negotiate the boundary between insider and outsider positions. My role as a PLC member, albeit one from a different context, was predicated on my being a group member, part of the PLCs investigation and development of literacy practices in schools. The benefits of insider status in research environments are multiple, including factors such as relationship, access and shared focus (Hayfield & Huxley, 2014). The cohesive group membership of PLCs develops relationships and collaborative habits that are conducive to the social constructivist model within which this research is situated. My membership of the group afforded me closeness and developed trust between the PLC members (Drake, 2010). As noted by Greene (2014), situating oneself as a co-member also serves to address perceived power dynamics that might inhibit the ways of working that inform PLCs as a mechanism for developing and informing school practices. The tally charts that noted interaction within the PLC meetings, served to highlight in a simple way to what extent I was positioned within the group as insider and outsider. This position, as can be seen in Chapter 4, shifted during the research.

Whilst one of my roles was a member of the PLC group, this role itself was a negotiated one. My role within the PLC was as an HEI tutor, not a school literacy coordinator. As my role was not only that of PLC member, however, I had also to navigate between my positions as group member, and the outsider position of researcher who was observing lessons and interviewing class teachers in schools. This necessitated my researching a process (PLC working) of which I was a part. If criticality is to be maintained, it is necessary to position oneself outside of the context of the researched and occupy the position of researcher (Hirschmann, 1998). This movement was marked in this research by the separation of key elements of the research from my membership of the PLC. It was during the lesson observations and interviews with the class teachers that the research into the work of the PLC was explored. To this end, the data from the interviews and observations were not shared with the PLC members. This separation was explained explicitly to the literacy coordinators and the class teachers. The purpose of the observations and interviews was to gain as authentic as possible insight into the experience of the teachers as they sought to develop

literacy practices in their lessons. This purpose and the processes involved the gathering and use of data during the lessons and interviews was established prior to interviews and observations taking place. This allowed for some separation between the research and the researched, as well as my own roles as PLC member and the researcher (Merriam et al, 2001). Berger (2015) claims that a researcher's positionality impacts upon a number of factors including the information they are able to access. The movement between my roles as PLC member to one of researcher for the observations and interviews perhaps provided the requisite space for class teachers to provide responses that they might otherwise not.

This separation of research elements from the activity of the PLC in this thesis belies the fact that the various roles within this research were not necessarily discrete. The separation could be seen in the isolating of the data from interviews and observations, but in terms of role, the boundaries were less easily compartmentalised and there is a need to recognise the blurred boundaries between my roles (Drake, 2010). It is, therefore, important to recognise the places in which my roles were situated, as well as the impacts these might have on the research process (Berger, 2015). Within the PLC, my group membership and my experiences as a school literacy coordinator might have given me access to a shared area of experience, even as my current role as an HEI tutor marked out my experience as different. My role as group member as well as researcher, who would be exploring the literacy practices put into place by the literacy coordinators within the PLC, situates my membership in a complex area of blurred boundaries (Drake, 2010).

The notion of insider-outsider roles is, perhaps, too dichotomised to fully articulate the sorts of research that are surfacing out of school and HEI collaboration, and might be too blunt a tool to inform the sorts of positionality that are part of this kind of work. Even as, for example, I was participating in lesson observations and interviews, I was not simply 'outside' that being researched; the lesson was not a discrete researchable unit in and of itself. Rather, I was also examining the ways in which a PLC, of which I was part, might be seen to influence teacher practice. The positionality of the researcher in this kind of research might best be articulated as part of a more fluid continuum (Mercer, 2007). This continuum might itself be best seen as describing the positions the researcher takes with regards to the research and the researched, with a clear recognition that these might require some difference in the ways in which data is gathered and interpreted.

Jaworski's (2003) examination of researcher/practitioner research as one of co-learning, with recognition of different positions as inherent within this kind of research is one that aligns with this thesis. In co-learning research, all parties are involved in exploring and reflecting upon practice. In this research, this would include literacy coordinators, teachers, as well as my own, learning about and from the experiences, knowledge and contexts of others involved, as well as deepening understanding of their own contexts. From this view of positionality, the difference in role and context is part of the research itself.

Jaworski describes co-learning research as shared and conducted by partners, with each having 'different although mutually sustaining roles and goals' (Jaworski, 2003, p.250). In this model, the interaction between roles and 'microworlds of research and practice' (ibid., p 251) are themselves sites of knowledge and a unit of analysis. Importantly, in this model, the practices themselves become part of the research. In this research, the borders between roles and microworlds are an area of knowledge gathering. The ways in which I, as a HEI tutor working with schools to research practice, negotiated my insider and outsider roles and separated the research is *part* of the knowledge that surfaced in this thesis. The research explores not only practice but the ways in which practice is explored within practitioner-researcher co-learning through a PLC. To this end, even whilst I was in the role of 'outsider' researcher conducting lesson observations and interviews, I was also an 'insider' exploring my own role as a HEI tutor working with schools to explore school practice. In a co-learning model, as noted by Huberman (1999), whilst the learning is a collaborative enterprise, *what* is learned is likely to differ.

### **3.15 Reflexivity**

Negotiating my positionality requires reflexivity. Finlay (2002) acknowledges that negotiating reflexivity and positionality is complicated and warns against regressive and excessive self analysis and disclosure. Instead, she suggests, the awareness of subjectivity can be seen as an opportunity rather than a problem to be solved. Acknowledging the researcher and the role played within the research allows for the ways in which meaning is constructed to be examined openly; knowledge production is exposed as is my role in that process. This necessitates 'self-scrutiny' of the process itself as well as the outcomes (Bourke, 2014, p.1) on the part of the researcher at all stages of the research.

Berger (2015) states that reflexivity requires the researcher to engage in internal dialogue throughout the research and consider the ways in which the positions they occupy influence the research process. This is not so as to remove any trace of researcher influence or positionality (even if this were possible), but to recognise them and situate this recognition as part of the process. Part of the reflexivity in this research is seen in the transparency of the research process, and the open and shared positioning of my roles as both member - researcher within the PLC and within the observation and interview contexts. To this end, my own professional interests and experiences were shared openly with all participants, as was my position within the research process. I demonstrate my awareness of the different roles I occupy within the research and actively participate in negotiating its construction in a deliberate and explicit manner. This does not erase my own biases or positions, but serves to recognise them at each stage of the research. It acknowledges knowledge as both situated and constructed, and my place in the construction of this knowledge during this research (Hamdan, 2009). The moments of role change allowed me to ‘consciously step back’ from the research and to ‘step up to be an active part of the contextualised action’ (Attia & Edge, 2016, p.33)

Reflexivity allows a researcher to critically examine the research in relation to their own position(s). To this end, first person pronouns are used in this thesis to indicate my presence in the research; I am actively part of its construction. As Berger (2015, p.221) notes, reflexivity allows researchers ‘to ponder the ways in which who they are may both assist and hinder the process of co-constructing meanings’. In this research, I am part of the research in multiple ways and this is part of the meaning-making process that I acknowledge during the thesis. It is also necessary to identify not only my positionality within the research but also the changes that I, too, experienced as part of the process. Edge (2011) identifies two elements to reflexive practices, namely prospective and retrospective reflexivity. Prospective reflexivity describes the possible impacts or effects of the researcher on the research/ed, whilst retrospective reflexivity describes the impact of the research on the researcher. In line with the co-learning model discussed above, the dialogue between how I shaped and was shaped by the research is also part of this thesis. The decisions I made regarding how and why to identify and negotiate boundaries between my roles, and the activities in which I participated in each of these roles, was a part of my own learning in this research.

In line with BERA (2010) guidelines, the schools, literacy coordinators and class teachers are anonymised in this thesis. As part of the trust that was a necessary part of the research (Cresswell & Miller, 2010), coupled with my status as PLC member, my own sense of prospective reflexivity meant being mindful of the possible impacts of the research on those who participated and I made the decision to use anonymity as a measure to provide this partially protected space for the research to take place. This was also behind the decision to separate out elements of the research and invite the class teachers to engage in dialogue with me as a researcher, rather than as a PLC member. Here, I actively step outside the action and make conscious decisions about how to gather data (Attia & Edge, 2016). This decision in itself - which was shared explicitly with all involved - helped protect the integrity of the research, but also raised other questions that centred on the withholding of information from the literacy coordinators about the literacy practices within their schools. As such, this prospective reflexivity introduced a dilemma that was situated within the dual roles I held even within the PLC. The data gathered during the lesson observations and interviews had the potential to be important as a way of developing practice within the PLC and, hence, the participating schools, even though the decision I made as a researcher was based on my view that a simple sharing of this information with the literacy coordinators could have compromised the willingness of the class teachers to share their thoughts and, hence, the data itself. These blurred zones of potential epistemological conflict are not easily resolved, but they can be recognised and acknowledged as part of the research. They were also sites of my own learning as a HEI professional engaged in research with schools, as will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

### **3.16 Reliability, validity, generalisability**

In the following section, I discuss the reliability, validity, and generalisability of my research, before addressing what I consider to be the most important ethical concerns. Reliability, which is concerned with the degree to which a piece of research could be replicated and is consistent over time, and validity, the success of the research in measuring what it intended, are associated more commonly with quantitative research within a positivist paradigm. In this research, the knowledge was, in the main, constructed in the research rather than tested by it and so these terms might not apply in the commonly accepted sense. Nonetheless, a brief discussion of how this research fits within such constructs is worthwhile.

## **Reliability**

Reliability is concerned with consistency, the extent to which a measure could be replicated or repeated regardless of context or timing. Research such as this, where context and specificity is a key element is not reliable in this way. Nevertheless, the main measure of reliability employed in this thesis is intra-rater reliability, in that coding throughout the research was conducted by one person, in consistent coding over time by one person. This in itself is in need of consideration in research of this kind as the positionality of the coder should be taken into account reflexively. The PISA tests and data are reliable in that they are replicable.

## **Validity**

Creswell and Miller (2000) claim that validity is concerned with the trustworthiness of the inferences drawn from data. Mixed methods approaches can support research validity as phases of the research are used to examine one another. As noted above, validity approaches, such as member checking, are used in elements of this research (Creswell, 2013; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). I use it to assess notes taken after each group meeting, to agree categories to part-frame the lesson observations and also to agree shared categories for the lesson observations and semi-structured interviews. Also, teachers who were observed teaching were given observation notes of their observed lesson, which were then discussed post-observation. By doing so, they had the opportunity to add detail to my interpretations. The observed teachers agreed that the lesson observation and interview notes were an accurate reflection of their thoughts and practices.

Reactivity is taken into account in this research in the lesson observations and the subsequent interviews, along with my own position as researcher. I also considered that teachers are likely to plan and focus lessons differently when they know that they being observed. The teachers agreed to participate in observation sometime before I came and were aware that their school was involved in this research and also that its focus was on literacy with a narrower focus on developing reading. One of the teachers confirmed during the post-observation interview that her focus on reading comprehension and reading strategy use had increased during the entire term because she knew I would be observing. She said this anticipation had motivated her in her planning and design of lessons not only in her observed class but also in her other classes. This increased focus might resemble the observer or Hawthorn effect where participants modify an aspect of their behaviour in response to the

attention of an observer (Oswald et al., 2014). This is, to a degree, unavoidable, in research that includes elements of direct observation.

Construct validity (Johnson & Christensen, 2013) indicates the extent to which a higher-order construct, such as reading comprehension, is accurately represented in a particular study; in other words, it considers whether my research tests what it is intended to measure. I address construct validity in relation to the reading tests conducted during this research. As noted in Chapter 2, reading comprehension is difficult to define precisely, especially within the secondary school context across multiple subject areas. Measuring reading comprehension is an ambitious task in any standardised reading test, and there is little doubt that only a small fraction of what can be considered reading can be measured. The construct of reading comprehension is, in large part, taken up by the literacy coordinators through our discussions, reading and their own subsequent personal study. To this degree, their constructs are informed by shared information and inquiry. These constructs are explored in the next chapter. The construct of reading comprehension that was stable and, hence, measurable is that used in the tests. The construct validity for the tests is drawn from PISA's (OECD, 2009a) own definition of reading literacy. The constructs in the reading tests are well-defined and complied with theories of reading comprehension (RAND, 2002), as well as aligning with views expressed by the PLC.

The schools were selected as being similar in nature in terms of socio-economic background of pupils, school results at KS3 and 4, number of pupils eligible for free school meals and so on. However, despite the relative similarity of the school cohorts on some broad measures, this does not mean that the pupils were a homogenous whole and not all variables are captured. My work with my co-researching group of literacy coordinators, combined with my observation of lessons by a variety of teachers across subjects in their schools, offered breadth and depth. This depth was reinforced by the quantitative data that was gathered during this research, which enabled, amongst other things, school by school comparison, categorisation of approaches and an exploration of any corroboration between test scores and literacy approaches, as well as any patterns that may be seen by way of responses to specific question types.

In this research, I draw upon a number of different data to construct knowledge regarding literacy practices within the schools (Johnson & Christensen, 2013). These are explored

together so as to better understand what the data generates. For example, the lesson observation data and the teacher interviews are explored together so as to look for any patterns or divergence. The PLC meeting notes were also used examined along with the lesson observation and interview data throughout the period of the research.

### **Generalisability**

Generalisability, whilst commonly associated with quantitative research, can be both qualitative and quantitative (Silverman, 2013). It is true that qualitative data of the kind found in this thesis is not directly generalisable. Although it was not the aim of this thesis to identify a ‘magic bullet’ (Shanahan, 2003, p.653) for reading comprehension in secondary schools, or a defined set of principles for being an effective literacy coordinator that could be generalised to a broad population of teachers and pupils, I wanted to make sure that the data painted a reasonable and relevant picture of what literacy coordination, teaching and using reading comprehension strategies in secondary school in Wales is like. This research explores some of the ways some secondary school teachers teach reading comprehension strategies within their subject lessons, and how some literacy coordinators approach managing whole-school, cross-subject literacy. The findings presented in the next chapters can therefore not be generalised to all Welsh secondary teachers, literacy coordinators or schools as populations, but they might be transferable to these populations.

It also follows that, when studying pupils and teachers across subjects in secondary school, reading comprehension is itself elusive. Several perspectives are available in this research - those of the literature, those discussed in the PLC, those subsequently taken up by literacy coordinators, those observed in lesson observations and discussed at interview, and those found in the formation of the tests. The test data sample of 500 secondary pupils, completing two tests each of ten test items provides a reasonably representative sample of year 9 pupils in schools in Wales. In addition, there was a consistency in schools represented in the sample that were selected on their commonality as fairly typical of Welsh secondary schools in terms of intake and attainment. I cannot, though, simply assume that the test results are generalisable to the entire population in secondary schools in Wales.

### **3.17 Trustworthiness**

As the research paradigms of reliability and validity are not easily applied to research of this type, trustworthiness serves as a way of more closely exploring validity and reliability in qualitative research. In addition to reflexivity, which requires the researcher to examine their own impact or influence on the findings and process of research (Morrow, 2005), other factors are built in to the research so as to enhance its trustworthiness. The trustworthiness of qualitative data is framed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) using the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. By addressing each of these concepts in the gathering and analysis of qualitative data, the question of the trustworthiness of the data can be established.

Credibility is concerned with whether the research findings can be seen as being reasonably drawn from the research data. Credibility is seen as being ensured by factors including prolonged engagement, triangulation and member checking. Each of these elements is used in this thesis so as to extend the credibility of the findings. My engagement with the literacy coordinators is prolonged, frequent and conducted openly. This allowed for a relationship of trust to be developed between the participants and with me as group member and as researcher (Merriam, 1995). The investigative nature of the PLC work is also a key element in this, helping to establish a notion of construction rather than judgement as central to the research. Triangulation is also used as multiple sources are drawn upon to inform my findings. The lesson observation data and interviews are used in dialogue with one another, and with the data gathered regarding the literacy practices put in place by the literacy coordinators. Member checking is used with the PLC group and with the class teachers. Meeting notes, lesson observation notes and interview responses are shared with a view to checking information and refining the data (Nowell et al, 2017).

The research conducted for this thesis was situated in a group of schools within a national context at a particular time of change. As such, generalisability in its accepted sense might be difficult as the context and participants are part of the research (Shenton, 2004). Nonetheless, the notion of transferability allows the reader to make decisions regarding how this research could apply to different contexts. This is taken into account by way of detailed description of the national context, along with the contexts of the schools and teachers within them. The context and boundaries of the research are explained, including the roles and experience of

the participants, allowing the reader the opportunity to make inferences in to their own contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The ‘repeatability’ of research of this kind, given its particular situatedness, is complex; however, dependability (the worth of the findings over time) and confirmability (the possibility of another research coming to similar conclusions from the data) are taken into account in this research. Again, triangulation is used to provide for more detailed data (Merriam, 1995). Details are also provided regarding the timeline and processes involved in the research. The roles of the participants in the research are also shared, including my own multiple roles and the places in the research where my roles shifted. The experiences and stances of the participants are shared, as are my own.

### **3.18 Research ethics**

This research is conducted in line with the contemporary guidance from the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). It also followed the university ethics and research procedures of the time.

Permission for conducting the research was initially sought from head teachers (Appendix A). Whilst initial approaches were made to head teachers, during initial contact with the literacy coordinators who were to form the PLC, the research, including data collection and dissemination, was explained to them and their direct, voluntary consent sought (Ryen, 2004). This was important – if the members of the group were to be full participants in an open and transparent research, they should decide freely whether or not to participate (Busher & James, 2012; BERA, 2011). The class teachers also gave their voluntary consent before the semi-structured interviews and before the classroom observation. This was initially through the school literacy coordinators, but also directly to them prior to each observation and interview. They were informed that they, too, could withdraw from the research at any time and that the raw data gathered from them would be shared with them only, other than a broad overview which was written and shared with literacy coordinators. Teachers were also informed that the lesson observation data would not be shared with their schools. This was explained to the literacy coordinators in each school. Teachers were also given the opportunity to review and discuss findings. Schools and teachers were informed that, should they wish to withdraw, all data relating to them would be destroyed. The research project and timeline was shared with all staff in each school at the start of the school year.

To ensure anonymity of the participants, all names of teachers, schools, and county were erased or replaced with numerical identifiers in the case of schools and literacy coordinators, and letters in the case of class teachers. After scoring was completed, data were input into SPSS, Version 23 (IBM, 2014). Pupils' names, sex and month of birth were inputted to the database. This information was used for analysis only and was not shared. Data collection began in September 2011 and proceeded until the end of the school year. In conversations with all participants I explained fully the purpose of the research, as well as outlining the BERA (2011) guidelines and responding to any queries that the teachers had. The class teachers self-selected lessons that I observed and these were arranged well in advance. After each observed lesson teachers were interviewed about the lesson in an attempt to understand the decisions and knowledge in play during the lesson, as well as explore their views regarding their experiences and understanding of literacy and reading.

The focus of this research is the school and teachers, rather than pupils. Whilst pupils were required to attend the lessons as a usual part of their school day, parents were informed by way of a letter jointly constructed by the university and schools (Appendix A) about the research project by the schools involved and told that pupils could be removed from the data at anytime. Lesson observations were not filmed, at the request of the schools, but rather anonymised, coded observation notes were used to record observation data.

This research, then, is a mixed methods study drawing upon qualitative and quantitative data. It has at its core a notion of the developing knowledge of the literacy coordinator co-researchers as fluid, dynamic and co-owned. The knowledge gained during this research was not extant, but constructed during the research period. The next chapter will present the findings from the meetings, lesson observations and tests. In Chapter 5, these findings will be discussed and evaluated, before recommendations and conclusions are presented in Chapter 6.

## Chapter 4

### Presentation of findings

In this chapter, I present the findings from the qualitative data, followed by the quantitative data. I have not included discussion of the literature in this chapter, in order to focus the presentation on the participants' views, the initial results from each of the tests, and the observation data. As noted in Chapter 3, this research was mixed method, rather than mixed model. As such, each type of data is examined separately in this chapter and any corroborated findings from the qualitative and quantitative data that allow for greater inferences to be made are discussed in Chapter 5 (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009). As noted previously, the nature of this research, sociocultural and generated in part through a PLC, meant that my qualitative data formed the dominant part of this study, with additional and important information provided by the quantitative findings (Mason, 2006).

The data is presented and explored in response to each of the research questions. The presentation of the data is as follows: PLC Meeting notes are explored first, as it was through these meetings that key ideas and principles were formed that were intended to influence the literacy practices within each of the participating schools. One of the research questions focuses in on the ways in which participation in a PLC may impact upon the behaviours of the literacy coordinators who were involved in the project. This question is key to my examination of the factors that can influence whole-school literacy practices at secondary school level. The next sections explore the data gathered during lesson observations and semi-structured interviews with classroom teachers. Finally, the quantitative data that came from the tests sat by pupils in the participating schools is presented. This allows me to examine what emerged in the quantitative data provided by the test scores and, importantly, evaluate any connections between. Performativity and the role this might play in teachers' enactment of policy and strategies come into focus during my engagement with the data. This aspect, though not originally considered during the initial stages of the research, forms an important strand of discussion in response to my research questions. As such, a section is included in this chapter that presents the data relating to aspects of performativity and teachers' own positions vis-a-vis their roles within the systems within which they work.

#### 4.1 PLC Group Meetings

*Research question: To what extent did collaboration within a PLC change the behaviour of the literacy coordinators?*

The five literacy coordinators from the participating research schools and I formed a PLC at the early stages of this research. The group met twice prior to the start of the school year during which the research would be undertaken and once every half term for the duration of the research. As noted previously, the schools were from different locations but were selected due to their similarity on a number of measures. As noted in chapters 2 and 3, professional learning communities within and across schools as a tool for system development and improvement have been a focus of educational research and practice since the late 1990s, with a keen focus in them emerging in the 2000s ( Welsh Government, 2013b; Harris & Jones, 2010). The focus of this research question was to examine whether membership of a PLC had any impact on the literacy coordinators within the PLC and also how this was manifested outside of the PLC in their schools. The notes from these meetings focus in on the first part of that question –namely whether the literacy coordinators’ behaviours were altered during the course of the PLC.

As noted in Chapter 3, another member of university staff was also present during the meetings to take notes and manage administrative matters such as emailing notes and actions to group members. A tally was kept in each meeting of the contributions from each member of the PLC. This information informed a participation chart, which will be explored shortly. These notes and tally charts were shared with and agreed by the PLC members. The group were, to varying degrees, experienced teachers, but quite new to the role of literacy coordinator, as can be seen below:

| School   | Name    | Time teaching | Time as Literacy Coordinator |
|----------|---------|---------------|------------------------------|
| School 1 | Litco 1 | 8 years       | 1 Year                       |
| School 2 | Litco 2 | 10 years      | 18 months                    |
| School 3 | Litco 3 | 9 years       | 5 months                     |
| School 4 | Litco 4 | 17 years      | 7 months                     |
| School 5 | Litco 5 | 6 years       | 1 year                       |

Table 1 Literacy Coordinators

Importantly, they had all seen literacy become a visible priority in their schools as part of a national focus on developing literacy in schools in Wales (Andrews, 2011a) and the role had, in each of the schools, been refigured with new significance.

As noted in Chapter 2, DuFour et al., (2008) suggest that for PLCs to be effective in teacher, and hence, school change, six key theoretical characteristics should be in place. These include shared mission, collective commitment and targets. The PLC that forms part of this research was established along the lines of these characteristics.

Fig 3 documents the initiation patterns throughout the meetings. As can be seen, in broad terms, PLC members initiated discussion with more frequency as the year went on. This is, perhaps, an unsurprising pattern, given that the focus of a PLC should be shared, collective learning so as to best benefit the classroom (DuFour et al, 2008).

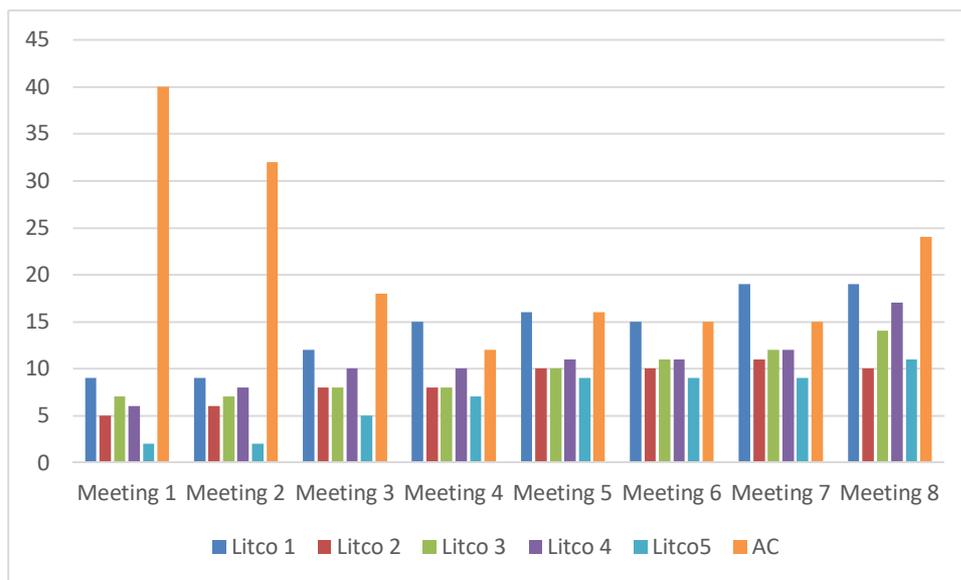


Fig 3 Initiation Literacy Coordinators in PLC Meetings.

As can be seen above, in the initial stages of the PLC, little talk was initiated by the literacy coordinator members of the PLC. There were some notable differences in the PLC members. Litco 1, for example, initiated talk over four times as frequently as Litco 5 in the initial meeting. This pattern can be seen, to some degree, in the meetings throughout the year. Litco 1 generally initiates more talk in each meeting, doubling the time of initiated talk from the first meeting to the last. Litco 5, however, undergoes something of a change during the course of the year. By the final meeting, Litco 5 has initiated talk over five times as much as in the

initial meeting. Litcos 2, 3 and 4 show a regular pattern of increasingly frequent initiation of talk throughout the period of the research. Litcos 2 and 3 doubled their initiation of talk during the period of the research, whilst Litco 4 makes considerable contributions to the final meeting, well over twice as many as in the initial meeting. Each of the literacy coordinators involved initiates talk more frequently as the year progresses. This is, perhaps, to be expected to some degree. The initial meeting was one which sought to establish key principles and to set out the work we would be doing during the year. For much of this initial meeting, talk was initiated by me. This is a pattern that can be seen in other ways during these meetings. A key change for the PLCs was my learning to switch my role from that of researcher to member of a PLC. My role in the PLC group, certainly in its earlier stages, can be seen to be influenced by my professional understanding of literacy research and practice. It was also influenced by my own wider professional role, which included delivering training on language and literacy, as well as by the different nature of my current role. As can be seen, in the initial meetings, I presented more material and ideas to the group than any other member. This pattern can be seen up until meeting 4, when I am no longer the key presenter of ideas to the group. My intentions and concomitant behaviours shifted from selection and delivery of readings and ideas, to one of exploring and co-constructing ideas about literacy with the group that would be taken into their various schools. This move to a release of responsibility was a key factor in the change in the group. Whilst it would be dishonest for me to pretend that I did not have access to an existing body of knowledge about literacy theory and practice, this was not the purpose of this group. The aim of this group was to provide the space and time for the literacy coordinators to come to their own informed understanding. This shift was a necessary part in my own professional learning. My intentions and behaviour changed as the group developed. This meant my not feeling the need to initiate all talk, lead discussions, make suggestions or lead the direction of travel. Patterns produced from these meetings suggest that one of the literacy coordinators initiated more talk than other members of the PLC. In most instances, Litco 1 initiates talk over twice as often as Litco 5 in each meeting.

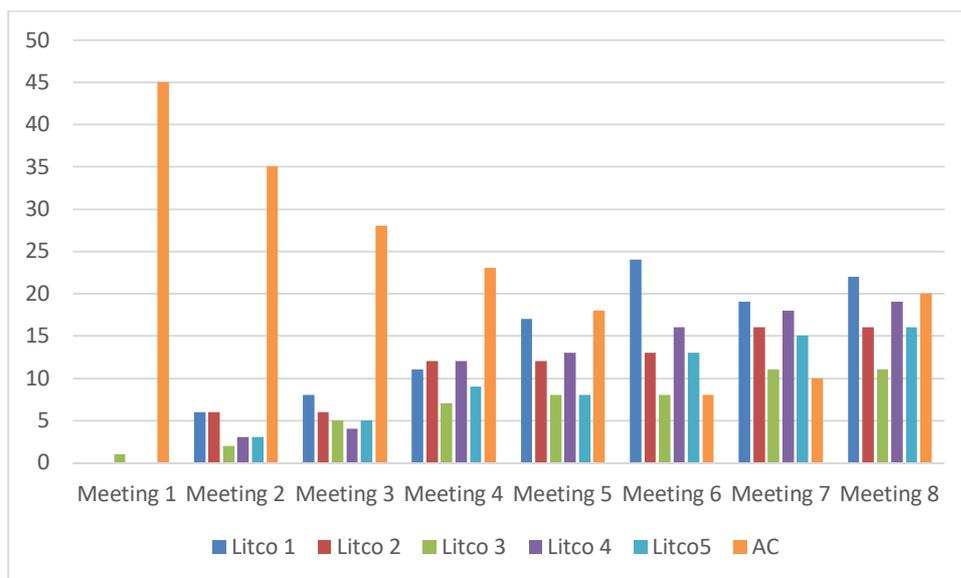
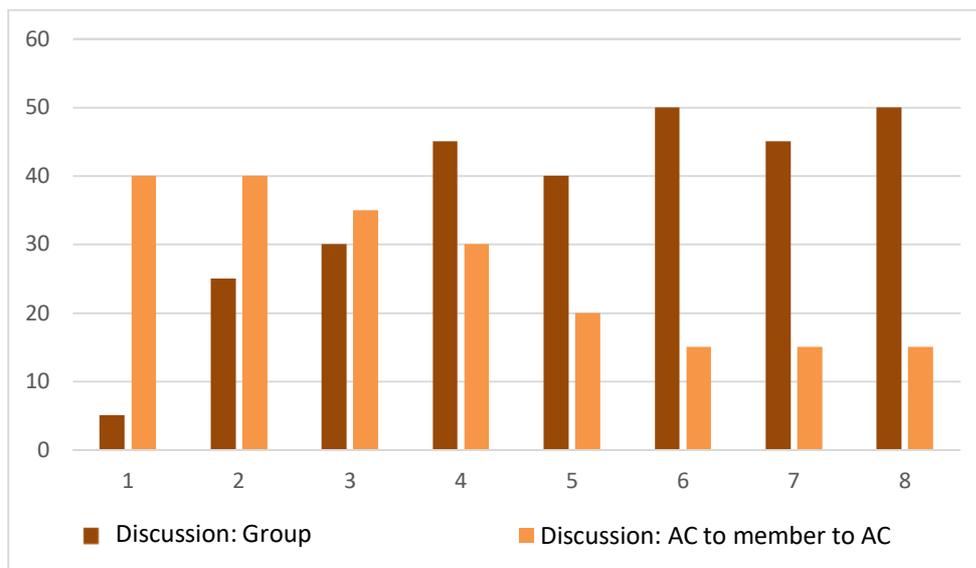


Fig 4 Presenting material to the group: Literacy Coordinators in PLC Meetings

As can be seen above, as the year of the research went on, the PLC members became more likely to bring with them to the meetings materials, readings, resources or approaches that they wanted to share with the group. Again, Litco 1 was the literacy coordinator most likely to present ideas or materials to the group – a pattern that was largely the case throughout the year. Amongst the other literacy coordinators, all made considerable gains in this measure, with Litco 4 increasing the amount of time they spent sharing or presenting to the group by a factor of 7 over the course of the PLC meetings. Litco 2 presented or shared almost three times as frequently at the end of the research than the beginning; Litco 3 doubled the amount of time they spent sharing or presenting to the group and Litco 5 increased in this measure by the power of five. In meeting 6, Litco 1 presented some work to the group that they were undertaking in their school. This work was partly to do with an increased focus on establishing certain practices across the school –namely shared reading and subject-focused literacy practices – and also the online system they had started to roll out for the sharing of resources across and within all subjects. The sharing of these ideas prompted group discussion and the roll out of some similar ideas in School 4; Litco 4 led the group off the following meeting with their own work in school. This is, perhaps, to be expected. As the group became more used to working together, the sharing of ideas and readings that we thought the group may be interested in became a more routine part of each meeting.

As can be seen, after the initial meeting, to varying degrees, each of the group members presented to the group as a whole as part of each meeting. Much of the initial meeting was

taken up by my presenting the research project to the PLC group so that we could agree how we would, as a group, define key elements such as how lesson observations would be organised and what questions should be asked in the follow-up interviews with teachers. As such, this initial meeting followed a quite different pattern from those subsequent to it. In this initial meeting, I also presented the group with some readings that I thought may introduce them to some key ideas and principles regarding literacy and reading. Similarly, in some of the other meetings, my presentations to the group were related to practical matters regarding observations and arrangements rather than the delivery of literacy. These readings came from a range of perspectives and I was at pains to explain that I was not endorsing any particular viewpoint in relation to how reading could be best developed across subjects in secondary schools. Rather, I explained to the group that I was interested in sharing some ideas from theory and research that could serve as lenses for our exploration of school practices. As can be seen below, the initial pattern of discussion and presentation to the group being initiated by and led by me, changed quickly over the course of the meetings.



**Fig 5 Participation as Group PLC Meetings**

The chart above illustrates quite clearly how the initial discourse pattern revolving around my own interactions with individual literacy coordinators in turn had altered radically by meeting 3 to one where group discussions dominated. This pattern of exchange seemed to mark a shift in the group as they moved from viewing the meetings as training events and looking to me to direct the meetings to participating as full members of the group in a collaborative effort to explore literacy. Nonetheless, the number of interactions that were between me and a single

group member are high over the course of the year. This is especially notable as this pattern did not feature between one group member to another. My role within the PLC did change over the research, but it can still be seen as somehow distinct from the other group members. The nature of my one to one interactions with group members also often took the form of assurance seeking from group members who wanted to know if they had understood an approach correctly or what I thought about the decisions they made.

In response to the research question ‘To what extent does collaboration within a PLC change the behaviour of the literacy coordinators?’, the overall picture that was constructed through the meetings is one where the group members moved towards increased group participation, and moved towards initiation, sharing and collaboration. The informal notes that were taken during these meetings showed a similar picture. Group members initiated and explored ideas; presented their thoughts on readings they had found or approaches they had explored and, importantly, built upon one another’s contributions to the group. These findings will be discussed in the next chapter, but it does seem to be clear that the behaviours of the literacy coordinators who were part of the PLC did change during the course of the year. That change was towards an increased proactive engagement with literacy and a move towards group construction and critical discussion of approaches and ideas. What is also seen in this research is that the role of HEI staff as part of PLCs with school colleagues is not straightforward. My participation is higher than that of any other group member during the course of the year; more interaction was directed at me by group members than to any other member of the group.

## **4.2 Lesson Observations**

*Research questions:*

*How does a literacy coordinator manage whole-school literacy practice across all school subjects?*

*To what extent does an engagement with learning about theory of literacy impact on practice?*

The PLC meetings with the literacy coordinators helped me gather data regarding the types of beliefs about literacy, as discussed in Chapter 2, and the sorts of approaches the literacy

coordinators were keen to develop across their schools. These are summarised in the table below:

| School   | Key literacy approach                                       | Literacy Monitoring   |
|----------|---|---|
| School 1 | Generic skills towards disciplinary literacy                | Literacy team<br>New Literacy Policy<br>Literacy an agenda item for all meetings<br>Book Monitoring<br>Online system for sharing resources<br>Subject literacy reps to share and monitor pupils' work |
| School 2 | Generic skills  | Literacy an agenda item for all meetings<br>Literacy Handbook for all staff with structured approach<br>Samples of work from subject areas monitored by literacy coordinator each half term           |
| School 3 | Mixed/non-specific  | Book monitoring each term   |
| School 4 | Generic skills  | Literacy an agenda item for all meetings<br>Literacy mapped in schemes of work across subjects  |
| School 5 | Generic skills with later elements of disciplinary literacy | Literacy an agenda item for all meetings<br>Book monitoring   |

**Table 3 Literacy coordinators' approaches and monitoring**

The lesson observations and follow-up interviews were designed to provide some information regarding how these approaches were played out in the actual classrooms in the participating schools.

The lesson capture proforma (see Appendix C) was intended to provide a snapshot of the strategies used in classrooms, as well as provide the space to record whether these strategies

were used as discrete ‘literacy’ elements or as part of subject teaching. They also acted as prompts for the interviews that were conducted following each observation.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the record used for the lesson observations, was constructed in discussion with the PLC of literacy co-coordinators. We agreed, having focused our discussions on literacy practices in the classroom, what elements of literacy we, as a PLC, wanted to explore. As discussed in Chapter 3, the recording instrument was simple and served to provide a snapshot of approaches that are linked to particular theoretical stances regarding reading in the secondary classroom. Each teacher was observed twice. What follows are the findings from the observational data from each of the observed lessons of each teacher. This is organised by: strategies used, the explanations or instructional episode regarding strategies in each lesson, the use of talk to support reading in the classroom, and, finally, the links made between approach used and subject content.

The initial round of observations took place during the later part of the autumn term; the second observations took place during the early summer term. This was to see if any changes or developments in approach could be seen as the literacy coordinators worked to embed approaches to reading in their schools. An outline of the school context with some information given regarding each teacher can be seen in Appendix B. This is followed by the data from the lesson observations. This is supplemented by descriptive accounts of the lessons that provide richer information regarding the observations.

The class teachers involved are outlined, anonymously, in the table below:

| <b>School</b> | <b>Teacher</b> | <b>Years Teaching</b> | <b>Subject</b> |
|---------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| School 1      | Ms C           | 6                     | Science        |
| School 1      | Mr D           | 2                     | Geography      |
| School 2      | Ms L           | 4                     | History        |
| School 2      | Ms E           | 11                    | RE             |
| School 3      | Mr P           | 3                     | History        |
| School 3      | Ms D           | 5                     | Art            |
| School 4      | Mr Pb          | 3                     | RE             |
| School 4      | Mr E           | 8                     | Science        |

|          |       |   |           |
|----------|-------|---|-----------|
| School 5 | Ms Db | 4 | Science   |
| School 5 | Ms W  | 4 | Geography |

Table 4 Information on class teachers.

As can be seen, the teachers represented a fair spread of subjects and were, in the main, within a similar spread of experience. Only one teacher had taught for longer than ten years, with the majority of teachers having taught for between 2-6 years. The teachers were observed with the same class in each of the observed lessons so as to provide some continuity and allow for comparison. The next table outlines and colour codes the strategies used along with those that were part of the whole-school intended approach.

#### 4.2.1 Strategies used

| Approaches                       | Lesson 1 | Lesson 2 | Part of School approach   |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|---------------------------|
| Reciprocal Reading               | Ms C     | Ms C     | School 1                  |
|                                  | Mr D     |          | School 4                  |
|                                  | Ms L     |          | School 5                  |
|                                  | Mr Pb    |          |                           |
| Eight Reading Behaviours         | Ms C     | Ms C     | School 1                  |
|                                  | Mr P     | Mr P     | School 3 partial          |
|                                  | Ms W     | Ms W     | School 5                  |
| Modeling                         | Ms L     | Mr D     | School 1                  |
|                                  |          | Mr E     | School 5                  |
|                                  |          | Ms W     | School 4 (post Christmas) |
|                                  |          | Ms C     |                           |
| Text Types                       | Ms L     | Mr D     | School 2                  |
|                                  | Mr E     | Ms Db    | School 5                  |
|                                  | Ms Db    | Mr E     |                           |
| Disciplinary Literacy Approaches |          | Mr D     | School 1                  |
|                                  |          | Ms W     | School 5                  |

|                       |       |       |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|
|                       |       | Mr Pb |
|                       |       | Mr E  |
| Skimming and Scanning | Ms Db |       |
|                       | Ms E  |       |
|                       | Ms W  |       |
| Other                 | Ms L  | Mr Pb |
|                       | Ms E  | Ms D  |
|                       | Ms W  | Mr P  |
|                       | Ms D  |       |
|                       | Mr P  |       |
|                       | Mr Pb |       |

**Table 5 Strategies used in observed lessons**

Reciprocal Reading is the most frequently observed strategy in the first observed lessons with four of the ten teachers using it. Where Eight Reading Behaviours is used, this is most frequently Activating Prior Knowledge (APK). Links between literacy coordinators' approaches and those seen in the lessons show a mixed picture. In the first round of observations, as can be seen above, some strategies that are part of the school approach do not always feature in lessons observed in those schools. Eight Reading Behaviours, for example, does not feature in Mr. D's lessons, despite being one of the strategies that had been a focus of school staff training. All teachers who do use this approach come from schools that have received whole school training in it. Two teachers, Ms. E and Ms. D do not use the approaches that are part of the school literacy work in either of their lessons, although Ms. E does make use of the school's Literacy Booklet. What is also noticeable is the number of teachers who use approaches that are not part of the school approach. Four teachers, Ms. L, Mr. D, Mr. Pb and Mr. E use named approaches that are not part of their school's literacy work but which feature in the work of other schools in this research. A greater number though, seven teachers, use approaches that do not feature in any of the schools' approaches. This suggests that the teachers drew upon other factors when deciding how to approach literacy in their lessons. This includes teachers such as Mr. Pb, who used his knowledge of Philosophy for Children in his lessons. This use of approaches not featured in whole school work is more prevalent in the first observations.

Strategy instruction in the form of Reciprocal Reading or Eight Reading Behaviours is seen in eleven of the twenty lessons. Modelling becomes much more of a feature of the second lesson observations, featuring in five of the second observations. This had been something that had been explored within the PLC during the intervening meetings. In each of the lessons, the strategy was used for the whole class, rather than changed for text demand or pupil need.

Ms. C incorporates Reciprocal Reading strategies in each of the observed lessons. She also made explicit reference to and use of the Eight Readings Behaviours (City and County of Swansea, 2011), namely, Activating Prior Knowledge (APK). Ms. C draws upon those strategies that are an explicit part of her school's approach. In her first lesson Ms. C asked the class to engage with a text that explained cell structure. She read the text aloud to the class and then asked some follow-up questions that were organised in the form of teacher-pupil interaction and focused on checking understanding of content. The class then had to try to summarise the text into twenty words. This is a summarising task, but this term was not used to describe what pupils were being asked to do. The original text was short, comprised of only sixty two words. No explanation was given as to why this approach might help their understanding. She then reminded the class about Reciprocal Reading and asked them to use this when reading as a group another text on cell structures that was more detailed.

Ms. C made more explicit use of a Reciprocal Reading approach, something that had been introduced by the literacy coordinator of School 1, in lesson two, allocating each of the pupils roles in a group shared reading of a text that focused on the transformation of sunlight to energy in plants. This was one of two instances where an explicit strategy was employed and explained. Ms. C also modelled reading aloud –asking questions of the text and exploring meaning. The Reciprocal Reading group work took up over one third of a 60 minute lesson and the outcome was a set of three agreed points which were written on the board and then copied into books by pupils.

The use of Reciprocal Reading can be seen in Mr D's first lesson, too, where pupils were allocated roles within groups to support a group reading of a text. Reciprocal Reading was not used in the second lesson. Instead, Mr. D. focused in closely on the text with which the class was engaged, drawing upon a wider range of strategies in a more embedded way. He identified key terms, text and content-based features and asked the class to examine how

certain words and phrases were used to communicate geographical concepts and features. This piece of text (on threatened environments) was interrogated by Mr. D. with his class. He explained the strategies he used, such as modelling, and explored how meaning was created in that particular text. Mr. D's class demonstrated some familiarity with the approaches that were being used, using key terms for text structures, for example, and engaging in modelled reading without need for further instruction. This second lesson took place in the summer term; Mr. D had been a member of the school's Literacy Group for seven months at this point. The approaches that Litco 1 had explored in the PLC group meetings could be seen quite clearly in this lesson.

As can be seen in Table 5, Ms. L made reference to or used four approaches in her first lesson. The focus of the lesson, an introduction to Civil Rights in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century by way of Martin Luther King, was text heavy. Pupils read a speech, discussed it in small groups, used Reciprocal Reading to explore a newspaper article, answered questions on the speech and the article, and wrote a summary of what they thought the key messages from the texts were. The lesson was very much text focused and pupils were given a number of strategies to use with which to engage with text. In this first lesson, Ms. L's teaching demonstrated an awareness of a number of literacy approaches that come under the umbrella of generic literacy skills. Ms. L's second lesson observation saw some changes in terms of the number of approaches used during the lesson. In this lesson, as can be seen in Tables 5 and 8, she made use of talk by way of teacher-pupil question and answer responses and also of modelled, focused response to text. The whole school literacy focus for the group for the half-term during which the observed lesson took place was on structure in writing, which she incorporated as a planned element of her lesson, using the text the class were exploring (an extract from a 19<sup>th</sup> century government enquiry into children working in mines) to examine structure. A considerable number of the features that were listed in the Literacy Booklet as structural aspects to focus on in written text were not found in this text, which provoked questions from several pupils who were intent on looking for the aspects listed in the booklet, such as sub-headings or topic sentences. In this second observation lesson, the reduced number of strategies used was notable. This reduction did not diminish the time given to explicit engagement with text during the lesson; rather, the single text that was the main focus of the lesson was contextualised and explored in more detail, with more time given to interrogating the text using a much smaller number of approaches.

In Ms. E's first observed lesson, the pupils were focused on religious festivals as part of a wider scheme of work exploring similarities and differences between religions. Groups were tasked with extracting the key information about a religious festival and then presenting this back to the rest of the class. Resources and roles (scribe, reader, presenter and deciders) were allocated to each group. The groups were not shown explicitly how to summarise or look for the important parts of the text, although skimming and scanning were suggested as possible approaches to use. During this part of the lesson, Ms. E circulated the class providing prompts to direct pupils to key parts of the text. The group feedback produced mixed results. Two of the five groups read aloud from the text they had been given. Of the remaining three groups, two selected most key elements, missed others and shared some aspects that were not found in the text. Each group had been given texts that were taken from a teaching resource that compared and contrasted religions in a number of areas. The texts used for this lesson were summaries of various religious festivals. As such, the reading task that the pupils had been assigned, summary, was already available as the purpose of the text. The final part of this lesson was given to the Literacy Booklet as was the case in Ms. L's lesson. For year 7 pupils during this term, the focus was on oracy and persuasion and pupils were instructed to persuade another pupil in the class that one of the festivals of the religion they had explored during the lesson was the best of all of the festivals discussed. Some simple pointers as to how this could be done were given by Ms. E. Pupils were also reminded of the importance of being able to use persuasive language and Ms. E gave an example of a good piece of persuasion and a less effective one.

The second of Ms. E's observed lessons followed a similar structure. Pupils were put into groups and engaged with different texts before engaging in a class discussion about whether war can be justified. The pupils were, this time, given a range of texts including some overviews of some famous wars and the events that led to them, views from a number of religions about war and violence, and some quotations from famous people about war. Each group was instructed to write down what each text said about war; to note any similarities or differences in opinion; then to organise the ideas they found in text into 'War is never justifiable because...', 'War can be justified because...' and then to write in two sentences what they as a group thought and why. These sentences were used as opening statements to the discussion that made up the next segment of the lesson. There were some key differences in this lesson despite the superficial similarity of the group engagement with text. The texts in this lesson were not simply versions of that which the pupils were being asked to produce.

Instead, they would be used to inform the written and oral texts the groups were going to construct. This moved the tasks from one of low challenge reproduction to one of synthesis. The other key difference was that the reading had a clear purpose and a more structured outcome.

In Mr. P's first lesson, APK (Activating Prior Knowledge) was used explicitly at the start of the lesson to gather key facts about the Industrial Revolution. The class was then split into groups, with each group being allocated a particular focus, such as the environment. Each group was given a pack containing short readings from a variety of sources. These included first person testimonials, facts and statistics, newspaper articles, extracts from books and so on. Each group had twenty five minutes to present back to the class on their topic, giving justified positive and negative impacts for their particular aspect. For this part of the lesson, the groups were told to use the Eight Reading Behaviours, which were displayed in the class. The Eight Reading Behaviours did not feature for the remainder of the lesson. In his second lesson, which was focused on the start of World War 2, the approach used was centred on group work and the Eight Reading Behaviours was again a feature of the lesson. Each group was given texts related to key events leading up to the start of World War 2 and asked to report back on their event, explaining its part in the start of the war. In this second lesson, Mr. P. distributed laminated cards with the Eight Reading Behaviours displayed for each group to use as they engaged with text. Success criteria were shared with the class and they were invited to comment on them and add or amend any elements they felt were important. This was not connected to any assessment or other criteria and many of the items included were general, such as 'Use a clear voice when feeding back to the group'. None of the items that made up the success criteria were explicitly focused on how to form opinion or extract meaning from text.

Ms. D's first observed lesson was focused on developing pupils' critical and personal evaluation. This included pupils explaining, using subject specific language where necessary, how they had used the work of a particular artist as an influence on their own artwork. The pupils had spent some time earlier that term exploring a number of artists and then had produced artwork influenced in some way by that artist. This influence could be in terms of, for example, technique, subject, style or materials. Pupils had to explore and explain how and why this artist had impacted upon the decisions they made in their own work. In this first observed lesson, the pupils were given an example of a piece of similar work from a previous

cohort. The mark scheme for this work was displayed on the board and pupils were invited to mark the work using these criteria. The grades were discussed and the actual awarded grade was revealed. Pupils were then told to use this example as a model for their own written responses. Some key sentence starters and vocabulary had been put onto a prompt sheet and given out to each pupil. Modelling as an approach was not discussed. Ms. D circulated during the lesson and offered points of whole class feedback on what she had observed in pupils' responses. The use of these approaches was not something that had been shared with the school by the literacy coordinator.

Ms. D's use of a model answer to structure pupils' responses was also evident in the second observed lesson with the class. During this lesson, a very similar pattern was followed. Pupils were shown a model answer (this time the focus was on a pupil's evaluation of their own work) and the mark scheme for that piece of work was shared. During this lesson, Ms. D read out the model answer and highlighted some key elements of the piece and made some links to the mark scheme for that piece of work. Pupils then used this response as a model for their own work. Links between the response the pupils engaged with as a reading text and the piece of writing they were undertaking themselves of a very similar piece of work were made only by way of reference to the mark scheme. The particularities of how the response they read was structured, of the technical and other language used, of the signposting language that gave the response cohesion were not explored in either lesson. Again, the support that was given for this lesson in terms of literacy or language came in the form of supports for the pupils' written responses. There was no engagement with the model responses as texts for reading in either lesson. The engagement with language in these lessons was implicit and related to how the response was judged rather than how it was created. The process of constructing these types of text as an artist, such as the use of evaluation and making explicit links between the work of other artists and one's own was not an explicit feature of the lessons. In each lesson, many pupils produced responses that were either very closely based on the model answer the class had shared or were descriptive rather than evaluative. The reading elements of this lesson did not seem to support the writing.

In the initial observation lesson, Mr. Pb used a number of approaches and resources. The lesson was focused on creation stories from a number of religions. Pupils were placed into groups of 4 or 5 and then shown a short clip of animated film that explained what a creation story was. Following the clip, pupils were given a comic-strip version of a creation story, a

short prose version of another creation story and a storyboard template. The prose versions of the creation stories were organised into short paragraphs of two sentences each, each covering a key point. Pupils were then given Reciprocal Reading roles and told to use these roles to explore the prose versions of the creation stories. The storyboards had vocabulary boxes at the bottom of the page, containing suggested vocabulary for each creation story. The storyboards also contained sentence starters, which the pupils could use if they so wished. The groups of pupil were given 40 minutes in total to read the short creation story, using Reciprocal Reading, and then transform this into a comic-strip. Mr. Pb circulated during the lesson and quickly became aware that the groups were not using the Reciprocal Reading roles in order to explore the text. He reminded the pupils of the importance of doing this, and instructed the groups to re-engage with the roles, but all groups had moved onto the comic – strip creation within five minutes of the task. Multiple supports were used to support pupils in the task, which was completed in half of the allocated time. Mr. Pb’s use of generic literacy approaches to support reading where there was insufficient challenge to require such a support was not uncommon, as will be discussed later.

In his second lesson, Mr. Pb took a wholly different approach. The class were working on a scheme of work that focused on what he termed ‘big’ questions, ethical dilemmas and moral decision making. This lesson saw a smaller number of approaches being used. The class were placed in small groups and shown a film clip which related to questions about the relationship between humans and animals. At the end of the clip, having first provided an example of such a question to the class (‘Are animals and humans equal?’), Mr. P asked each group to write down any questions that came to them and to make them ‘big’. Pupils presented their questions and the class voted on which they would like to discuss. Prior to starting the discussion, Mr. Pb reminded the class why these discussions were important in R.E. and distributed talk cards to each group. These cards contained some common language points for discussion, such as phrases to denote turn taking or agreement/disagreement, as well as some ethical points that were connected to this topic that he wanted to form part of the discussion. This sort of approach is very clearly derived from Philosophy for Children approaches, which encourage the discussion of philosophical ideas through focused group talk. This approach involved fewer explicit literacy strategies than the first, but Mr. Pb made stronger links between the approach being used and the aspect being studied. The use of content and talk cards to support the discussion provided some support for both the skills and techniques of discussion and also for some of the key moral and ethical elements of this topic.

Mr. E's first observed lesson was concerned with writing evaluations of simple experiments. The class were given a good example of an evaluation of an experiment and this was discussed as a whole class. The key features of this type of text were drawn out by the discussion between Mr. E and the class and these features were used to create success criteria for the pupils' own work. Mr E explained to the class what a text type was and the part audience and purpose played in making decisions about how a text was constructed. This was not elaborated upon nor was the specific audience or purpose of the text the pupils were producing explained. The remainder of the lesson was spent with the pupils writing their own evaluations.

The second of the observed lessons was focused on renewable and non-renewable energy sources. This included the pupils considering the benefits and disadvantages of each energy source, ending in pupils in groups deciding upon a new possible energy source that they would present to the class. In this lesson, the class were given a weak example of a text written to explain and justify the use of solar panels as an energy source. Pupils were tasked with spending time in groups improving it. Mr. E then displayed the example and took pupils' suggestion regarding how it could be developed. In many instances, the suggestions were very much focused on improving the text to make it more appropriate in terms of vocabulary or style – 'rechargeable' was replaced with 'renewable', for example. In the main, though, the specifics of the text, its purpose and its audience, were not explored, meaning that several of the changes made were general and broadly connected to accuracy- a changed apostrophe, for example - rather than focused on what makes this particular type of scientific text effective or not. From the altered model, a template was produced for the pupils to use in their own writing. Broad language features such as signposting connectives were highlighted and explained in terms of their importance in how text coheres.

The first of Ms. Db's lessons was focused on how food is used and digested by the body. During this lesson, the class were presented with diagrams of the body which were explained by Ms. Db. They were directed to a worksheet that explained again how food was transformed into energy by the body and instructed to transform the text into diagrams that explained the process. Ms. Db did not explicitly state during the lesson that the class were using any literacy skills or approaches, although she did use some in this first lesson. The use of vocabulary specific to a text aside, Ms. Db also asked the class to come up with what the

most important things were when writing a clear explanation in science. These were then agreed and noted in pupils' books. Many of the things noted were generic, such as accuracy in writing, but Ms. Db guided the pupils towards some more specific aspects which were connected with, for example, how processes are explained and connections or causality communicated.

In the second lesson, the focus on language was explicit, and repeated. In this lesson the class were again focused on explanations. This time the pupils were working towards providing explanations of acid rain in prose and diagram form. A handout detailing 'explanation' as a text type was given to all pupils. This included detail such as where and when an explanation may be used, typical language and structural features such as use of time connectives, present tense and so on. Pupils were then given some examples of texts and asked to identify which they thought were explanations. These texts were all about the topic of acid rain, but only some were explanations. Over the course of the lesson, over half of the allocated time was spent exploring the text type 'explanation'. Pupils were given oral instructions to use their reading skills including skimming, scanning and reading for clues.

In Ms. W's initial lesson, pupils were focused on examining differences in daily life between school pupils in Wales and South Africa. Pupils were next given two texts about life in South Africa and a series of questions was shared on the board. The texts were of quite different types, one a first person narrative of the home life of an eleven year old girl in a township and the other a collection of tables depicting statistics about features such as average earnings, health care, education and food. Pupils were given oral instructions to use their reading skills including skimming, scanning and reading for clues. The ways in which continuous prose texts can be compared with texts using tables and graphs, or how to engage with material presented in different forms, were not discussed. In the lesson plan, reference was made to pupils using the Eight Reading Behaviours to support their reading, but these were not mentioned during the lesson. Oral feedback was taken from the class, which included some misreading of information. The feedback from this reading task took over twenty minutes, rather than the planned ten minutes. The specific requirements of reading the texts were not examined and the explicit link between those texts and the one the pupils were intended to produce was not clear in this first lesson.

The second lesson was focused on urban regeneration. Pupils were tasked with using a range of information to explain the benefits and potential issues of a proposed urban regeneration plan in an area close to the school. This lesson was much developed in terms of engagement with the specifics of the texts used by pupils. Whilst pupils were not given explained strategies to examine the texts themselves, the focus on how to locate key information from, say, a newspaper report or a table was modelled by Ms. W. The class were also directed to key vocabulary and explanations of geographical concepts in the texts by Ms. W and were given cards to use in their own presentation that contained key terms to be used in group presentations about the proposed plans.

#### 4.2.2 Instruction and explanation

| Teacher | Approach instructions given Lesson 1 | Approach instructions given Lesson 2 | Approach explained Lesson 1 | Approach explained Lesson 2 |
|---------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Ms C    | X                                    | X                                    |                             | X                           |
| Mr D    | X                                    | X                                    |                             | X                           |
| Ms L.   | X                                    | X                                    |                             | X                           |
| Ms E    |                                      | X                                    |                             | X                           |
| Mr P    |                                      | X                                    |                             | X                           |
| Ms D    |                                      | X                                    |                             |                             |
| Mr Pb   | X                                    | X                                    |                             | X                           |
| Mr E    | X                                    | X                                    | X                           | X                           |
| Ms Db   |                                      | X                                    |                             | X                           |
| Ms W    |                                      | X                                    |                             | X                           |

Table 6 Instructions and explanation

As can be seen above, whilst there was evidence that strategies or approaches were used in the observed lessons, instruction and explanation of these approaches is inconsistent. Only

one of the initial observations featured an explanation regarding why an approach is being used and how pupils should use it to support their own engagement with text. This increases considerably in the second observations, with all but one of the teachers providing some explanation regarding the use of a literacy approach. As will be seen below, these explanations were themselves variable in the depth and detail given. Six of the explanations given in the second lessons were broad and generic, stating mainly that an approach would help with a particular aspect with little additional detail.

Instruction features more commonly than explanation in the first round of lessons, but is still only an explicit feature of five of the ten lessons. All of the second observations included some instruction to pupils regarding the approaches they were using. This aspect saw the greatest change across the lessons.

In each of the Ms. C's observed lessons, the strategy is used, but is not explained in lesson one and not fully explained in two. She explained why she was doing this in general terms in the second observed lesson, telling the class that the approach would 'help us find out what you know and how it can help with a new topic'. Instructions were given about how to use Reciprocal Reading, as was a reminder of the roles incorporated in this approach in each lesson. This was, in the main, by way of explaining what 'job' each pupil had within their group. One pupil, for example, was 'The Questioner' and it was explained that their role was to ask questions of the text.

In Mr. D's first lesson instructions were given without specific reference to the actual text type or purpose for which the pupils would be reading. There was clear and explicit instruction plus explanation in his second lesson. Pupils also seemed to be more familiar with the approaches used by then. In this second lesson, not only were approaches to text explicitly explored and explained, they were contextualised within the subject and topic on a word, sentence and whole-text level. Clear links were made to not only subject content, but the language of his subject, Geography. He explained the strategies he used, such as modelling, and explored how meaning was created in that particular text.

Ms. L's first lesson was very much text focused and pupils were given a number of strategies to use with which to engage with text. None of these strategies or approaches was explained during the lesson, nor was any modelled to the class or linked explicitly to what each piece of

text was about. Instructions were generic; pupils were asked to use an approach but explicit detail was missing. In lesson two, Ms. L's explanations were more explicit. She explained to the pupils, for example, that certain text features were not found in all texts at all times, but that they would see some of them in the lesson they were part of that day and may see others later on in that half term or in other subjects. The reasons why certain structural features were not found in some texts or what this meant and how they could use this information in their own reading and writing was not explored.

In the first of Ms. E's lessons, the groups were not shown explicitly how to summarise or look for the important parts of the text, although skimming and scanning were suggested as possible approaches to use. They were not given explicit instructions to use a particular approach. Some simple pointers as to how this could be done were given by Ms. E, but the class were informed they could use whatever they thought best. Pupils were also reminded of the importance of being able to use persuasive language and Ms. E gave an example of a good piece of persuasion and a less effective one. The effective example of persuasion by Ms. E included features such as direct address, rhetorical questions and use of flattery. Some pupils could identify these elements, although they were not part of Ms. E's explanations or instruction.

Mr. P's first lesson included use of the Eight Reading Behaviours. These were displayed in the class, but pupils were not given explicit structure or guidance regarding how to explore the texts they were engaging with for that particular purpose. The pupils were 'doing' or 'using' literacy but this was not being developed or guided. Each group had a large sheet of coloured paper and they were told to create a poster highlighting the positives and negatives for their topic. The purpose behind this choice of presentational tool was not explained nor was guidance given as to how to best organise this type of text. In his second lesson, Mr. P asked the group to use the behaviours to help them understand the text more effectively and explained each of the behaviours to the class.

In Ms D's first lesson, no instruction was given regarding what pupils were expected to do to support text engagement, nor were any approaches that Ms D was using, such as modelling, explained. The particularities of how the response they read was structured, of the technical and other language used, of the signposting language that gave the response cohesion were not explored in either lesson.

Mr. Pb gave pupils limited instruction in lesson one. Pupils were told to use Reciprocal Reading, but this was not explained beyond that. In lesson two, explanations were given regarding why discussions of ethical question were important in R.E and how they are supported by particular types of language. Examples of this were given to the class for them to use as explicit supports for their discussion. Mr. E explained to the class in his first observation what a text type was and the part audience and purpose played in making decisions about how a text was constructed. This was not elaborated upon, nor was the specific audience or purpose of the text the pupils were producing explained. He was the only teacher who offered explanation of the literacy approach he was using in the first round of observations. In lesson two, a weak model of the text he wanted pupils to produce was used as a basis for a whole class task. Broad language features, such as signposting and connectives were highlighted and explained in terms of their importance in how text coheres. While the finished texts were not, therefore, made available during the observation, the discussion that formed part of the modelling during this lesson was focused quite clearly on improving pupils' understanding.

In her first observation, Ms. Db directed pupils to a worksheet that explained again how food was transformed into energy by the body and instructed them to transform the text into diagrams that explained the process. One example was shown on the sheet. This was noted by Ms. Db but not explained or explored. The process or relationships indicated by key words did not feature as part of any explanations, but Ms. Db did, during the feedback for this task, isolate some words that were represented in the pupils' illustrations. The second lesson saw explicit focus on the instruction and explanation of text types. This took up a considerable proportion of lesson time, with the lesson topic, acid rain, first introduced half way through the lesson.

In Ms. W's first observation, the instructions for the tasks were open ended and the end point of the task, a written comparison of daily life, was not introduced. There was no instruction regarding the literacy approach suggested. As such, the pupils' responses were broad and included elements such as the colour of school uniforms in each of the locations. In the second lesson, the texts were explored as a class in the first instance, with Ms. W explaining what the text was and giving clear instruction on each text regarding the information that

pupils were to extract from it. Some explanation was seen in this second lesson, and although this was broad, did include reference as to why pupils were engaging in the approach.

#### 4.2.3 Use of talk

| Teacher | Question and answer: teacher to pupil to teacher Lesson 1 | Question and answer: teacher to pupil to teacher Lesson 2 | Question and answer: pupil to pupil Lesson 1 | Question and answer: pupil to pupil Lesson 2 | Group talk Lesson 1 | Group talk Lesson 2 |
|---------|---|---|--|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| Ms C    | X   | X   |  | X  | X                   | X                   |
| Mr D    | X   | X   |  | X  | X                   | X                   |
| Ms L.   | X   | X   |  |  | X                   |                     |
| Ms E    | X   | X   |  |  | X                   |                     |
| Mr P    | X   | X   |  | X  | X                   | X                   |
| Ms D    | X   | X   |  |  |                     |                     |
| Mr Pb   | X   | X   |  | X  | X                   | X                   |
| Mr E    | X   | X   |  | X  | X                   |                     |
| Ms Db   | X   | X   |  |  |                     |                     |
| Ms W    | X   | X   |  |  |                     | X                   |

*Table 7 Use of talk in observed lessons.*

Talk as a means of exploring text was not explicitly stated by any of the literacy coordinators as an approach they were explicitly using across their schools. Talk is, though, a recommended approach in developing reading (ESTYN, 2008; Mercer and Howe, 2012) and is often cited as one of the key ways in which teachers check reading comprehension. It was a feature that was seen in all of the observed lessons. There was a considerable proportion in each of the lessons that involved reading or listening to text and then talking about text or

simply talking/listening, suggesting a belief that reading comprehension instruction involves talk. This does not contradict the ESTYN (2008) or PISA (OECD 2009a) definitions of reading comprehension and suggests that talk is an important aspect of what should go on during reading comprehension instruction – in other words, talk is part of the process of extracting and constructing meaning.

As can be seen above, group talk is used by eight of the teachers in twelve of the observed lessons. This was, in the main, unstructured, with three instances out of the twelve using explicit instruction regarding the group talk. All teachers in each of their lessons made use of teacher to pupil questions. In the twenty lessons where this was a feature, this was used by all to check understanding of content. In the second round of observations, six of the teachers, indicated in red in the table above, used teacher to pupil questions to explore aspects of how the text was constructed.

In each of Ms. C's lessons talk was a feature. Aside from the Reciprocal Reading work, in the first lesson, this was predominantly in the form of teacher to pupil questions and also short paired discussion. In the second lesson these approaches were again present, although questions were supported by secondary questions and more pupil-pupil development of responses. In each of Mr. D's lessons, talk was a feature of text interrogation. In the first, this was used to gauge understanding of content. In the second lesson observation, pupils were encouraged to talk about text in a focused way as a class. Mr. D drew attention to elements such as subject specific language features, organisational elements of text (such as topic sentences) and the impact of word choice for effect (the difference, for example, in as 'the biggest river' or 'the principal river'). Mr. D's use of talk in his second lesson was focused on content and language of his subject. It was also used to build pupils' own subject vocabulary and understanding.

Ms. L's first lesson used talk as a means of checking understanding in simple teacher-pupil sequences. Her second lesson also used talk in this way, although it was also used in this lesson by way of modelled, focused response to text. Mr. P made use of group talk in each of his lessons. In his second lesson, the discussion part of the group work had more clear and explicit focus by way of a series of questions that focused the reading and reporting back of each group. Ms. D made minimal use of talk in each of her observed lessons. This was predominantly in the form of circulation during the lesson and offering points of whole class

feedback on what she had observed in pupils' responses. Mr. Pb's second lesson was the most focused on discussion of all of the lessons. In the lesson, pupils discussed ideas relating to the stimulus, presented their questions to class and voted on which they would like to discuss. Prior to starting the discussion, Mr. Pb reminded the class why these discussions were important in R.E. and distributed talk cards to each group. These cards contained some common language points for discussion, such as phrases to denote turn taking or agreement/disagreement, as well as some ethical points that were connected to this topic that he wanted to form part of the discussion. The use of content and talk cards to support the discussion provided some support for both the skills and techniques of discussion and also for some of the key moral and ethical elements of this topic. The use of Philosophy for Children approaches provided a structure in this lesson.

Mr. E used talk in his lessons to draw out key features of text through discussion between Mr E. and the class. These features were used to create success criteria for the pupils' own work. Whilst there was some group discussion and, in the second lesson, some pupil to pupil questioning, oral feedback taken from the class was the most frequent use of talk in Ms. W's lessons. This was organised by way of pupil to teacher response and included some misreading of information.

#### 4.2.4 Links to content

| Teacher | Links made between Content and Approach Lesson 1 | Links made between Content and Approach Lesson 2 | Approach used To examine language of Subject Lesson 1 | Approach used To examine language of Subject Lesson 2 |
|---------|--|--|---|---|
| Ms C    |  | X  | X   |   |
| Mr D    |  | X  |   | X   |
| Ms L.   |  | X  |   |   |
| Ms E    |  |  |   |   |
| Mr P    |  |  |   |   |
| Ms D    | X  | X  |   |   |

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|       |   |   |   |
|-------|---|---|---|
| Mr Pb |   | X | X |
| Mr E  |   |   | X |
| Ms Db | X |   |   |
| Ms W  |   | X | X |

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**Table 8** Links between literacy approach and content

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The links made in lessons between what was being studied (content) and how it is developed in the literacy approaches used in the lessons is not well represented in these findings. This feature was not always easy to measure. In some lessons there might, for example, be a partial link made by the class teacher whereas others might see a more thorough presentation of the text as subject specific, with closer attention paid to how this is apparent in the text. Notes taken during the observations, as seen above, indicated clear distinctions between those lessons where some links were made between a subject text or content and the approach used, and those where the text itself was interrogated as a subject specific. In the first round of observations, in only two of the lessons were explicit links made between the approaches used and the subject content; there were no lessons where the literacy approach was used as part of an interrogation of subject.

There were some clear moves towards more explicit links between the two elements in the second round of observations. In six of these lessons, teachers linked the approach to the content focus of the lesson. This development of a more contextualised literacy can also be seen in the four lessons that situated textual approaches within the subject. What seems to be clear is that disciplinary literacy approaches, where a text is seen and explored within a discipline, were not a regular feature of the observed lessons.

Subject content is not focused on during reading in Ms. C's lesson one. Whilst there is some development between the first and second observations, there is still some dissociation between reading and subject matter. In each of the lessons, the reading approach that was used was presented separately from the content of the lesson; in the second lesson the modelling did focus more on the specifics of the text, but this was on specific information found within it rather than how it was constructed as a science text. This was not, therefore, modelling the approach she wanted the pupils to use in their own writing in science. Content

was, in the main, separated from strategy other than in the modelling episode. In each of the lessons, the reading approach that was used was presented in a discrete part of the lesson, distinct from content.

Ms. L's first lesson also did not examine text in a subject-focused way. The differences in language, structure, purpose and audience between the speech of Martin Luther King and the newspaper article were not a focus of the tasks, nor were explanations of the historical basis for examining each text. The approaches were used in a generic way as a set of skills that could be applied to any content and were taught in separate sections of the lesson. At the end of Ms. L's first lesson, she brought the attention of the class to the Literacy Booklet and reminded them of their literacy focus for that half-term. This was not related to the lesson objective or focus itself, but instead involved the pupils undertaking a series of vocabulary tasks in their books as a series of context-free tasks, which lasted for the final ten minutes of the lesson. In her second lesson these approaches were linked to the text being explored and some mention was made of the purpose of the text.

This pattern can also be seen in Ms. E's lessons. The initial lesson saw no connection made between reading approaches and content being explored. This pattern continued in the second lesson, where even though the texts the pupils were examining would be used to inform their own writing, the specificities of the text were not discussed. Mr. P's lessons also made no link between text approach and content. In his second lesson, the texts were of quite different types, with different intended audiences and aims. This was not discussed with the class, nor was there any mention of how these different types can be interrogated as sources in History. Ms. D made links in each of her lessons between the response the pupils engaged with as a reading text and the piece of writing they were undertaking themselves only by way of reference to the mark scheme. The particularities of how the response they read was structured, of the technical and other language used, of the signposting language that gave the response cohesion were not explored in either lesson.

Ms. Db's first lesson included a series of pictures explaining how food is digested. Pupils were tasked with transforming this into text. For this stage, Ms. Db provided the class with some words they had to use and others that were forbidden, explaining that she wanted them to write in a scientific way. Whilst this notion was not explored further, the vocabulary that pupils had to include in their text acted as anchors for a context appropriate style, although no

explicit links were made. The second lesson had more focus on literacy by way of text types, but this was organised as a distinct and separate part of her lesson. Over the course of the lesson, over half of the allocated time was spent exploring the text type 'explanation' without reference to the topic acid rain or the specifics of scientific text.

The separation of content from literacy approach can be seen, too, in Mr. D's first lesson, where he did not link the strategy to the lesson content; it sat as a separate, generic approach and instructions were given without specific reference to the actual text type or purpose for which the pupils would be reading. In his second lesson clear links were made to not only subject content, but the language of his subject, Geography. In Mr. D.'s second lesson something approaching the disciplinary literacy described by Moje (2008) could be seen. He identified key terms, text and content-based features and asked the class to examine how certain words and phrases were used to communicate geographical concepts and features. The subject specificity of the text was the driving force behind his interrogation of text. The language of Geography was exposed in this lesson.

Greater connection between literacy and subject also featured in the second of Ms. W's lessons. In this lesson, Ms. W explained that information about topics in Geography can come from many places and that it is important to know how to interrogate and interpret them. In contrast to the first observed lesson, the texts were used explicitly as a means of generating information for a Geographical purpose. This purpose was shared with the pupils and the reading of the text was modelled by the class teacher. The texts were not engaged with passively as they were in her first lesson; the ways in which they can be engaged with were demonstrated and used to explore the subject.

Mr. Pb's second lesson also examined content through an approach. This lesson involved fewer explicit literacy strategies than his first, but more explicit links were made between the approach being used and the aspect being studied. Prior to starting the discussion, Mr. Pb reminded the class why these discussions were important in R.E. and distributed talk cards to each group. These cards contained some common language points for discussion, such as phrases to denote turn taking or agreement/disagreement, as well as some ethical points that were connected to this topic that he wanted to form part of the discussion. He made explicit reference to how ethical dilemmas are discussed in the texts the pupils explored and highlighted key language features that were specific to those texts.

In Mr. E's lessons a similar pattern can be seen. In his first lesson, the approaches used were not explored in terms of the specifics of the sorts of language, including, say, verb use, found in this type of scientific text. The notion of text types was introduced, but the specifics of a scientific evaluation were not examined. The approach and the subject were only connected during the discussion of the example. More subject based focus was seen in lesson two. His use of a shared model owed much to shared writing or writing- models approaches (Corbett & Strong, 2011), an approach popularised initially in the primary school setting. In this iteration, unlike later developments of this approach (see Strong, 2013, for example), the specifics of subject texts were not a common feature, as could be seen in this lesson. The specifics of the text, its purpose and its audience, were not explored, meaning that several of the changes made were general and broadly connected to accuracy, a changed apostrophe, for example, rather than focused on what makes this particular type of scientific text effective or not. The aspects that were identified in the teacher-led group discussion of the model, however, were the linked by Mr. E to marking criteria. This focused the class, albeit in an implicit way on the particular features and expectations of the text in a scientific context. Mr. E's lessons, along with those of Mr. Pb, Ms. W from School 5 and Mr. D from School 1, were those most clearly focused on using literacy approaches to develop subject performance.

#### **4.2.5 Summary**

As is the case with any classroom research, my being in the class alters the classroom context. The teachers in this research were volunteers in research which was, in the classrooms at least, focused on literacy in general and reading comprehension in particular and were told many times that I was studying them, not the pupils. Therefore it is quite possible that the lessons I viewed were designed with me in mind. Over the course of my investigation, I observed approximately 20 hours of lessons in which a considerable proportion of instructional time was spent reading texts of one kind or another. The observed lessons, did, to some degree and in some places, align with the stated theoretical positions on literacy held by the literacy coordinators of each school, although these links were, in many instances, tentative and tended to be by way of an approach being adopted in a lesson with little real explanation or connection with topic. It was also observed that teachers were not necessarily using the approaches that the literacy coordinators had positioned explicitly as whole school approaches.

### 4.3 Interviews with Teachers

As discussed in Chapter 3, all of the interviews for this study followed a qualitative semi-structured design. Each of the interviews was analysed using the same process and then coding was used to look at any common patterns or themes that could be seen. In this section, I will describe and elaborate the core categories and concepts related to them, illustrating how my interpretations of the interview transcripts contributed to the key themes that could be seen in the interview data; these will be explored in detail in Chapter 5. Each of the teachers was interviewed twice, once early in the research cycle and once later on; each time the interviews took place after a lesson was observed and focused to a great extent on the lesson itself. The interview data for each set of interviews will be presented here. The interview schedule, as noted in Chapter 3, allowed for some key questions to be asked of all observed teachers. The semi-structured interviews that were conducted with the class teachers took place directly after each lesson observation. As the quantitative results were not yet collected, the main focus of these interviews was to explore the key aspects of how reading as co-constructed with the PLC group manifested in the classroom and to explore further any approaches or strategies observed during the lesson. Another aim was to examine the key messages from a literacy coordinator about what literacy is and how it should be approached across subjects in a secondary school. The research questions that were explored during the semi-structured interviews were those connected with the link between theory and practice, namely:

How does a literacy coordinator manage whole-school literacy practice across all school subjects?

To what extent does an engagement with learning about theory of literacy impact on practice?

For the purposes of anonymity, as noted earlier in this chapter, I replaced the names of the teachers who participated in this research.

| School   | Teacher | Years Teaching | Subject   |
|----------|---------|----------------|-----------|
| School 1 | Ms C    | 6              | Science   |
| School 1 | Mr D    | 2              | Geography |
| School 2 | Ms L    | 4              | History   |
| School 2 | Ms E    | 11             | RE        |
| School 3 | Mr P    | 3              | History   |
| School 3 | Ms D    | 5              | Art       |

|          |       |   |           |
|----------|-------|---|-----------|
| School 4 | MrPb  | 3 | RE        |
| School 4 | Mr E  | 8 | Science   |
| School 5 | Ms Db | 4 | Science   |
| School 5 | Ms W  | 4 | Geography |

Table 4 Information on class teachers.

As outlined in Chapter 3, the main interview questions for the teachers involved in the research were the same and were part of an interview schedule co-devised and agreed with the PLC in advance of the pilot study and then revised for the research observations. As the interviews were to take place following lesson observations, it was agreed by the PLC that tone, purpose and focus would be important. As noted previously, the lesson observation and interview data were not shared with the literacy coordinators of the schools. The interview approach adopted for this study took the form of knowledge construction through conversation and dialogues. In Kvale's view 'the process of knowing through conversation is inter subjective and social, involving interviewer and interviewee as 'co-constructors of knowledge' (Kvale, 2007, p. 19). The teachers in the study therefore produced some narratives of their own pedagogic experiences (Kvale, 2007). The interviews sought to elicit each teacher's perceptions and understanding about their observed practice and the ways by which they explained their own actions. To this end, questions for the interviews were simple, open ended and conversational, and supplemented with probes and prompts. This also made me focus on some significant incidents that had occurred in their classrooms and use them as the basis for discussions with them. This approach allowed the teachers to explore some of the rationale behind the decisions they made in their lessons. The interview data is presented under themes that were constructed through the data, using the interviewees' own responses to form categories. Each interview began with some general conversation and then the interview opened with questions related directly to the observed lesson, followed by further questions about literacy, school approaches and teaching. Each set of interviews used an interview schedule (Appendix D) to part-structure the conversation around the research questions. Most of the questions on the schedule asked were the same each time, although some were altered for the second round of interviews. This was done in collaboration with the literacy coordinators in the PLC. Any differences in question will be noted in the

commentary on responses to follow. The following section is organised by main theme, with the comments and general findings for each presented for all of the teachers.

### **4.3.1 Teacher efficacy and confidence**

#### **Attitudes to observation**

There were differences in the attitudes teachers had towards being observed. Four of the teachers saw observation as non-threatening part of a teacher's professional experience. Ms. D, for instance, had a very positive attitude towards observation, viewing it as an essential professional development activity, arguing that 'although it can make you nervous and worry about things you wouldn't normally, it motivates you to up your game; it forces you to reflect on your teaching and to make positive improvements to your practice' (lines 56-8).

Of the remaining six, three felt that being observed, even when voluntarily, can lead to a feeling of some vulnerability. Mr E stated, 'I was really nervous today, I don't know why, it is silly really. I suppose you don't want to be seen and for it to go wrong. Or even worse you think it goes really well but it hasn't' (Mr E lines 3-6).

#### **Observation and judgement**

In each of the interviews, the observed teachers wanted to discuss whether I viewed their lesson positively. Throughout the interviews with teachers there was evidence that they were keen to be judged positively. This was, after all, a self selected group and, in line with research on lesson observations, many expressed a keenness to be seen as 'good'. As discussed in Chapter 2, lesson observations are frequently used and perceived as tools of judgement on teacher performance. In the initial interviews, eight of the teachers asked questions about performance, even as the literature indicates that teacher change occurs more frequently when development is the focus rather than performance: '...my aim is to be what I would call a good classroom teacher, respected, motivate pupils to deliver' (Ms. L, lines 65-66).

'...you want somebody to watch you teach and think that you're a good pro, that you know what you're doing.' (Ms. C, lines 4-5).

These teachers expressed their views about observations in terms of a definition or judgement of themselves as practitioners. Each of the eight wanted to know whether the lesson observed was 'good'.

### **Teacher effectiveness and tests results**

The use of tests results as a means of measuring teacher effectiveness was also discussed by some of the teachers at interview. Six of the teachers interviewed expressed some views regarding what could be measured in such tests, pointing out that some developments would not be seen in such a measure. Each of these teachers explained that the tests results were not indicators of teacher quality. Mr. Pb, (lines 15-18), for example, claimed that: '...if you don't get them to score better, it doesn't mean they've not learned or not developed. I think there is more than meeting targets to teaching'. This view was echoed by the other observed teachers who expressed this view, including Mr. D who stated that teacher effectiveness was about more than pupils' results and has to take into account other, less visible factors such as pupil confidence and engagement.

### **Teacher confidence**

In the initial interview round, eight of the group said they tried to incorporate the approaches in which they had been trained in their teaching. All but two of this group reported that they did not have confidence in their ability to utilise the literacy approaches they had been trained in. The most experienced teacher, Ms. E commented that:

'there seems to be a lot of pressure on people to include a lot of elements in all of their lessons and I think that can knock confidence, even if it is something that people can do' (lines 36-37).

Mr. E felt that 'when you have training in things at the start of term you sometimes end up questioning yourself, even if it is actually stuff you have done for years, just not with those terms. It can sound so complicated that it puts you off' (Lines 22-25).

Six of the teachers reported feeling concern that they would not be able to implement the literacy approaches of the school in their lessons. Four of these expressed some worry about their professional identify as a result, with Mr Pb saying 'I think I am good RE teacher. I hope I am anyway, but then with things like this I just feel a bit like I am not really able to do it as well as I'd like, which is frustrating' (lines 51-53).

Ms W commented ‘if I really knew it all and had the time to really get to know it I’d probably feel really excited but it just makes me worry about not really getting it right’ ( lines 60-61).

All of the teachers in each of the interviews stated that they wanted more knowledge about how to make literacy more a part of their lessons. All but one of the teachers, Mr. D, felt they had not received sufficient training or time to explore the literacy approaches of the school.

#### **4.3.2 Performativity and teachers’ positionality.**

In each of the initial interviews, the class teachers expressed views that were linked to notions of performativity. These include the ways in which national and local imperatives were seen as driving teaching and learning, as well as teachers’ feelings of dislocation from the site of decision making about their professional practice.

Even though I had explained to each of the participating class teachers that the lesson observations were not linked to school accountability or performance structures, in the initial round of interviews, each of the class teachers aligned lesson observation with performance judgements, rather than as a tool for exploring their practice. Six of the ten teachers saw lesson observations as potentially threatening, each commenting on concerns about being judged. All of the teachers in the initial round of interviews saw observation as linked to external judgement on quality, rather than as a site of professional dialogue. Eight of the class teachers asked directly for a performance judgement on their lessons, even though the purpose of the observations as unrelated to performance management had been explicitly stated at several points during the research. Ms C commented that ‘I do want to know if I am ‘good’... in other people’s eyes...if I am doing what I should be (lines 8-10). The view of quality as measured from outside was mentioned by all of the class teachers, with eight of the teachers asking directly for a judgement on performance, even when the dialogic, rather than judgement-focused, nature of the conversation was restated.

Mr E stated that ‘I think we all put on a show when someone comes in... from my teacher training on really. I would actually like to be able to see lesson observations as something that would be of benefit to me. It makes sense that talking about your teaching should be a

normal part of what we do' (lines 10-14). This notion observation as performance could be seen in all of the initial interviews.

Other than judgements accrued via lesson observation, the class teachers referred to other external factors as key influences on their practice. Six of the teachers interviewed made explicit mention of the use of assessment data as a measure of teacher quality. Mr Pb commented that 'I don't always do what I think is right for the children really, or what they need. I do what I know will count' (lines 30-31). Others also expressed a view that their decision making in the classroom was often in response to school or national measures. All of the teachers expressed a view that literacy was going to become a more central part of their teaching, with six specifically mentioning Wales' PISA scores as a direct reason for this shift.

Each of the teachers in the first round of interviews explained their literacy teaching decisions with reference to external drivers, the most prevalent being the school's own policy and performance expectations. In the instance of School 2, decision making was conducted not at school, but at a regional level and literacy expectations given to schools in the form of a chronologically organised toolkit. Teachers own understandings of the demands of their subject or the needs of their pupils were not given as a key factor for the selection of approaches in their lessons. Six of the ten teachers explicitly stated that they incorporated literacy in their lessons solely in direct response to national directives and prioritisation that had in turn driven local and school-level focus, even as they felt unsure of how it fitted in to what they were teaching or whether they felt they had sufficient understanding of how to do it effectively:

'I do it because I know I have to...I don't really think it makes my lessons better...I've not seen anything yet anyway' (Ms. C, line 21).

This view was echoed too in the views of six of the ten teachers interviewed who felt that they did not know how to incorporate literacy in their lessons, even as they felt compelled to do:

'I do it, or at least I do what I think *it* is, but I am not really sure why I am doing it or how I would know if it was right' (Mr P, lines 32-33).

In each of the responses, literacy was defined as something 'given' to the teaching staff and which they were then expected to enact in their lessons, even as they felt under-skilled or felt

it irrelevant to many of their lessons. All teachers in the initial interviews expressed a view that literacy as it was presented to them in their schools was an uneasy fit with what they saw as their area of expertise and their aims as subject teachers. Nine of the teachers in this initial round claimed that it was something they perceived as an expected element, rather than a part of their own planning:

‘It is an add-on; I plan my lesson and then put in the literacy focus. It isn’t the way I’d choose to do it, I know’ (Ms. L, line 45).

This view of literacy as an adjunct to their teaching was still felt by seven of the ten teachers in the second round of interviews. The only school where each class teacher expressed a feeling that literacy was more a part of their teaching was School 1, the only school where decision making had over the year been devolved partly through subject teams, rather than the literacy coordinator. Even so, all teachers felt that literacy could be made more specific and relevant to the teaching of their subjects.

All schools had participated in training of some sort in literacy. In each of these training events, strategies were presented to teachers as information and either during the training or shortly afterwards, teachers were told what would be looked for by way of literacy in their lessons. In the initial interviews, each teacher expressed concern that they would not have sufficient understanding to use the approaches that they were expected to demonstrate. In each school teachers saw literacy as something that would be ‘looked for’ (Mr Pb, line 12) in their lessons, something which made each of the teachers feel uncertain. There was a willingness to develop their current level of understanding seen in the responses of all teachers. Each of the teachers interviewed stated that they would welcome more knowledge about how to make literacy more a part of their lessons. Importantly, each teacher expressed a desire for literacy to be an embedded part of what they do as teachers, part of their professional understanding, but initially, at least, felt that the way in which literacy had been presented and was accounted for made this difficult. Ms W (lines 40-43) claimed that ‘I would like to just be able to think ‘oh this would really help them here’ and be able to know what I could use to support them that really fits with what I am trying to do in a way that I understand.’

This desire to develop the professional understanding that could allow teachers to better support their pupils was seen in the initial responses of all of the teachers. There was a

reported view amongst all that teachers would welcome training that helped them develop understanding, even as there was a reported feeling that the training and monitoring systems they were part of did not afford this.

#### **4.3.3 Communication of whole-school approach: Training or staff development in literacy**

Each of the class teachers interviewed had received some training in literacy in the past year. Six of the ten teachers interviewed had only received training within their own school. For most of this group, this was undertaken by their local consortia (Schools 1, 2 and 4), as well as the literacy coordinators from the school. Mr. D from School 1 had also undertaken training in literacy by an external body as part of his role as a member of the Literacy Group in School. Mr. E had also undertaken some external training as part an MA module he was following and had also been part of a small group of teachers from School 4 who were exploring literacy. Mr Db and Ms W had also been part of a group of teachers who had undertaken voluntary additional training in School 5.

Seven of the group had had no specific training in literacy in the five years prior to the year of this research. Of those who had, two had done so as part of their teaching qualification and one as part of a pre-inspection preparation in their previous school of employment. The training in literacy centred, in the main, on whole-school events lasting a full day. These events focused on generic approaches to literacy, such as writing frames. Reciprocal Reading and the Eight Reading Behaviours featured heavily in two thirds of the training undertaken. Other common elements included whole language elements such as the incorporation of free reading time in a variety of forms and text types. The four teachers mentioned aside, the only training or development activity for the teachers was in the form of these one or half day stand alone events.

#### **Relevance of training to teacher practice**

In the initial interviews, seven of the ten teachers didn't see the literacy training they had received as very relevant to the teaching of their subject. This included Mr Db who had volunteered for additional training. All seven commented that it was something that was important as a general principle, but not to their subject. Six of the ten teachers felt it was something they had to do because the inspectorate and Welsh Government had made it a

priority. Ms. C noted that ‘it does feel sometimes like I have to try to add it in when I should be doing something else. I know it is important, but it takes up time I should be spending on science’ (lines 17-20). All of the group of observed teachers expressed a view that further training would be of benefit, with seven of the group saying that they thought different training was needed that allowed them to develop their understanding.

### **Approaches and the whole school**

In the first set of interviews (and round of observations) clear patterns could be seen in the approaches used. A small number of approaches were seen across all schools in some form and similar language used to describe them. This was, in the main, not explicitly linked to the stated dispositions of the literacy coordinators of each school. This did change in the second set of observations and interviews, but not always with an explicit understanding of the approaches underpinning the literacy coordinators’ work, and not in all cases. Again, the closest alignment between a literacy coordinator’s stated interest and beliefs re: literacy and practice in their school was in Mr. D’s lessons and interviews in School 1. His subject-focused literacy approach and subsequent comments about the how specific geographical texts are constructed were in line with the growing interest in disciplinary literacy of Litco 1.

Ms. C in the same school, however, did not teach in this way, nor did she express these views. Similarly, in other schools, with the teachers who were observed (and it must be remembered that this group of teachers volunteered for observation of literacy in their lessons) the literacy beliefs of the literacy coordinators were not articulated explicitly. Some could be seen in practice (see the observations of Ms. E or Ms. W, for example), but in most cases, the literacy beliefs espoused by the literacy coordinators of school were not explicitly referenced by the observed teachers in their schools. Both observed teachers in School 4 did express a clear interest in developing their understanding of literacy through training and opportunities outside of the school. This was seen by both of these teachers as very much a part of the literacy coordinator’s approach which was to explore, in a much broader sense, a range of approaches in a longer time frame.

In the second interviews, six of the teachers felt that they had developed their knowledge and understanding. Three of these said that they had come to understand a little more about practices they already used but did not identify as a particular approach. Mr. D situated this development within his own school and his involvement with literacy. Four of these teachers

said that their involvement in this research had made them focus more explicitly on their literacy practices. Nine of the teachers felt that their school could not make substantial changes to practices or training due to factors beyond their control such as examination specifications, timetabling and professional development structures.

#### **4.3.4 Theoretical understanding and interpretation**

##### **Identification of approaches used in lessons**

In the first round of interviews, all but one of the teachers, Ms. D, named at least one approach they had used in their observed lesson and eight of the ten teachers named more than one. The most frequently named approaches were Reciprocal Reading, Eight Reading Behaviours and text types. In three instances, teachers named approaches that did not actually feature in their lessons. In one of these instances, the teacher, Mr. E, thought he had used the Eight Reading Behaviours, when this hadn't been a feature of the lesson. This stemmed from a misunderstanding as to what the approach actually entailed. In another, Ms. W said: 'I thought I had. I know I should so perhaps I thought it was in there' (lines 12-14). In the case of Ms. E. , she named an approach, group reading, that she had used but, when probed further, she explained that she was uncertain as to what it was as a defined approach: 'I often get the pupils to look at something together as a group and see what they make of it together. I call it group reading because they are reading it as a group, but it probably isn't really' (Ms. E lines 9-10).

##### **Rationale for use of approach**

All of the teachers in the first round of interviews reported that they used the approaches they did because they thought it was part of their school's policy and training or because they had received some training in an approach elsewhere. In the case of School 3, these approaches were, in the main, generic rather than specifically literacy focused, such as the use of group work or reading with the class. No teacher in this first round justified the choice by reference to what they wanted to develop or improve in terms of pupils' work. In all of the interviews after the first round of lessons, the teachers expressed the literacy elements of their lessons in terms that were general and focused on broad aims. These included comments such as: 'I want them to have practice in writing and reading...these things are important in school but later too' (Ms. D, lines 31-34).

‘It is important for these kids to have good literacy...it opens doors for them and makes them more confident’ (Mr. P, lines 13-14).

The teachers were asked to explain in more detail why they used, say, Reciprocal Reading for a specific text in their lessons. Of those that used this approach, the most common response revolved around the pupils learning what ‘good readers’ do. This phrasing is a common feature of training and resources in this approach (Palinscar and Brown, 1984). When probed about the level of challenge in the texts the pupils were engaging with and how teachers gauged if a support structure such as that used was necessary, none of the teachers in the first round of interviews had considered the text, its level of challenge and the reading skills of the pupils in their lessons beyond those pupils who had been identified previously as in need of additional support in literacy. Several of the teachers expressed some surprise at this, with Ms. W stating ‘I am not sure why I didn’t think of that. I do with everything else. It’s really obvious’. (Ms. W, Lines 20-22).

In Mr. Pb’s lesson, the lack of challenge in the text meant that the reading strategy was not at all necessary for the pupils to engage with the text. His initial insistence that they used the strategy anyway indicated, he said, a lack of confidence in how and when to best use such approaches. When probed about whether he thought the pupils need to use a strategy to understand the texts they were given, he replied that ‘they could have understood them without...they weren’t difficult...in fact, I had made them really simple on purpose so that they just got the main points’ (Lines 20-22). None of the class teachers in the initial round of interviews had considered whether the text the pupils were engaging with was of an appropriate level of challenge to require supporting strategies in order to access the text for the purpose of the set task. As will be explored in Chapter 5, this meant that considerable time was wasted instructing pupils in how to use a particular approach to engage with a text that they could already engage with without difficulty.

School 2 used approaches that had been pre-decided for each secondary school on a consortia-wide basis. The teachers from this school were aware of this as the school had been a key part of the piloting of this consortia work, but neither of these teachers could articulate in the first set of interviews why the approaches advocated were useful in their particular lessons for that particular learning aim with that particular class:

Ms. L: ‘I know they worked on it for a long time and wrote the guidance...it was really well thought out and they used lots of research...’ (lines 20-22).

When probed further, Ms. L responded that she used a high number of literacy approaches in her first lesson observation that were not necessarily part of the school's overall literacy strategy, but were approaches she had read or heard about or in which she had received some training in her previous school. These approaches were not really explored during her lesson nor was she sure if they were used for a particular reason during her lesson:

'I wanted to try some things out...partly because I knew I was being observed, but partly because I do want to make this something I am better at in my own teaching. I would like to know more about when to use certain approaches or why they may be useful' (Ms. L, lines 44-46).

These responses suggest that the teachers were not making informed professional decisions about their own lessons.

The second round of interviews produced some different responses. After the second observed lesson, half of the group explained their choice of approach with some reference to pupils' work:

Ms W: 'the class needed to look at how an argument text works, what language is used, how it is set out...they usually just sort of describe things and then say 'it's terrible' or 'it's brilliant' to get their point across' (lines 27-29).

Each of the teachers from two of the schools, School 1 and School 2, could articulate a reason for their use of an approach that was focused on the learning in the lesson and the pupils. In one school (School 3) neither teacher, even when prompted, articulated the literacy choices they made in their lessons in terms of what the pupils were learning or what their development needs were. Ms. D, for example, expressed her awareness that in her first lesson, the texts had not really suited the task she had set and that she had been more focused on 'doing' literacy than on the usefulness of the approaches she used. Similarly, Mr. P said that he felt that he wanted to look more closely at how pupils read and write in his lessons but felt uncertain as to how to best approach this. His choice of unstructured group work in his first observed lesson was something he 'did quite a lot... I have seen it done really effectively, where the pupils really produce great answers but I know I need to work on it more' (lines 22-23). In the second round of interviews, four teachers expressed an increased awareness of the relationship between challenge and approach, although this was not necessarily seen in the lessons.

In Mr. D's interview after his second lesson, he was able to identify the topic needs, text needs and the needs of his class that led to his making the choices he did in terms of the literacy approaches he used in his lesson. He was aware that an approach is best used if a text, or what is required of a response to text, is challenging:

'The extract (from a geological report) was quite hard...I knew that...I wanted them to be able to read these things though, see it's not a mystery...if they could access it already and totally get it and see how it was done, they wouldn't need me to think about how to help them to access it...that is the point really...to get them to do what they wouldn't have been able to otherwise, or do it better' (Lines 32-37).

Mr. D was not the only teacher in this second round to acknowledge that literacy approaches and reading strategies are useful in supporting pupils in their engagement with texts or ideas that may be just a little challenging. Ms. Db also noted that 'they don't really read things like this so when they have to write one themselves (drawing conclusions from evidence) in year 10 or 11, it's really hard for them. I wanted to show them and talk them through really the things the writers do, how they organise their ideas and link ideas together in a clear way' (Lines 25-28).

### **Teacher understanding of approaches**

In the first interview, when asked to explain the key approaches in which they had been trained, in 3 of the 5 schools, teachers from the same school had differing definitions of the strategies and different understandings of how and why to use them. These conflicting definitions and understandings were quite marked. In one instance, teachers from the same school (School 2) described text types as:

Ms. E: 'it's interesting...you get them to say, write a newspaper article or a poem or something about, for me, Hanukah or some ethical dilemma and it helps them remember it because it's in a different format...it sticks more..' (lines 12-14).

Ms. L: 'you teach them about the sort of things you'd see in a report or an evaluation...the layout, the language, purpose, audience...it helps them understand how certain types of text are made and how to write in a certain way or for a specific purpose' (Lines 15-18).

The teachers from School 3 were each able to name some literacy approaches that they thought were used across the school, but these differed from one another and reflected the

things that they (or their departments) were using or had experience of using. Mr. P spoke about the use of Reading Behaviours, whilst Ms. D described writing frames and other writing supports as common school practice. There had been some training in Eight Reading Behaviours, but none of these approaches were explicitly part of the school policy. This lack of clarity in terms of what approaches the school's literacy coordinator was advocating for whole-school use was mirrored in the absence of any recent updated documentation or guidance for staff. The absence of a shared understanding of school approaches can be seen in later responses, too, when teachers explain choices they made in their lessons. This raises some questions, which will be explored in Chapter 5, about how, even when whole-school training events on specific approaches are delivered, teachers' different understanding and then application of these approaches means that pupils are exposed to inconsistent messages and practices. This is especially so in the secondary school, where a pupil will be taught by multiple teachers each day who might in turn have multiple different understandings of how to use the same approach.

In the second round of interviews, eight of the group felt that the literacy approaches they were trained in could have some relevance to their subjects, even if six of this number expressed the concern that they were not yet sure they quite knew how to make that link between the text, the approach and the subject:

Ms. W: 'I do know that if they are better at reading the texts – and there are a lot in Geography- and then they become better at writing their own, then they will be better in Geography. It is all words at the end of the day really. I just don't think I am there yet. I know it, but I not really sure I am doing it'. (Lines 26-30).

This represents a change in attitude over the course of the year.

#### **4.3.5 Literacy within or without subject**

##### **Benefits and limitations of literacy in the subject classroom**

Questions regarding the use of literacy in subject lessons provoked mixed responses. In initial answers, all teachers identified that literacy was important in a general way:

'It's becoming more of a focus and I think that's good. It's a vital part of education and preparing them for the world' (Mr. P, Lines 44-45).

This comment is representative of a general expression of literacy as a positive thing for schools to focus on. As noted above, these generalised, context-free sentiments were shared by the whole group. Each of the observed teachers recognised that literacy was going to figure more explicitly in secondary schools and all felt this was a positive move. However, this positivity was expressed in terms of a general sense of pupils being literate and therefore more equipped to enter the adult world. In the first round of interviews, each teacher spoke about how better literacy was of benefit to the pupil and to society:

‘We need a more literate work-force...if they can understand things better and can write more accurately, it just opens up opportunities for them’ (Ms. L, lines 32-33).

Again, this sort of response was found in each of the first round of interviews. None of the teachers in this first round of interviews answered questions regarding how literacy impacts upon their subject directly unless offered prompts. When prompted to consider how a focus on literacy could benefit their own subject teaching, responses became mixed. The initial responses of most teachers to the question of how literacy would be situated within their own teaching tended to be general and positive. Eight of those interviewed noted that such a focus would make pupils more able to respond to text and to write more effective responses in their subject lessons and, most frequently mentioned, their assessments. Seven of those interviewed mentioned that literacy in Wales had been identified as a problem and all recognised that literacy was something that needed to be a focus in secondary schools, with four teachers mentioning that literacy had been seen as a feature of primary school teaching rather than secondary school:

‘It was always something pupils did in primary school and then they came into secondary to be taught subjects. They’d already covered reading and writing and now it was time for subjects. That has changed now, I think’ (Mr. P, lines 52-55).

Two of the teachers in the first round of interviews noted that they felt the focus on literacy in secondary school was, in part, due to weaker literacy skills in the pupils arriving in secondary school:

‘We have noticed the change though. We have lots of pupils who come in who don’t really have the skills’ (Mr. E, lines 36-37).

#### **4.3.6 Literacy as separate from subject**

Each of these types of responses figure literacy as a set of generic skills or that which exists as an adjunct to the teaching of subjects, happening at a different time and place to subject lessons.

Seven of the ten teachers interviewed expressed some concern that they were not sure how to approach literacy in their classrooms. In each of these responses, literacy was defined as something separate to subject, with teachers expressing concern that they did not have the necessary skills or knowledge to teach literacy. Mr. P noted that he felt ‘I don’t really know if I am doing it right, but I try to. I’m not sure if I have the knowledge myself yet, really’ (lines 36-8). These responses echo comments made regarding training and also teacher confidence.

All teachers in the initial interviews raised some questions regarding how literacy could fit across all subjects in a secondary school. Ms. L expressed some concern that the literacy approaches used in her school did not always fit with what was being taught in her lessons: ‘I feel like I am sometimes shoe-horning things in that don’t really suit the lesson because I know that is what I am meant to focus on, even if it doesn’t fit with what I have planned subject-wise’ (Ms. L, lines 43-44).

Ms. E similarly expressed some frustration that her scheme of work and the literacy approaches she followed as part of her whole-school literacy plan were not planned together so as to work in tandem:

‘ I may be doing topics which will end on a piece of assessed writing during a particular term, but the literacy focus for that time might be oracy or writing instructions. It needs to fit together better’ (Ms. E, lines 40-41).

This could also be seen in Ms D’s comment that even having had some experience in another school in literacy, she ‘didn’t see how it would fit really. It will always feel like I am doing something extra to what I should be doing’ (lines 60-61).

Others also expressed a concern that the literacy approaches of the school were not always suited to what they were teaching as part of their subject. All but one of teachers in the initial interviews mentioned feeling that they had felt or did feel as if literacy strategies were an

added on element of their lessons rather than part of their teaching, even if five of these expressed that they thought it *could* be of benefit to pupils' work. In the second round of interviews this was still the view of seven of the teachers. All teachers expressed the view that a more subject or discipline focused literacy would be more pertinent to their teaching. Of the three teachers who said that they saw literacy approaches as a part of their subject teaching, two were from School 1. This included Mr. D who, in his second interview, expressed clearly that he had come to see literacy as very much part of his teaching, saying 'I think I have seen a difference in my own teaching and in their work...I know I have seen a big difference for some of them in their Geography' (Mr. D, lines 51 and 58).

#### 4.4 Test Data

In each of the research schools, as outlined in Chapter 3, all pupils in year 9 were given a test in literacy in the September of the academic year of this research and also in the June. The lack of a control school for the testing means that maturation has to be taken into account. The tests were based on the PISA Reading Literacy questions (OECD, 2009b). The test questions were changed for each of the tests, but were of the same type and level of challenge each time. This allowed for a comparison of the same skills over the same level of challenge. The table below shows the types of reading required for each question, along with the PISA scale –that is, the item difficulty on a PISA scale- and the percentage of correct answers across the OECD in each question.

| Question no | PISA scale | Percentage | Level | Skill              | Text type for the section |
|-------------|------------|------------|-------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 1a          | 356-360    | 85%        | 1     | interpret          | continuous                |
| 1b          | 480-487    | 65%        | 2     | retrieve info      |                           |
| 1c          | 402-410    | 78%        | 1     | reflect & evaluate |                           |
| 2a          | 478-484    | 65%        | 2     | retrieve info      | Non continuous            |
| 2b          | 540-542    | 50%        | 3     | retrieve info      |                           |
| 2c          | 600-598    | 37%        | 4     | reflect & evaluate |                           |
| 2d          | 397-395    | 77%        | 1     | interpret          |                           |
| 3a          | 521-525    | 53%        | 3     | interpret          | continuous                |

|    |         |     |   |                       |
|----|---------|-----|---|-----------------------|
| 3b | 562-559 | 45% | 4 | interpret             |
| 3c | 637-640 | 37% | 5 | reflect &<br>evaluate |

Table 2 Test question types

As can be seen, the pre and post-tests were matched closely to allow for analysis. The question by question data was analysed for pre and post-test changes across all schools, within schools and between schools.

A paired sample t-test showed the mean difference in the pre and post-test scores item by item. The broad results showed that mean score for each school improved from the pre-tests to the post-test.

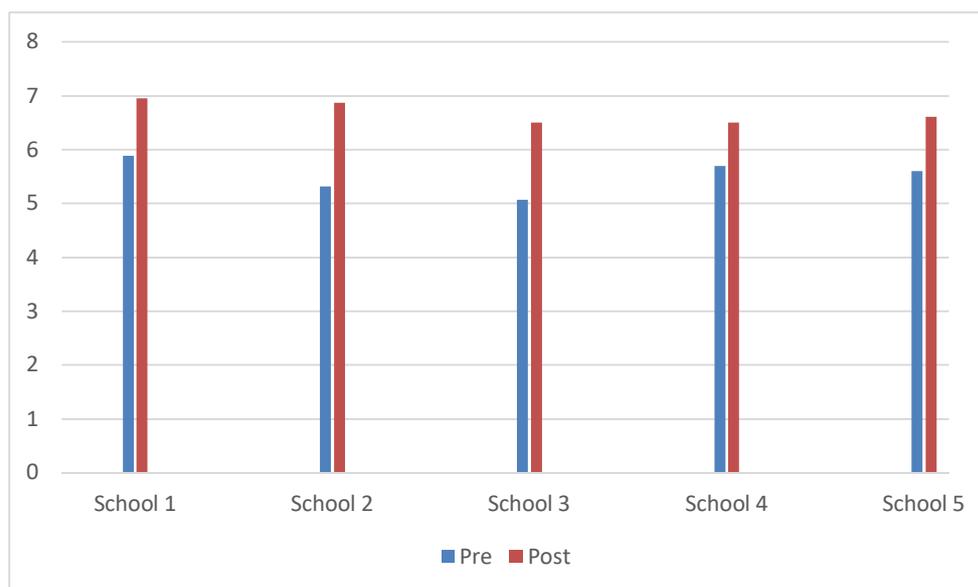


Fig 6 Overall tests scores by school

An ANOVA (analysis of variance) of the results shows that whilst there is significant difference in each school between the test scores, there was no significant difference between the schools in the pre and post-test differences:

| School 1<br>(N=72) | School 2<br>(N=99) | School 3<br>(N=58) | School 4<br>(N=21) | School 5<br>(N= 23) | F | P |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---|---|
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---|---|

|          | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |      |     |
|----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|------|-----|
| Pre-test | 5.88     | 2.11      | 5.31     | 2.01      | 5.06     | 2.13      | 5.68     | 2.08      | 5.59     | 2.29      | 2.57 | .03 |
| Posttest | 6.94     | 2.04      | 6.86     | 2.19      | 6.86     | 2.19      | 6.49     | 2.08      | 6.60     | 2.54      | .97  | .42 |

Table 9 (ANOVA) between different schools with respect to pre and post-test

This suggests that the nature of the literacy work undertaken in each school made no statistical difference to the pupils' performance in the PISA reading tests. Each school improved ipsatively, but no school improved at a significantly different rate to any other. The greatest differences in pre and post-test scores can be seen in School 2 and 3. School 2 improved on their pre-test mean performance by 1.35 and School 3 by 1.8. These schools did have the lowest scores in the first test.

As noted in Table 2, the tests were matched by level and by question type across the pre and post-tests. Each of the questions in each of the tests focused on a different reading skill, as outlined in the PISA guidance (OECD, 2009b). In each of the tests, the questions were of the same level of difficulty so as to provide a more useful comparison. A paired sample t-test showed the mean differences between the pre and post-test by question.

*Mean difference between post and pre-test*

|            | Pre      |           | Post     |           | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | CI 95% |      | Cohen's<br>d |
|------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|--------|------|--------------|
|            | (N=530)  |           | (N=530)  |           |          |          | LL     | UL   |              |
|            | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |          |          |        |      |              |
| Measures   |          |           |          |           |          |          |        |      |              |
| Question 1 | .78      | .27       | .87      | .21       | 7.35     | .0       | -.12   | -.07 | 0.37         |
|            |          |           |          |           |          | 0        |        |      |              |
| Question 2 | .49      | .28       | .57      | .29       | 6.41     | .0       | -.10   | -.05 | 0.28         |
|            |          |           |          |           |          | 0        |        |      |              |
| Question 3 | .41      | .29       | .60      | .34       | 11.40    | .0       | -.22   | -.15 | 0.60         |
|            |          |           |          |           |          | 0        |        |      |              |

Table 10 Paired sample t-test

Table 10 shows the question by question mean difference between the pre and post-test data for all schools. This showed that scores improved for each question in the post-test. For each question, the scores on post-test are significantly higher than those for each question in the

pre-test. This demonstrates that improvement was made not only in each school, but also in each question type. The scores improved most for question 3, which had the highest level of difficulty across each of its parts.

|            | School 1(N=72) |           | School 2 (N=99) |           | School 3(N=58) |           | School 4 (N=21) |           | School 5 (N= 23) |           | F    | P   |
|------------|----------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|------|-----|
|            | <i>M</i>       | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>        | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>       | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>        | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>         | <i>SD</i> |      |     |
| Question 1 | .80            | .26       | .79             | .26       | .72            | .28       | .81             | .26       | .73              | .32       | 2.05 | .08 |
| Pre-test   |                |           |                 |           |                |           |                 |           |                  |           |      |     |
| Item 1     | .89            | .17       | .88             | .21       | .86            | .23       | .86             | .23       | .83              | .26       | 1.21 | .30 |
| Post-test  |                |           |                 |           |                |           |                 |           |                  |           |      |     |
| Question 2 | .28            | .02       | .45             | .27       | .44            | .28       | .49             | .27       | .51              | .28       | 2.11 | .07 |
| Pre-test   |                |           |                 |           |                |           |                 |           |                  |           |      |     |
| Item 2     | .59            | .30       | .57             | .28       | .54            | .30       | .56             | .24       | .58              | .33       | .38  | .82 |
| Post-test  |                |           |                 |           |                |           |                 |           |                  |           |      |     |
| Question 3 | .44            | .29       | .36             | .28       | .36            | .30       | .41             | .30       | .44              | .30       | 2.00 | .09 |
| Pre-test   |                |           |                 |           |                |           |                 |           |                  |           |      |     |
| Item 3     | .62            | .32       | .62             | .34       | .57            | .33       | .55             | .36       | .58              | .34       | .96  | .42 |
| Post-test  |                |           |                 |           |                |           |                 |           |                  |           |      |     |

Table 11 Question by question ANOVA

Table 11 again shows the mean difference between schools question by question with respect to pre-test and post-test. It is evident from this data that for all items there is no significant difference between different schools with respect to pre-test and post-test; the significant differences for the tests lie within each school. This opens up questions about the impact of the approaches used in each school, as well as the ways in which the types of literacy being practised impact upon tests such as these.

A more detailed breakdown of the results by question type was conducted to explore any variance or development in specific types of reading within and between schools. The scores for each question type were collated and cross-tabulated. These will be presented for each question: interpret, reflect and evaluate, and retrieve information in turn below.

The interpret questions in each of the tests were analysed in the first test across all schools as can be seen below:

| Interpret               |                                   | School 1 | School 2 | School 3 | School 4 | School 5 |        |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------|
| interpret<br>mean coded | Count                             | 71       | 67       | 43       | 39       | 35       | 255    |
|                         | .00 % within interpret mean coded | 27.8%    | 26.3%    | 16.9%    | 15.3%    | 13.7%    | 100.0% |
|                         | % within school                   | 45.5%    | 48.6%    | 55.8%    | 50.6%    | 42.2%    | 48.0%  |
| 1.00                    | Count                             | 85       | 71       | 34       | 38       | 48       | 276    |
|                         | % within interpret mean coded     | 30.8%    | 25.7%    | 12.3%    | 13.8%    | 17.4%    | 100.0% |
|                         | % within school                   | 54.5%    | 51.4%    | 44.2%    | 49.4%    | 57.8%    | 52.0%  |
| Total                   | Count                             | 156      | 138      | 77       | 77       | 83       | 531    |
|                         | % within interpret mean coded     | 29.4%    | 26.0%    | 14.5%    | 14.5%    | 15.6%    | 100.0% |
|                         | % within                          | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0% |

Table 12 Pre- test scores for interpret questions across all schools.

Of all pupils, the highest percentage of pupils who answered this type of question correctly came from School 5, where 57.8% of pupils answered ‘interpret’ questions correctly. The lowest score was by School 3 with 44.2% of all pupils answering this type of question correctly. The range of scores for this type of question was not significantly different, with schools scoring within a range of 13.6% of each other.

| Reflect and evaluate       |   | School 1 | School 2 | School 3 | School 4 | School 5 | Total  |
|----------------------------|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------|
| reflect_evaluate_mean_code | Count                                   | 91       | 88       | 54       | 46       | 48       | 327    |
|                            | .00 % within reflect_evaluate_mean_code | 27.8%    | 26.9%    | 16.5%    | 14.1%    | 14.7%    | 100.0% |
|                            | % within school                         | 58.3%    | 63.8%    | 70.1%    | 59.7%    | 57.8%    | 61.6%  |
| 1.00                       | Count                                   | 65       | 50       | 23       | 31       | 35       | 204    |
|                            | % within reflect_evaluate_mean_code     | 31.9%    | 24.5%    | 11.3%    | 15.2%    | 17.2%    | 100.0% |
|                            | % within school                         | 41.7%    | 36.2%    | 29.9%    | 40.3%    | 42.2%    | 38.4%  |
| Total                      | Count                                   | 156      | 138      | 77       | 77       | 83       | 531    |
|                            | % within reflect_evaluate_mean_code     | 29.4%    | 26.0%    | 14.5%    | 14.5%    | 15.6%    | 100.0% |
|                            | % within                                | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0% |

Table 13 Pre-test scores for reflect and evaluate questions across all schools

The reflect and evaluation questions produced different results. This question type saw a lower range of scores than those for the interpret questions. Again, School 5 had the highest percentage (42.2%) of pupils who answered this type of question correctly, whilst School 3 scored the lowest for this type of question with 29% of pupils answering this type of question correctly. The spread of scores for this question type was within a similar range to that for the interpret questions -13.3%. This question type did include the most difficult of the questions in each of the tests –the sole level 5 question in each paper. This may go some way to explaining the lower scores for this type of question overall.

| Retrieve information |                              | School 1 | School 2 | School 3 | School 4 | School 5 | Total  |
|----------------------|------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------|
|                      | Count                        | 45       | 61       | 36       | 23       | 32       | 197    |
|                      | % within                     |          |          |          |          |          |        |
| .00                  | retrieve_info_mean_pre_coded | 22.8%    | 31.0%    | 18.3%    | 11.7%    | 16.2%    | 100.0% |
|                      | % within =1, =2              | 28.8%    | 44.2%    | 46.8%    | 29.9%    | 38.6%    | 37.1%  |
|                      | Count                        | 111      | 77       | 41       | 54       | 51       | 334    |
|                      | % within                     |          |          |          |          |          |        |
| 1.00                 | retrieve_info_mean_pre_coded | 33.2%    | 23.1%    | 12.3%    | 16.2%    | 15.3%    | 100.0% |
|                      | % within school              | 71.2%    | 55.8%    | 53.2%    | 70.1%    | 61.4%    | 62.9%  |
|                      | Count                        | 156      | 138      | 77       | 77       | 83       | 531    |
|                      | % within                     |          |          |          |          |          |        |
| Total                | retrieve_info_mean_pre_coded | 29.4%    | 26.0%    | 14.5%    | 14.5%    | 15.6%    | 100.0% |
|                      | % within =1,=2               | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0% |

Table 14 Pre-test scores for retrieve information questions across all schools

Lastly the retrieve information skills for each school saw the highest score in the pre-test for all schools. The highest score was from School 1, where 71.2 % of pupils answered these sorts of questions correctly and, again, the lowest score was for School 3 with 53.2% of pupils answering this type of question correctly. The literacy coordinators of each school had indicated that they thought these types of questions would most likely to be answered correctly by pupils, as they felt these were the question types the pupils encountered most frequently.

The same analysis was done for each question type in the post-test. Again, results were cross-tabulated to look at scores within schools. A further paired samples test confirmed the hypothesis that there was significant positive improvement in all three questions between the two tests. As will be seen below, the pattern of improvement was evident across all schools and all questions types, except for School 1's slight and not significant dip of 0.7 % in the retrieve information questions.

| Interpret post           |                          | School 1 | School 2 | School 3 | School 4 | School 5 | Total  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------|
| interpret_mean_code_post | Count                    | 44       | 34       | 27       | 26       | 24       | 155    |
|                          | .00 % within             | 28.4%    | 21.9%    | 17.4%    | 16.8%    | 15.5%    | 100.0% |
|                          | interpret_mean_code_post | 28.2%    | 24.6%    | 35.5%    | 33.8%    | 28.9%    | 29.2%  |
| st                       | Count                    | 112      | 104      | 49       | 51       | 59       | 375    |
|                          | 1.00 % within            | 29.9%    | 27.7%    | 13.1%    | 13.6%    | 15.7%    | 100.0% |
|                          | interpret_mean_code_post | 71.8%    | 75.4%    | 64.5%    | 66.2%    | 71.1%    | 70.8%  |
| Total                    | Count                    | 156      | 138      | 76       | 77       | 83       | 530    |
|                          | % within                 | 29.4%    | 26.0%    | 14.3%    | 14.5%    | 15.7%    | 100.0% |
|                          | interpret_mean_code_post | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0% |

Table 15 post-test interpret questions for each school

The range of percentages of correct response for this type of question ranged within 10.9%. School 2 scored the highest in this test with a score of 75.4% and school 3 scored the lowest with a score of 64.5%.

The post-test interpret questions saw an improvement in each school as can be seen below:

| School   | Interpret pre | Interpret post | Difference |
|----------|---------------|----------------|------------|
| School 1 | 54.5          | 71.8           | +17.3      |
| School 2 | 51.4          | 75.4           | +24        |
| School 3 | 44.2          | 64.5           | +20.3      |
| School 4 | 49.4          | 66.2           | +16.8      |
| School 5 | 57.8          | 71.1           | +13.3      |

Table 16 Comparison of interpret scores pre and post-test

The between school comparatively low score for School 3 in this type of question is contrasted with its within school improvement of 20.3% -the second highest improvement in this question type across all of the schools. School 5 had the highest score in this question type in the first test, but the lowest improvement percentage. Pupils in School 4 improved the most in this question type.

| Reflect and evaluate post        |                                  | School 1 | School 2 | School 3 | School 4 | School 5 | Total  |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------|
| reflect_evaluate_mean_post_coded | Count                            | 53       | 51       | 23       | 34       | 31       | 192    |
|                                  | % within                         |          |          |          |          |          | 100.0  |
|                                  | reflect_evaluate_mean_post_coded | 27.6%    | 26.6%    | 12.0%    | 17.7%    | 16.1%    | %      |
|                                  | % within school                  | 34.0%    | 37.0%    | 30.3%    | 44.2%    | 37.3%    | 36.2%  |
| Total                            | Count                            | 103      | 87       | 53       | 43       | 52       | 338    |
|                                  | % within                         |          |          |          |          |          | 100.0  |
|                                  | reflect_evaluate_mean_post_coded | 30.5%    | 25.7%    | 15.7%    | 12.7%    | 15.4%    | %      |
|                                  | % within school                  | 66.0%    | 63.0%    | 69.7%    | 55.8%    | 62.7%    | 63.8%  |
| Total                            | Count                            | 156      | 138      | 76       | 77       | 83       | 530    |
|                                  | % within                         |          |          |          |          |          | 100.0  |
|                                  | reflect_evaluate_mean_post_coded | 29.4%    | 26.0%    | 14.3%    | 14.5%    | 15.7%    | %      |
|                                  | % within                         | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0% |

Table 17 post-test reflect and evaluate scores for each school

This question type saw the greatest improvement for all scores, except School 4. The highest score (69.7%) was notable for being from School 3 which had scored the lowest in this question type in the first test. The School 3 score in this type of question improved by a considerable 39.8% between the tests. The range for this question fell between 14.1%.

| School   | Reflect and Evaluate<br>pre | Reflect and evaluate<br>post | Difference |
|----------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------------|
| School 1 | 41.7                        | 66                           | +24.3      |
| School 2 | 36.2                        | 63                           | +26.8      |
| School 3 | 29.9                        | 69.7                         | +39.8      |
| School 4 | 40.3                        | 55.8                         | +15.3      |
| School 5 | 42.2                        | 62.7                         | +20.5      |

Table 18 Comparison of reflect and evaluate scores pre and post-test

| Retrieve information post     |                               | School 1 | School 2 | School 3 | School 4 | School 5 | Total  |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------|
| retrieve_info_mean_post_coded | Count                         | 46       | 31       | 23       | 18       | 24       | 142    |
|                               | % within                      |          |          |          |          |          |        |
|                               | retrieve_info_mean_post_coded | 32.4%    | 21.8%    | 16.2%    | 12.7%    | 16.9%    | 100.0% |
|                               | % within school               | 29.5%    | 22.5%    | 30.3%    | 23.4%    | 28.9%    | 26.8%  |
| retrieve_info_mean_post_coded | Count                         | 110      | 107      | 53       | 59       | 59       | 388    |
|                               | % within                      |          |          |          |          |          |        |
|                               | retrieve_info_mean_post_coded | 28.4%    | 27.6%    | 13.7%    | 15.2%    | 15.2%    | 100.0% |
|                               | % within school               | 70.5%    | 77.5%    | 69.7%    | 76.6%    | 71.1%    | 73.2%  |
| Total                         | Count                         | 156      | 138      | 76       | 77       | 83       | 530    |
|                               | % within                      |          |          |          |          |          |        |
|                               | retrieve_info_mean_post_coded | 29.4%    | 26.0%    | 14.3%    | 14.5%    | 15.7%    | 100.0% |
|                               | % within                      | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0% |

Table 19 post-test retrieve information scores for each school

This was the question type that saw the least improvement, for all schools, across the tests. The score for School 1 in this test was below that of the pre-test. The remaining four schools improved their scores on this type of question although the range (7.8%) was smaller than for the other questions. This was the question that all schools had performed most strongly in the first test, which may have impacted upon the potential for improvement. This will be discussed in Chapter 5.

| School   | Retrieve information<br>pre | Retrieve information<br>post | Difference |
|----------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------------|
| School 1 | 71.2                        | 70.5                         | -0.7       |
| School 2 | 55.8                        | 77.5                         | +21.7      |
| School 3 | 53.2                        | 69.7                         | +16.5      |
| School 4 | 70.1                        | 76.6                         | +5.5       |
| School 5 | 61.4                        | 71.1                         | +10.3      |

**Table 20 Comparison of retrieve information scores pre and post-test**

As can be seen, there was improvement in each school between the tests. That improvement was significant when comparing the school's own results, although not significant when comparing school by school. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, this suggests that differences in the particular approach adopted in each schools, were not manifested in the test data. Differences can be seen in the types of improvement schools made in question type and degree of improvement. This too will be discussed in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion of findings

#### 5.1 Context and rationale for the research

This research was conducted to explore the ways in which literacy was being developed in secondary schools in Wales. This included a focus on how the literacy coordinators used theory to inform their decisions, the place of a PLC as a mechanism for professional and school development, and how whole-school approaches are made manifest in the classroom. It also sought to explore what impacts could be seen in the types of reading assessed in PISA Reading Literacy tests, as it was these tests that acted as both instigator and success measures of considerable change in the educational landscape in Wales. The preceding chapters have established the national context for this study, set out the views from literature regarding reading literacy in the secondary classroom, explained the research design and presented the data from lesson observations, meetings, interviews and tests. This chapter presents a discussion of the findings of this research, organised by way of research question. In addition, the relationship between the quantitative results, school practice and the findings that surfaced from literature is discussed. This chapter concludes with describing the limitations of the study. Chapter 6 presents recommendations for future studies and research, and any implications the current study may have for exploring how to approach literacy in secondary school lessons, as well as how such change is managed so as to have coherent, purposeful impact on pupils' learning.

Whilst there has been research conducted on reading comprehension, these have been largely based in the USA (RAND, 2002) and/or in elementary/primary schools (Taylor et al, 2000; Cocannon, -Gibney & Murphy, 2010). The aim of this research was to explore the ways in which literacy was being developed in a group of secondary schools in Wales and to critically analyse whole-school approaches that were used across subject areas in these secondary schools. What follows is a critical discussion of this research organised by way of research question.

## **5.2 To what extent does an engagement with learning about theory of literacy impact on practice?**

As outlined in the previous chapter and in Chapter 2, prior to the academic year when much of this research took place, the PLC had met twice. This work was, at least in part, to help inform and establish the work the literacy coordinators who made up the group were going to put in place in their schools. The group had engaged with a number of theoretical positions and, in the spirit of inquiry, had discussed and explored ideas about literacy, reading and associated practices. These meetings took place in June and July, with the research process in schools starting in the September. From these meetings, some of the research questions that informed this thesis were discussed and refined. This research question was of interest to the PLC group as they wanted to expand their knowledge base regarding literacy and reading and use this to inform the practices they put into place within their schools. In turn, this led to an evaluation of the ways in which literacy was approached in the classroom, particularly if it was approached as an integrated part of the teaching and learning of the subject or as a discrete element, and how literacy approaches in general and reading approaches in particular could be part of whole-school practice in a secondary school. It is this aspect of the research that I explore in this section. The information related to this question was generated during the lesson observations and the interviews that followed each observation. The stated positions of the literacy coordinators during the PLC meetings also gave information regarding the theoretical positions they held and the approaches they used in their role, as well as some of the reasoning behind their decisions.

### **5.2.1 The role of theory in the decisions and practices of the literacy coordinators**

Much of the discussion in the early PLC meetings revolved around whether reading at the comprehensive school stage was taught or acquired and whether and how all subjects should view and support reading in their lessons. I had, as part of my role as PLC member, shared some reading with the group in the initial meeting from a number of theoretical backgrounds (Moje, 2007; Palinscar & Brown, 1984; Daniels et al, 2000) and had initiated discussion about the positions found in each of these readings, namely disciplinary literacy, reciprocal reading and whole language. The literacy coordinators expressed most clear interest in learning about strategies, with a view to selecting strategies that would form part of their school's literacy policy and approach. As can be seen in Chapter 4, four of the five literacy coordinators used a generic skills based approach in their schools, in the initial stages at least.

In places, the discussions were solution focused rather than theory engaged, with factors such as resource availability being prioritised. Litco 5, for example, brought to an early PLC meeting a range of work mats that had information regarding different text types on them; Litco 1 shared reciprocal reading cards with the group. The strategies that had resources attached to them were viewed favourably by the group. As stated by Litco 5, ‘I think we all need something that we can give to people to say ‘this is how you do it, this is what you use’’ (Meeting 2, lines 121-122). Those literacy coordinators who expressed an early interest in using the most popular approach, Reciprocal Reading, in their schools, made explicit mention of the resources that are available for this approach. There is some evidence to suggest that this approach can be effective (Palinscar & Brown, 1984; Shanahan, 2005), but the evidence base did not feature in early discussions regarding why this approach had been selected. This suggests that pragmatic concerns were more of a focus, certainly at this early stage of the PLC, than engagement with theoretical positions and exploring which position and associated approaches would best fit a particular context.

Having selected strategy instruction, and in particular Reciprocal Reading or the Eight Reading Behaviours approaches, some literacy coordinators did engage more explicitly with the ideas that underpinned approaches of this kind by way of, in the case of Litco 1, sharing a journal article with the PLC on reading strategy instruction approaches that was discussed in the PLC, or in the case of Litco 5, sharing with the PLC old and new versions of their school literacy policy with theoretical positions mapped across the document. These instances were notable for their rarity. Some justifications were offered by literacy coordinators regarding their use of generic strategy instruction approaches that used some of the language of these approaches:

‘they break reading down into manageable parts that we can give to teachers.’ (Meeting 2, line 40)

‘it shows the teachers and the pupils the sorts of things a good reader does when they read so that they can use it in all of their subjects’ (Meeting 3, lines 52-53).

The parts of the meetings where the PLC engaged with the theoretical positions of various approaches to reading were the parts of the meetings that were most likely to be structured by way of individual comments and questions to me. This highlights the perceived and actual differences in our roles within the PLC. I did, after all, have more experience with this element of the work. It could also be seen as an indicator of a lack of experience or

confidence in this area. Litco 3, for example, offered no comment on the theoretical positions discussed by PLC, saying, 'I haven't read this sort of thing since university...I'll just listen to you all' (Meeting 3, line 56). Litco 3 was the literacy coordinator who made the fewest changes to their school's policy and practices, and drew upon a mixture of approaches from a number of theoretical positions in their role as literacy coordinator. This is not to suggest a simple correlation between engagement with theory and proactivity in practice. It might, though, point to the relationship noted by Van Daal et al (2014) between self efficacy beliefs and willingness to innovate.

The discussions in the first two PLC meetings generated an agreed set of key elements that was used to inform the lesson observations. These are explored in Chapter 3. Of the five literacy coordinators, four expressed an early initial preference for the view that literacy was best taught as part of a skills-based approach, with one literacy coordinator using this view amongst others in their work. These skills were described, in the main, as context-free, in that they could and should be included across all lessons as generic ways in which pupils could be supported to engage with and produce texts. All of the literacy coordinators during the first three meetings viewed literacy in this way - as a set of approaches that could be taught in the same way regardless of subject content. This coincided with the dominant view of reading that was observed in lessons, which was generic skills-focused and strategy based. As can be seen in Chapter 4, the majority of lessons throughout the research focused on the use of a small number of generic, shared reading strategies when pupils engaged with text. Proponents of this type of skills-based literacy (often referred to as a content area literacy) believe that the cognitive requirements for reading/writing are essentially the same regardless of content areas and that the primary difference among disciplines is in their content (Shanahan and Shanahan, 2012). In a content area literacy model, then, pupils are expected to use generic literacy skills and strategies to help them engage with texts in all content areas. The views of Litco 1 began to change during the year of the research and became more focused on aspects of disciplinary literacy (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Moje, 2007). This was also the case, although this happened later in the year, with Litco 5.

The pragmatism that can be seen in the selection of approaches can be situated within notions of performance, as discussed in Chapter 2. The roles adopted during the PLC meetings when theoretical or research-based approaches to literacy were a focus, were those where my own role as PLC member was most noticeably different. My position during these elements of the

meetings was connected to theory and research, with little direct engagement by the literacy coordinators in initial discussions of theoretical positions. Theoretical understanding was not viewed as a key concern. Instead, the literacy coordinators were driven to find explicit, manageable approaches that could be *given* to teachers. As can be seen in the comments above, literacy was viewed as a tangible thing that is identified (and hence identifiable) and then performed.

The invisible processes of informed decision making, outlined by Borg (2006), was largely absent for the literacy coordinators as well as the class teachers in the discussions about why and how to select and adopt particular approaches in the classroom. The changes in cognition that Borg (2006, 2009) sees as underpinning effective teacher development were not the focus; rather visible changes in practice were identified as the key aspects of the literacy approaches adopted. This tension between the invisible and the visible as the site of teacher professional understanding and development could be seen in the pragmatic moves by the literacy coordinators towards finding a tangible ‘thing’ that could be ‘given to’ or ‘used by’ teachers in contrast to the teachers’ expressed willingness to ‘know’ or ‘learn’ more so as to better inform their practice and understanding. The selection of the approaches, framed in terms of resource availability and portability, could be seen as a means to ‘solve a problem’ (Braun et al, 2010, p.549) rather than to deepen understanding.

This sense of disconnection between the theoretical basis (the invisible understanding) for the adopted strategies and teachers’ explanations for their visible choices can also be viewed through the lens of performativity and the ways in which teachers ‘do’ or ‘perform’ literacy in their lessons with their prime stated rationale being situated as external –school performance expectations and national priorities –rather than as part of their developing professional understanding. Whilst it might be argued that an explicit understanding of the theory and research-base for classroom approaches might be an onerous task to add to an already heavy workload, the disconnection between the why/how of these approaches from the prescribed, enacted ‘what’ meant that the class teachers did not feel able to make professional choices in their lessons. As seen in Chapter 4, teachers made teaching decisions that were not based on an understanding of what would be effective for their pupils in that lesson in that context. This meant that strategies were sometimes used inappropriately or unnecessarily.

### **5.2.2 Strategy selection and choice**

The lessons provided a valuable site of inquiry for exploring how reading is approached in secondary schools. As can be seen in the previous chapter, over all of the schools, teachers instructed their pupils to use a small repertoire of reading strategies. This repertoire typically included a combination of strategies among the following: Reciprocal Reading, skimming and scanning, using or referencing the Eight Reading Behaviours (notably activating prior knowledge and summarising) and class discussion (Duke et al., 2011; NRA, 2000; Harvey & Goudvis, 2008). These approaches were seen in lessons across each of the schools involved in this research. This was the case even where, as in the case of School 1, the literacy coordinator developed a stated position that was different from this type of approach. During the second set of post-lesson interviews, teachers' reflections on their lessons and choices indicated that seven of the teachers thought these strategies could be effective tools for teaching and developing reading comprehension, even as they expressed some lack of clarity as to how this efficacy could be released in their lessons.

In most instances in the first set of observed lessons, pupils were told to use strategies that were part of the school literacy guidance, but beyond the instruction, guidance as to how to employ the strategies, or why the strategy may help pupils engage with a text, was not forthcoming; explanation was offered in only one of the initial lessons, though this did increase to all but one of the lessons later in the year. It is worth noting that, aside from the prevalence of strategies such as Reciprocal Reading and Eight Reading Behaviours, many of the strategies used were not explicit elements of the whole-school approach in the schools in which the class teachers taught. In some instances, teachers were imprecise with the language they used to describe strategies or approaches and in three out of the five schools, expressed different definitions and views on what their school's literacy policy and/or approaches were. In all but four of the twenty observed lessons, as noted in the previous chapter, reading strategies were stand-alone, and most often occupied discrete parts of the lessons.

In several instances, it was possible that the texts used in nominated lessons involved content that was familiar or not sufficiently challenging to pupils to warrant the use of reading strategies (Shanahan et al, 2012). This is something that surfaced in some of the post-lesson interviews, most obviously in the case of Mr. Pb who had simplified a text for his class and then used a reading strategy anyway. This point could be seen throughout the initial

interviews in particular, where all teachers based their choice of approach on school policy or training, rather than pupil need or text demands. In most of the lessons observed, pupils were directed to use a named strategy with which to engage with text. The named strategy was, in all cases, the same for all pupils and suggests a use of skills that is based on task rather than a pupil's reading needs or the demands of the text itself. Reading strategies in many lessons were deployed when the text did not warrant any support, or when the level of challenge had not been taken into account by any of the teachers when they decided to use the strategy (Moje & Speyer, 2008). It was simply, as noted by Ms Db ' what we use in this school as part of our policy. I just use it.' This view of strategies as something to be 'done' in a lesson was a common feature of the interviews and removes them from the very site of their effectiveness – supporting pupils' engagement with texts that they might otherwise find too challenging. If the support is not needed, the strategy is not only unnecessary; it takes up lesson time that might be better used on other aspects of learning. In these practices, we can see what Shanahan identifies as the use of strategy without clear gain (Shanahan et al.2012; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

In their research into grade three reading comprehension, Connor et al (2004) found that children with different levels of skill in reading comprehension benefit from different instructional models, with children with weaker skills demonstrating more progress when taught within a model. This is echoed in the NRP (2000) where it is claimed that there is not enough evidence regarding whether certain strategies are more suited to particular levels of skill. In the first round of lesson observations, no teachers made instructional decisions based upon the reading skill level of their pupils. During the interviews, this was noted by several of the teachers who expressed surprise themselves that they had considered neither text difficulty nor pupils' skills when deciding to use an approach or strategy in their lessons, with Mr. Pb's comment that ' I know the text was too easy really, but some of them are really good readers..I don't know why I didn't think about that' (line 37-8). This suggests again that teachers view reading strategies in their lessons as an adjunct to their usual practice, something removed from not only subject but pupils too. It also raises the question of the information that teachers have regarding their pupils in a secondary school and where and how information regarding a pupil's reading comprehension skills is best generated and communicated.

It is interesting to note that all but one of the teachers used more than two strategies across their observed lessons. The evidence that point to the benefits of strategy instruction suggests that multiple strategies used for a variety of purposes best support reading comprehension (Shanahan, 2003, 2005). Reciprocal Reading is, it should be noted, an approach that draws upon a number of strategies. In the lessons observed, the range of strategies used did not correlate with a closer engagement with text. This can be seen, for example, in the second observation of Mr. Pb, who made more focused use of one approach in his second lesson. Afferbach et al, (2008) claim that the benefits of strategy instruction approaches in supporting reading comprehension are often impeded due to factors such as strategies being used without full understanding or in isolation. General discussion of the reading processes or ‘what good readers do’ was present in six of teachers’ lessons over the year –two of them from the same school. This general explanation of strategy use can also be seen in the interviews. In each of these lessons, this notion was not elaborated upon beyond a general explanation of the skill the pupils would be using during the lesson. This was not linked to the content of the lesson nor any reasoning as to why this skill was a useful tool for the pupils. All but one of the teachers observed made some mention of a reading skill, strategy or role during observed lessons. This emphasis on general discussion and explanation of the reading approaches used in class contradicts some evidence that literacy instruction should focus on both skill and meaning (Hirsch, 2006; Palincsar, 2007). Ness (2009) notes that achieving this balance is not always easy. In the lessons observed, this imbalance seems to persist even in secondary school at a point in literacy development when pupils typically have stronger decoding skills.

The theoretical positioning of strategy use is that it supports engagement, with a view to pupils’ internalising the processes as they move towards automaticity in their reading comprehension, drawing on the strategies implicitly and then applying them explicitly if presented with a text that presents a challenge. What was not so clear in the majority of the lessons was how the reading approaches used were supporting pupils’ own ability to engage with text. The focus of this research is on teachers’ practice rather than pupils’ performance, but the move towards replacing the strategy with a move towards internalised independence was not a feature of the lessons. Comprehension strategies have been endorsed as an effective and important component of reading comprehension instruction (NRP, 2000, ESTYN 2017, Welsh Government, 2013a), and much of the teacher resources in the area of reading comprehension instruction focus on strategy instruction.

The majority of lessons observed in the early part of this research revealed that the approaches were used in a fragmented way, with a designated part of the lesson for literacy and then the content element. This can be seen quite clearly in Ms. Db's lesson where pupils learned about evaluation rather than *what* was actually being evaluated. As mentioned in Chapter 4 and earlier, the difficulty of the texts and the needs of the pupils (individually or collectively specific additional needs aside) were not determining factors in the selection of reading (and other literacy strategies) in the lessons.

Overall, the lesson observations showed prominent focus on the use of strategies, oral questioning as a tool for developing understanding of written text and a specific focus on strategy instruction, with less attention paid to the text itself as a unit of meaning. Given the attention that the topic of strategy instruction has received in both the research literature (e.g., National Reading Panel Report, 2000) and professional documents (ESTYN 2017; City & County of Swansea 2011, 2013; Welsh Government, 2013a) it was not surprising to find that strategy instruction plays some role in every teacher's classroom. It was with reference to these sorts of external drivers that most of the teaching decisions were justified. A 'top-down' (Ball et al 2013, p.6) chain of influence could be seen in responses where PISA results informed national focus, which led to local/consortia focus, which in turn formed the basis for decisions at a school and, ultimately, classroom level. As noted by Ball et al (2013), teachers' roles within this kind of performative system are as implementers of policy by way of 'school level insertions into practice' (p. 25). In this research, teachers' use of strategies in their lessons can be seen as part of this sort of system. Strategy-based literacy was inserted into their existing practices and it was visible instances of these strategies that were measured as proxies for 'literacy'.

Over the year, more teachers were able to articulate the approaches and strategies they employed, employing more common language to define and discuss the approaches in their schools and in their own classrooms. Six of the teachers expressed that they had developed their knowledge and understanding, with three teachers explaining that the year had helped them articulate and focus practices that they used implicitly in their lessons. Mr. D aligned this development in his own practice closely with the opportunities and experiences he felt he had benefitted from in his school. The comparative professional autonomy experienced by Mr D, as someone actively involved in the development of literacy in his school, could be seen in his practice by the time of his second lesson observation, where his teaching decisions

were made with direct reference to his understanding of what would be best suited to his pupils and topic. The mixed responses of the remaining five situated their perceived growth in other experiences, most commonly their own interest, with four of the teachers citing participation in this research as a spur to examine their practice. This will be discussed when whole-school management of literacy is explored.

While neither skills nor strategies are necessarily successful in developing reading comprehension (Afflerbach et al, 2008), there is some strong support for the use of reading strategies in the classroom (NRP, 2000, Block & Duffy, 2008; Gertsen et al, 2001), even if their use might be limited (Shanahan 2008). This effectiveness, however, might be compromised if strategies are seen as ends in themselves; if they are used mechanically in decontextualised activities (Block & Duffy, 2008; Fisher & Frey, 2008a). As noted by Fisher and Frey (2008b), over emphasis on strategy can hinder the automaticity that the strategies are meant to support. As discussed in Chapter 2, researchers have voiced concerns that strategies instead of texts have become the focus of reading instruction and that strategy instruction runs the risk of becoming too mechanical (Wilkinson & Son, 2011). As Lee and Spratley (2010, p.18) argue, whilst some pupils might come to secondary school with secure reading skills, they ‘still need to be taught how to read deeply in the disciplines’.

### **5.2.3 Explanation and instruction**

The overarching information that can be seen in the observation data (see previous chapter) was that whilst strategies of some sort were used in each of the observed lessons, those strategies were not usually taught, but rather utilised, and there were only four examples of subject or discipline specific focus to the employment of the strategy. As can be seen, for example, in Ms. C’s first lesson, Reciprocal Reading is used but the aim of the approach, to provide pupils with strategies to employ so as to better understand a text, did not feature. In Ms. Db’s lesson, the strategy overwhelms the text and what is meant to support pupils’ understanding of a text, serves to replace the text. When exploring how text engagement is structured in subject area lessons, the literature suggests achieving the balance between content and process is important, and it is something to which I will return later in this chapter.

In the lessons where specific strategies were explicitly taught, the approaches did generally not follow Duke and Pearson's (2002) 'Gradual release of responsibility model', whereby the teacher initially introduced the strategies, for example, or modelling them in action with a view to pupils gradually taking up strategy selection themselves as they see fit. This could be seen, for example, in Mr. D's second lesson, where modelling was used to focus pupils in on text and pupils seemed to be familiar with the approaches. Modelling could be seen in the lessons of four other teachers in the observations. With the exception of Mr. E's lesson, this element was controlled by the class teacher. In other instances, in lessons where reading strategies or approaches were called upon, this happened largely in whole group instruction, was controlled by the teacher, and involved some combination of listening and speaking with very little explicit teaching.

In the first of the observed lessons, a strategy was used with little (in one case) to no (in the remainder) explanation as to why it was being used and how it was going to improve or develop the pupils' engagement with the text. This element of the lessons changed considerably over the year, with all but one of the teachers offering some explanation of the approach being used in the classroom. Even with this change, though, many of the explanations were generic and made in the form of claims that strategy x will help pupils develop their reading skills.

This also can be seen even in one of Ms. C's lessons where her use of Reciprocal Reading was one of a number of lessons where a reading strategy was explained. Even in this lesson, however, what was not clear is how the strategy improved the pupils' understanding of photosynthesis. The strategy instruction took up a third of lesson time with an outcome (three points on the board) that did not require strategy use. These seem to be an instance of what Palinscar (2007) suggests is routine strategy instruction that is not focused on reading as a means of building understanding or knowledge (Hirsch, 2006). This pattern of strategy instruction, that focused neither on developing pupils' reading nor their learning of content, can be seen in sixteen of the observed lessons.

#### **5.2.4 The use of talk in the lessons**

Discussion approaches to comprehension instruction, in which pupils and teachers talk about the text during the process of reading, have been endorsed as an effective method for

promoting pupil understanding (NRP, 2000; ESTYN, 2008; Mercer & Howe, 2012). All of the teachers observed used talk as a tool for exploring text by way of using questions to check understanding; all but two of the teachers used some form of group talk as part of their lessons. Talk based approaches can be seen in whole language models of comprehension, where discussion based group exploration of text is a feature.

In the observed lessons, the talk was generally unstructured suggesting that the talk itself is the mechanism by which understanding is developed. Most of the observed lessons involved reading or listening to text followed by discussion, suggesting that talk is a way into understanding. This reflects a view of reading that can be found in, for example, ESTYN (2008) and suggests that talk is an important aspect of developing a pupil's understanding. The observed lessons for this research included a considerable degree of talk-based engagement with text, most commonly in the form of teacher-led question and answer. In the main, these were used to check understanding of content, with few questions focused on how that content is presented or constructed through language. This view, in keeping with the separation between subject knowledge and literacy noted elsewhere, seems to position content as existing somehow separate from language. It seems to support a view of knowledge that is presented, rather than created, in text. This position itself seems to be at odds with the theoretical view of text as something constructed in the relationship between reader and that underpins much of these approaches (Shanahan & Neuman, 1997). As noted by Mercer and Howe (2012) classroom talk can have a measurable impact on pupils' understanding. However, the sociocultural underpinning of this approach means that its impact is seen when it is used to generate collective understanding.

As seen in Chapter 4, in half of the lessons observed, when questions were used to assess and develop pupils' understanding of text, the sequence of teacher-pupil response meant that the actual process was wholly teacher- focused. In these lessons, the teacher tended to intervene when pupils did not respond or did not respond on the required way. In this sort of approach, the teacher is assessing understanding rather than using questions to model or develop understanding in pupils about how to interrogate text (Ness, 2009; Taylor et al. 2000). However, others (Kalenze, 2014) have suggested that this format isn't in and of itself a negative approach, but rather, that it requires a more specific purpose and that the texts themselves should be sufficiently challenging to require such questions as part of the sense-making process. This is echoed by Mercer and Howe (2012) who recognise that one function

of classroom talk is to check understanding but that this needs to be balanced by dialogic exchanges that can help pupils develop understanding. This could also shift the position of learning towards the pupil, in a move towards independence.

A series of questions in one of the observed lessons around the differences in daily life in Wales and South Africa, for example, saw Ms. W ask increasingly narrow questions in an attempt to complete the list of differences and similarities she was writing on the board. Rather than return the pupils to the text and demonstrate how they could find this information, by way of geographically specific topic sentences or an agreed set of key features that can best describe daily life, for example, the texts were abandoned and a series of questions used to extract the required answer. This not only reduced the cognitive demand of the task, it removed the text itself as the source of information. In this initial sharing activity, as well as later in several of the lessons, several pupils shared information that was not only inaccurate, but contradicted by the text that had just been read in class. These ideas were, nonetheless written on the board and displayed, but not explored. This approach rendered the text itself less purposeful to an understanding of content and, simultaneously, did not utilise reading strategies for the purpose of better understanding a text.

This was a pattern that was observed in, as noted, above half of the lessons observed. When asked in interview about the use of questions as a means of exploring text and ideas in class, all of the teachers who used questions in the pattern above described the process in ways that would suggest a social constructivist model of learning, with frequent reference made to features such as pupils exploring and discussing ideas as a class or building on each other's ideas that were not observed in the lessons.

The use of oral questioning at the start of engagement with text as a method of activating prior knowledge was seen in almost all lessons. In six of the lessons, this was specifically referred to as 'APK' - a term that features as one of the Eight Reading Behaviours approach to developing reading that was gaining popularity at the time of this research (City and County of Swansea, 2011). In this part of the observed lessons, pupils were typically invited to share any ideas they had relating to a title, image or key word that was presented by the teacher. In one of the observed History lessons, as noted in Chapter 4, for example, a picture of a civil rights protest was used in this way. In what was typical of this approach as observed in the lessons, pupils' responses were shared and noted down on the board, but then

these initial ideas about the text were not probed or explored. In other examples, pupils were asked to write down questions about a text after an initial read through and then called upon to share the questions they had generated. In the process of sharing, the teacher might acknowledge or record the pupils' questions, but in most of the lessons observed, there was little discussion of the pupils' ideas. The benefit of these approaches (ESTYN, 2008; Mercer & Howe, 2012) is described in ways that focus on the potential for pupils to explore and build understanding together. In the lessons observed, these approaches were not used to build pupils' knowledge collaboratively or to use what they already know to build or develop new knowledge (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). This again suggests that the theoretical underpinning of a classroom approach is sometimes lost on the journey to the classroom.

The influence ubiquity of this type of 'APK' raises important questions about how group response is used in lessons and how this then helps to develop individual or group understanding. If its efficacy resides in using group or individual understanding to construct and develop new knowledge, the ways in which this sort of talk is used in class needs to be focused in this way. Without the necessary focus on the interplay between new and existing understanding, however, the connections and potentials of this approach seem weakened and become instrumental parts of classroom practice. The use of group discussion in many of the lessons did not serve to build knowledge, but rather gathered information that was discarded. Importantly, the stages that seem to support pupils move towards independent learning, such as focus lessons and guided instruction (Fisher & Frey, 2007) were absent from most of the lessons. The pupils moved straight to collaboration without the necessary steps put in place. This again suggests that what is used in classrooms is the end point of an approach, rather than the necessary development that precedes it to result in that end point.

### **5.2.5 The relationship between subject and literacy approach**

The interviews and some of the views of the literacy coordinators suggested some tension between subject-content coverage and literacy. This will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter when considering how to manage whole-school literacy. This could be seen in the views of seven of the teachers who, even at the end of the research, felt that literacy was an additional element of their teaching, separate from subject. All teachers expressed the view that a more subject or discipline forced literacy would be more pertinent to their teaching. This is in keeping with those who argue in favour of a disciplinary literacy stance

due to the lack of specific discipline-specific approaches that generalisable, non-specific content area reading strategies encourage (Lee & Spratley, 2010; Moje, 2008; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008, 2012). Despite this developing focus on discipline-specific approaches to text, there remains some clear evidence (Fisher & Frey, 2008) that generic approaches have impact on pupils' comprehension skills (Shahanan, 2016). What seems to be missing is the move from these approaches to the 'next step' of more subject-focused text.

There is not a great deal of classroom based research that specifically examines the use of reading strategies in secondary subject classrooms. Some (Wilkinson & Son, 2011) surmise that it is not a feature in many secondary classrooms. This was not the case in this research, but what the findings suggest that where it does feature, it is not seen or generally used as part of the teaching of the subject. All but one of the teachers in the observed lessons featured some mention or even discussion of the reading process at some point during their observed lessons, while only in four of the lessons did the teacher focus at all on discussing concepts or ideas in the text and how these are presented. One of the teachers that did focus on how subject content and concepts found in disciplinary text was Mr. E, who discussed how scientific concepts were presented in a text by way of modelling, with some focus on science specific features of text. This was an explicit focus of his second lesson. What seemed to be clear from the majority of the lessons was that a narrow range of generic strategies were called upon with little reference to the specifics of the particular text being explored; this meant that meaning, curiously, seemed to be less of a focus.

Ms. C's expressed a sense of conflict in her interview as she tried to combine what she saw as two distinct and discrete forces that guided her decisions - the National Curriculum Programme of Study for Science and her schools' literacy policy. This disconnection between content and reading was a common feature of lesson observations and interviews.

Across the observed lessons, teachers spent relatively little time connecting understanding of the ideas in the text with reading strategies. Strategies in each lesson were named and used but the reasons why they were being used or the ways in which the content knowledge of a text was presented were not explored together. The simultaneous presence of strategy instruction and absence of time spent developing knowledge of content suggests a sharp cleave between learning content knowledge and becoming adept in the use of strategies that support skilled reading. Disciplinary literacy (Moje, 2008; Shanahan, 2012) was not a feature in any of the early lessons observed and in only four of the later lessons. In one of these

particular lessons, the class teacher had been particularly interested in the literacy coordinator's presentation of some of Shanahan's ideas and had been part of a school literacy group charged with taking literacy forward in the school. This was something of a pattern that could be identified during this research. The more explicit involvement a teacher had with the literacy work of the whole-school, the more focused and explained their approaches to literacy within their classrooms were.

This could be seen most clearly in the example of Mr. D who had been closely involved in the whole-school literacy work of School 1 and who was able to discuss how he approached literacy as part of his teaching of his subject. His explanation of his teaching decisions situated the approaches to text he used in his lessons as an integral part of his teaching of his subject. He considered the texts that would be explored or created and the needs of his pupils when making decisions about how to approach reading and writing in his lessons. In his second observed lesson, the approaches were an integral part of the learning of the content of the lesson. This degree of connection between text and how it is constructed and interrogated was only seen in his second observed lesson.

In keeping with Ness (2009), the findings show that the majority of teachers observed and interviewed felt that the teaching of reading comprehension was isolated from content or detracted from learning content. This use of strategy instruction to focus on the use of the strategy rather than on the developing understanding of pupils with regard to a particular text could be seen in all but four of the twenty lessons observed, as seen in Chapter 4. The notion of strategy use as an end in itself does not correspond with the theoretical and evidence base for strategy based reading comprehension instruction, which emphasises the use of strategies as a way of getting closer to meaning and how it is constructed in a text (RAND, 2002). Reading strategies are presented in the literature as tools that readers can draw upon to engage with as they construct meaning from text (Duke et al, 2011). This situates strategy based reading approaches within a constructivist view of learning as the pupils actively engage with tools that should support their independent engagement in text and meaning construction. They are intended to provide a support to allow pupils to increase their skills in reading text in a way that might not be available to them otherwise. Used as a standalone instructional feature that is not directly focused on meaning, this constructivist potential can be lost. Rather than move pupils toward more skilful, independent engagement with

language, this approach can see pupils becoming familiar with the instrumental elements of the strategy.

Whilst many of the strategies used in the lessons were not necessarily fully articulated or linked cohesively to content, the disconnection observed in the initial round of lessons was lessened in most instances by the second lesson observation. These changes could be seen in two main areas: teachers' consideration of text difficulty and pupils' skills, and more explicit explanation of why a particular approach or strategy should be used in a lesson. A small repertoire of reading comprehension strategies could be identified among these teachers, along with (in the second round of observations and interviews, at least) some consideration of how and why these were used in their teaching. In the follow up interviews to the second lessons, teachers offered some thoughts on why they had used a particular approach in their lesson, but still expressed some uncertainty about how they could effectively manage the teaching of their subject and what they seemed to view as the literacy elements of their lessons. This separation was expressed not only in the actual practices of the lessons, which, as can be seen in Chapter 4, had distinct content and literacy sections, but also in the teachers' articulations of some of the difficulties they saw in adopting a focus on literacy and reading; Mr. P's comments being typical of concerns expressed by all teachers at some stage in the interviews:

'there's just so much to try to cover, especially when they get to Key stage 4. It's hard to fit everything in' (line 41).

Seven of the teachers in their interviews reported seeing these approaches as not necessarily part of their teaching of their subject, but rather something they undertook for purposes beyond or as an aside to the subject focus of their lessons. This was a common feature of most of the lesson observations and teachers' subsequent discussions. Hirsch (2006) notes that using reading strategies as 'largely a set of general-purpose manoeuvres that can be applied to any and all texts is one of the main barriers to our pupils' achievement in reading (p. 14). Data from this research suggest that these teachers are not yet confident in their ability to interweave reading approaches with the content of their subjects or lessons in such a way as to support specific understanding. This suggests that if teachers are to engage in informed instruction that is focused on learning content, and are to feel confident in how they make conscious decisions about how to best approach text within a specific context for a

particular purpose, then, as pointed out by all of the group of observed teachers, further, or, as some noted, *different* training may be required.

The RAND (2002) definition of reading comprehension, as outlined in Chapter 2, suggests that reading instruction should support the process of constructing and extracting meaning, but this definition provides little guidance regarding what this looks like in the classroom. As noted by Connor et al, (2004, p.682), ‘not enough is known about how effective reading comprehension instruction is implemented in the classroom’. The report notes that there is no clear consensus from research about how teachers can best support pupils’ understanding of subject texts. There is a body of work about what seems to work on the classroom (NRP, 2000; Duffy & Israel, 2009), and some explicit instructional guidance can be found for earlier stages of reading comprehension (Shanahan et al, 2010), but evidence based, clear and explicit guidance that provides clear instructional guidance for teachers in subject areas in secondary schools is lacking.

Four of the five literacy coordinators were English teachers. In my own experience as and working with literacy coordinators, this is not uncommon, but it carries with it certain assumptions that language specialists in a school take responsibility for general literacy and language skills that can then be applied across disciplines. This could also be seen in the PLC meetings where it was a readily accepted feature of literacy in schools that the English teachers would be best placed to lead literacy across all subjects. It can also be seen in Welsh Government guidance regarding the Literacy Framework (2013c), which says that some aspects of literacy are most naturally found in English or Welsh lessons, and in the revised Programme of Study (Welsh Government, 2015) for English which makes explicit the strong links that are seen between English as a subject and literacy. As outlined in Chapter 2, this can only be the case where literacy is defined within generic practices that have their roots in part from language based subjects and could then be used to do ‘literacy’ regardless of context. This position is, to a great degree, understandable. Part of an English teacher’s role in their subject is that they teach pupils ‘how to do things with words’ (Austin, 1962), including engaging with text, structuring response, developing understanding of how texts are structured and meaning constructed. These are skills that can be used to develop pupils’ skills in all subjects and so it seems understandable that it is to English teachers, as language experts, that literacy seems to fall. If the purpose of literacy strategies across all subjects in to ensure that pupils can engage broadly with the content of their subjects, then these generic

approaches would seem to be a good fit and English teachers would seem to be the members of staff best placed to lead in this area. If, however, the limited effects of strategy noted by Shanahan (2016), Moje (2008) and Fang and Schleppergrell (2010) amongst others are to be reflected in school, then literacy needs to be examined outside of the English classroom.

It is worth noting English teachers also have disciplinary literacy teaching responsibilities; they have subject demands that are not defined within literacy. Literacy is not the same as English as a subject and, as noted by a number of the literacy coordinators, generic approaches led by English teachers run the risk of being necessarily broad with little chance of moving pupils into the more focused disciplinary literacy outlined by Shanahan (2010). It is notable that, as outlined in Chapter 4, in the initial interviews instructional purpose and pupils' learning did not figure in the justifications given for the selection of a literacy approach. The literacy approaches used in the observed lesson were, in the great majority, distinct and generic rather than embedded in the discourse of the subject or topic. Shanahan (2013) argues that to meaningfully study a discipline, pupils must understand how literacy is used in that discipline. Something that is generated in this research, in the lesson observations and in the interviews, was some realisation that there seems to be a need for a more focused type of literacy that was directly related to the work done in subjects as producers and users of text. This view is echoed by Catts and Kamhi (2017), whose claim that reading comprehension is multi-dimensional and, therefore, general reading strategies are not sufficiently complex as tools for developing complex understanding, is relevant here.

### **5.2.6 Conclusion**

Theory, then, did have some impact on practice in this research. The literacy coordinators engaged with ideas in the meetings and some of these ideas could be seen in the literacy policies and practices in their schools. This was an inconsistent picture in that some approaches that were observed that were not explicitly linked to the literacy coordinators' stated position. Strategy instruction, which theorises reading as teaching skills, was overwhelmingly the dominant approach used in schools. What can be seen in this research is that the coordinators themselves were driven, at least in part, by understandably pragmatic concerns and did not always examine the theoretical positions or consistency of the approaches they wanted to use. This can be seen, too, in the lesson observations and interviews, which saw approaches used in a surface way in many instances, which often

meant that the point of strategy use was lost. This resulted in some approaches being used without a clear rationale regarding how that approach would enable pupils to better access the text with which they were engaged for a particular reason. As can be seen later in this chapter, the language of some approaches to reading development in secondary schools was not necessarily understood or used in the same way within and across schools and, as such, theoretical coherence was lost. Approaches were used that are intended to build knowledge or support pupils' construction or engagement with meaning production, but these were often used in a way that did neither of these things. This can be seen clearly in the dislocated application of strategy approaches in content based lessons, as discussed in this chapter.

It would be rash to make an easy assumption that a deeper engagement with theory or a more detailed theoretical understanding would necessarily support teachers' practice. Teachers are necessarily concerned with classroom practices and the theoretical readings associated with those practices might not be a priority in a busy school. This does, however, suggest that a more coherent link between the assumptions about learning that underpin practices that are commonly adopted in classrooms may be needed in the form of the training and resources that focus on process rather than product. In the case of strategy instruction, without some clear understanding of the process and its theoretical or evidence based foundations, the product in the form of deeper understanding, might be weakened. It might also suggest that time is needed to allow for deeper embedding of principle based practices.

The frequent comments regarding the competing demands of subject and literacy that can be seen in this research is also the site of possible further attention. If strategy use is, after all, intended to provide generic ways in to text, but is of some limited use after a while (Willingham, 2006), then a focus on meaning as discursively constituted in texts, and on subjects as producers and users of texts might provide an opportunity for teachers to situate reading practices as a coherent part of their subject teaching, with a purposeful focus on knowledge building.

The disconnection between theory and practice seen in this research leads to what Ball (2003) terms inauthenticity. That is, once the pedagogical reason for the use (or not) of a particular approach or strategy is removed from its utilisation, and the teacher is in the position of the implementer of strategies, then the efficacy of both strategy and teacher is reduced to the 'mechanics of performativity' (Ball, 2003, p.220). The potentials of both are limited to the

parameters of the system within which they operate. The shifts in practice seen in the lessons of Mr D, most obviously, but also Mr. E, Mr. Pb and Ms. W, seemed to be connected to their engagement with how they could use literacy as a means of developing their own understanding in a way connected to how they positioned themselves as teachers of their subjects.

### **5.3 How does a literacy coordinator manage whole-school literacy practice across all school subjects?**

The literacy coordinators involved in this research had all volunteered or applied for the role in their respective schools. Many of them had, since their appointment, implemented some change regarding the literacy structures, monitoring and, in some cases, practices. All but one of the literacy coordinators had written, or was in the process of writing a new literacy policy for their schools that would define and shape literacy in their schools for the academic year of this research.

Each of the literacy coordinators, through the course of the year, also identified key approaches and strategies that they saw as informing the way in which they wanted literacy to be supported in and across subjects, and which would be represented in the literacy policies in their schools and the associated practices that would be monitored on a whole-school basis. For most of the schools, this included some training for school staff regarding key strategies and practices that formed part of the school's approach to literacy. As can be seen in Chapter 4, Table 3, the majority of stated approaches and recommendations for practice were within a generic skills-based approach, whereby particular strategies are adopted that are then used to engage with text in all subjects. Interestingly, whilst most of the schools positioned themselves in a skills-based approach, a majority of literacy coordinators and class teachers spoke about either how they wanted literacy to be more connected with their subject area or expressed a belief that exploring the language of their subject was of benefit to pupils. Four of the literacy coordinators recognised that these generic whole-school approaches might not be focused or specific enough for all subjects. However, the more context based, disciplinary literacy that can be seen in the work, for example, of Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) and Moje, (2008) did not feature in many of the lessons. This understanding of literacy can, though, be seen explicitly in the words and approach of Mr. D in School 1, but can also be seen in the aspects of the second observed lessons for Mr. E, Mr. Pb and Ms. W.

### 5.3.1 Teacher awareness and understanding of whole-school approach

Teachers and literacy coordinators alike felt that insufficient time was available to develop a purposeful understanding of the literacy tools they were being encouraged to use. This can be seen in the mixed messages regarding strategy definition and use that can be seen in Chapter 4. In many of the lessons observed, as well as in most of the initial interviews, even if teachers could identify the preferred strategy, the usefulness of that strategy for a given purpose was not explicit. This may, in part, be due to the relative newness of some of the approaches as centralised, whole-school expectations. As noted in Chapter 4, training was identified by all but one of the teachers as insufficient, claiming that they were not confident in how to select and utilise approaches to the benefit of their pupils. Many of the teachers also expressed that they did not feel the approaches they were expected to use would be of benefit to their subject. The teachers' lack of confidence in the approaches themselves, as well as in their professional understanding, echoes Takahashi's (2011) claims about the importance of developing teacher and collective efficacy within structures that afford some sense of agency in their own professional development.

Even though teachers expressed their lack of confidence and also belief in the relevance of the approaches they were utilising, they *still* used them in their lessons. Several of the teachers, as can be seen in Chapter 4, expressed their feelings that the demands of performance expectations drove their teaching choices rather than 'commitment, judgement and authenticity' (Clarke, 2013, p.231). This lack of connection between teachers beliefs about what they should be doing and what they did in their lessons reflects what Phipps and Borg (2009) identified as the influence of the system within which teachers work which impacts upon the relationship between teacher beliefs and teacher practices.

The notion of more integrated literacy practices, seen most clearly in the lessons of Mr. D, was identified as an aim by literacy coordinators and teachers alike. The structures in place, however, did not seem to lead easily to this position. This was recognised by the teachers in this study who reported that they felt they could benefit from having a deeper understanding of the approaches they were being encouraged to implement. Moreover, contrary to the findings of past literacy studies in the USA (Lester, 2000; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008) that identify resistance to literacy teaching approaches in subject teachers, there were teachers in

this study, who expressed some disappointment that they had not had sufficient opportunities to understand the strategies they were being asked to use. As can be seen in Chapter 4, those teachers with a departmental role in literacy were more likely to see the development of literacy in their classrooms as part of their teaching, and were more confident in trying out approaches. However, despite being in the same department sometimes, teachers who were not directly involved in the school's literacy work seemed less aware and less confident in their own practice of the school's approach to teaching literacy.

At times, the same literacy terms had varying connotations, resulting in different teaching practices. This can be seen quite clearly in some of the schools where teachers had quite different understandings of what approaches were part of the whole-school approach and what those approaches looked like in the classroom. As noted in Chapter 2, positive efficacy beliefs are connected to teachers' feeling they have the capacity to improve their own practice supported by focused professional development. In contrast to Opfer and Pedder's (2011) findings that successful professional development tends to have a mid or long term focus and is centred on focus on collaboration and the construction and sharing of practice, the training that had been undertaken in the schools was predominantly in the form of a single whole or half day delivery mode of the sort Henson (2001) identifies as being insufficient to change practices.

This pattern could be seen in each of the schools. Training was delivered to staff in a pre-constructed form with no room for their own professional input. This sort of short term, discrete training might be insufficiently embedded to effect real change in beliefs or practices. What can be seen in the teachers' practices, in the main, is that the trained element is simply *added on* to existing practices and beliefs. The training was organised as 'events' that served to give teachers exposure to the practices they would be expected to use. This performative type of training can only change behaviours, not cognition (Borg, 2009). In this kind of training and the subsequent systems put into place to monitor the strategy use outlined in the training, teacher efficacy is situated within the terms of pre-identified and visible factors, or what Ball et al (2011, p.614) suggest is the prioritisation of 'deliverology' over and against 'informed professional judgement'. As can be seen in Chapter 4, the class teachers felt that literacy could and should be something they knew more about and wanted to have further or different training to enable them to feel able to make informed decisions in their lessons. A desire for more training in literacy was expressed by all of the class teachers,

as seen in Chapter 4. This possible impact of insufficient training is found, too, in Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009) who found that lack of training impacts negatively on teachers' efficacy beliefs.

### **5.3.2 Management, systems and context**

This perceived lack of confidence amongst the teachers might point to a need to develop shared knowledge of how literacy and subject content interact and how tools such as a particular reading strategy can be used effectively rather than simply instrumentally. It also suggests that the model of collaborative construction that could be seen in the PLC was replaced in schools with a top-down model of development that did not, in most cases, involve teachers in decisions about practice. The model in each of the schools, even that of School 5 which did have an internal literacy group as part of its approach, was of the literacy coordinator controlling literacy practices through centralised decision making. The class teachers used pre-decided generic strategies, and as could be seen in the interviews with the class teachers, those who felt most confident and invested in the literacy work of the school were those, such as Mr. D, who had been given opportunities to make some decisions in their own practice through informed involvement.

The importance of collective efficacy has been discussed in chapter 2, and seems pertinent here (Bruce et al, 2010; Hattie, 2016). Whilst the work of the PLC meant that those who were part of the group felt they had developed, the teachers in their schools had not been part of this work. Several of the class teachers observed reported some surprise at what the group had been doing and felt the group seemed like a positive thing. What they also expressed was a desire to be involved in a similar process themselves, at a subject or team level, so that they, too, could reflect upon and consider how best to develop the literacy in their lessons. The literacy coordinators who had been part of the group were well-placed to develop this culture in their schools. Teachers that value self-improvement, reflection and professional growth are assets in creating the sorts of cultures that could develop teachers' understanding of their role in their own professional development and understanding. To some degree, this could be seen in School 1, where Litco 1 established a literacy group within the school that met to discuss and monitor literacy across the subjects. However, this extending of collaborative and collective practices was limited, in the main, to the members of the literacy group.

Crockett (2002), amongst others, notes that productive collaboration, that can be seen in regular focused dialogue amongst a group or groups of teachers has provided impressive results in classrooms and in schools. The shift in model from the PLC that the literacy coordinators were part of to the school was marked. Ross et al's (2004) claim that a school system has considerable impact on collective efficacy and that self efficacy and collective efficacy work in conversation with one another could suggest that the practices and ethos developed in the PLC might have been an effective vehicle for the sorts of changes to practice the literacy coordinators were hoping to make. Teachers with high self efficacy, suggest Van Dall et al (2014), will be more likely to examine the practice and innovate. This is more likely to happen, say Tschannen-Moran et al (1998), within a school context that supports factors such as teachers' involvement in decision making and help develop teacher beliefs about their capacity to decide upon effective action in their classrooms. That is, the belief (or otherwise) in the potential agency of the collective informs the beliefs of the individual. Goddard and Goddard (2001) also claim that a teacher's beliefs about themselves are influenced by their beliefs about the collective within which they belong.

The changes in the behaviours and understanding of the literacy coordinators could have been more effective had there been more deliberate efforts and opportunities to consider how to use this new understanding most effectively. To this end, it may be that school leaders must be deliberate in their efforts to build the capacity for effective PLCs to be implemented in schools (Hord et al, 2010). In order to develop effective PLCs, teachers must be allotted adequate time to build new theories and understandings and these must then be given time to be effectively embedded in practice. This would mean reconsidering how to manage factors such as literacy in secondary schools to move from a delivery model as seen in the schools in this research to one of informed, focused collaboration.

The literacy policy was seen by all of the literacy coordinators as the key vehicle for establishing, informing and managing whole-school approaches to literacy. The interview data, however, seems to reveal that the ways in which a policy is used in a school and how it can influence practice is not clear (Harris, 2002). As seen in Chapter 4, there were teachers who were uncertain as to whether or not literacy policies are implemented in their teaching practices. More reference was made to practical aspects of a literacy approach such as training or resources than policy. As noted earlier, those teachers more directly involved in the literacy work of the school, had a more secure working understanding of the approaches

the school recommended and the rationale behind those choices. Teachers were aware of an increased national prioritisation of literacy but were less clear about the policy of their schools. This suggests that whole-school policy might not be seen by teachers as a key factor they consider when planning their lessons and that other mechanisms for sharing understanding and expectations might be necessary.

Several of the literacy coordinators and the class teachers felt that the development of effective, focused practice was compromised by competing demands. Brindley and Schneider (2002) identify multiple pressures that surround teachers in schools and impact upon their practice. The literacy coordinators and teachers in this study identified administrative tasks, time scarcity and assessments as significant objects influencing their teaching practices. The different responsibilities that the teachers held in their school and the competing demands on their time also seemed to have a perceived impact on how they engaged with whole-school policies and expectations. For instance, Litco 4 suggested that sometimes school documents that should define and inform practice and expectations, such as literacy policy documents, are not engaged with by teachers as other factors become prioritised:

‘People are busy and things get left by the wayside. It is frustrating..but what can be done?’ (Meeting Notes 3, lines 48-49). Thus, despite literacy being identified as important by Welsh Government, school management teams and literacy coordinators, the priority a teacher ascribes to literacy may vary. Not only may it vary, but many of the literacy coordinators felt that it was difficult to know and, hence, manage.

Initial bursts of enthusiasm were reported by most of the literacy coordinators for class teachers incorporating approaches into their teaching, but this was often seen as short lived. This is contradicted by the interview data from the teachers, seven of whom who felt that this aspect of their teaching felt more relevant as the year progressed, but still expressed concern that the demands of the content coverage of their subjects, as well as other competing initiatives, impacted upon the time they could spend learning about and then implementing literacy approaches in their lessons. A majority of the teachers interviewed, across schools and subject areas, expressed the view that given the demands of curriculum coverage, some demands such as literacy are difficult to address in their teaching practices.

During the year of the research, all of the literacy coordinators echoed this view, claiming that, despite having some confidence in the approaches and resources they wished to develop

and in the systems they wanted to put into place, due to the lack of provisions such as time being made, for example, for teachers to be trained in a purposeful way in these approaches, they felt they had to redraw their plans into something more manageable that would fit within school systems and competing demands. As noted by Litco 5, 'I feel as if I only have enough time to tell them about the things I want us all to try, when I want to give everyone time to really discuss it and come up with their own ideas. I don't even know what most of them have done' (Meeting 6, lines 77-79). Here, too, the dominance of performance as a proxy for learning can be seen. Litco 5 recognises that the top-down outcome-focused approach is not the most effective way of developing professional understanding, even as they feel compelled by time and system constraints to manage literacy in their school in this way. As noted by Borg (2003), practice is changed through changing beliefs, rather than focusing solely on behaviours and expectations.

Thus, despite the effective teaching and development of literacy becoming a key concern of most schools, and a national priority (Andrews, 2011a), it seems evident that not all of these teachers is engaged in meaningful interaction with these processes, nor perhaps are the structures and expectations organised in such a way as to make this easy. These findings suggest that even when an approach has been explored and expectations have been shared, work still needs to be done to ensure that there is a shared understanding and opportunity for the approaches to be explained and then adopted, amended or embraced. This is especially true if teachers are to experience the shifts in cognition, rather than visible behaviours, that can affect teacher beliefs and practices (Borg, 2009). The view that literacy is just yet another thing to be added to an already crowded professional load was expressed by most of the teachers. They also, though, did express at interview that literacy is an important aspect of teaching that could improve pupils' skills and that they knew it should be something they understood and used in their lessons. This view was, however, contradicted by sentiments expressed by the same teachers in most instances that they were really convinced it *was* or really could be part of their gift as subject teachers. Some of the teachers suggested that primary school teachers have the biggest influence on and responsibility for pupils' literacy.

These conflicting opinions might be generated by some tension between what teachers consider to be an expected response and what they actually believe. They might also be in response to an understanding of literacy that sees it as something that floats on top of their subjects rather than inhering within it. Contrary to the assertions of Welsh Government

(2013a) and ESTYN (2017) that it is the responsibility of every teacher to ensure that all pupils are given the opportunity to develop, as well as use, their literacy skills across all subjects, the study revealed that there are teachers who, even as they state that literacy is a shared responsibility, do not necessarily perceive this as a meaningful part of their role. Again, notions of authenticity and expectation can be seen here, with teachers participating in what Ball (2003 p. 218) calls a form of ‘ventriloquism’, where teachers’ voiced beliefs are those of the system within which they are situated, rather than their authentic beliefs.

The teachers also expressed concerns that literacy, at least as it was seen as a distinct and separate body of knowledge, was comfortably within their understanding or remit. As noted by Gillis (2014), not every teacher *is* a teacher of literacy, but rather, and this is particularly so in the secondary classroom, they are subject specialists who could make effective use of focused approaches to exploring and revealing the language of their subjects. This view is echoed not only in Shanahan (2003, 2013), but also in the work of U.K –based commentators such as Barton (2012) and Didau (2014) who write about the clear need in secondary schools to give pupils the best tools to write like a geographer or read like a scientist.

As mentioned earlier, this point was a significant feature in a great number of the interviews with class teachers. There seemed to be a disconnection between what they perceived as their subject and the literacy approaches they were attempting to deploy in their classrooms. The teachers expressed literacy as something other than their subject: as something that was a part of a wider set of expectations, quite removed from the content of their lesson. This echoes the claims found in Moje (2008), who found that the focus on literacy in content-area lessons had been unsuccessful and called for refocus on content in lessons. As discussed earlier, the disciplinary literacy approach, which recognises the ways in which literacy practices are intertwined with disciplinary content (Fang & Croatam, 2013; Shanahan and Shanahan, 2008), was not well represented in the observed practices and could go some way to make literacy more purposeful to subject teachers.

School 3 did not have a stated or coherent position on how literacy was positioned and School 1, although originally within a generic skills-based approach, moved towards some of the definitions and activities that would fall within a disciplinary literacy approach. School 5, too, made some shifts towards a more subject/context focused approach to literacy as the year progressed and part of School 4’s longer term aim was to explore more closely how literacy

was present in subject areas. School 2, even with a more rigid and structured programme for literacy, made some moves during the year to looking at how literacy best fits with and can be developed by various subjects. Despite this acknowledgement that subjects use and produce texts for particular purposes, the feeling amongst the group as was that whole-school generic strategies would be easier to monitor, integrate and manage across a whole-school.

### 5.3.3 Monitoring and measuring

As noted above, what became clear as a common thread across schools was the identification of explicit, named strategies that would form a key part of the management and monitoring of literacy in their schools. To this end, it could be said that these structural decisions, might act as limiters on teachers’ pedagogical decisions, as well as on their role as pedagogical decision makers. The strategies acted as the vehicles for the principles the literacy coordinators saw as central to developing a coherent, explicit, measurable approach to literacy. In some cases, as noted above, the literacy coordinators’ views of literacy and, hence, the ways in which they sought to implement whole-school approaches, shifted throughout the year. The use of explicit, named strategies for reading that were, in most instances, monitored and tracked, however, remained a constant feature in almost all schools. The table below, seen in Chapter 4, outlines the literacy coordinators’ stated view or stance regarding literacy and the monitoring procedures implemented in the schools:

| School   | Key literacy approach                        | Literacy Monitoring   |
|----------|--|---|
| School 1 | Generic skills towards disciplinary literacy | Literacy team<br>New Literacy Policy<br>Literacy an agenda item for all meetings<br>Book Monitoring<br>Online system for sharing resources<br>Subject literacy reps to share and monitor pupils’ work |
| School 2 | Generic skills                               | Literacy an agenda item for all meetings<br>Literacy Handbook for all staff with structured approach<br>Samples of work from subject areas monitored by   |

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|          |   |  |
|----------|---|--|
|          |   | literacy coordinator each half term  |
| School 3 | Mixed/non-specific  | Book monitoring each term  |
| School 4 | Generic skills  | Literacy an agenda item for all meetings<br>Literacy mapped in schemes of work across subjects |
| School 5 | Generic skills with later elements of disciplinary literacy | Literacy an agenda item for all meetings<br>Book monitoring                                    |

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**Table 3 Literacy coordinators' approaches and monitoring**

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The ways in which an approach or strategy might be used in the classroom could, and should, be multiple and contextualised within a specific purpose or aim (Block & Duffy, 2008; Duke et al., 2011; Fisher & Frey, 2008). The ways in which this use was monitored in the schools was by means that typically saw if an instance of it could be identified in, for example, meeting notes, schemes of work or pupils' books. These systems may not, however, provide information regarding how well an approach is understood or if it is used effectively or appropriately. As noted by Harvey and Goudvis (2007), learning how to select and make decisions about when, why and how to use a strategy or tool is the ultimate aim of this sort of instruction. The monitoring does not focus on this; instead it looks for instances rather than impacts. These monitoring systems can only record visible instances of compliance rather than change.

The separation of subject and literacy could, as discussed earlier, be seen in a great many of the observed lessons and seemed to represent a perception of competing demands that was sometimes expressed as an impossible task. This did alter somewhat during the year, with more of the class teachers expressing that they knew that developing effective ways into the texts should be a part of their subject teaching rather than an additional, separate element. As Litco 5 put it, 'If literacy is seen as separate from learning, this is a problem' (Meeting 4, line 71). Part of the problem of competing demands on time can be seen as emerging from this notion of literacy as something distinct from subject that could be seen in lesson observations

and interviews. As already discussed, it becomes an addition to lessons, rather a way of exploring subject.

It is, perhaps, telling that Mr. D, certainly by the time of his second observation, saw literacy as part of his teaching as opposed to something he did as well as teach his subject. His approach in his second observed lesson, where he explored the literacy of his topic rather than grafted on generic approaches to his content, meant that time was not sacrificed and that the texts he was exploring with his pupils were the focus of the lesson. His was not the only lesson to move towards a more subject embedded literacy, but it was perhaps the lesson most situated within subject. This sort of embedded approach might, however, not provide the markers necessary for monitoring in the ways defined by the literacy coordinators as the aim is for a more embedded approach to learning, rather than a discrete and discrete 'literacy' element of lessons. It is important to remember that if a strategy or approach is used to support pupils' engagement with text, the ultimate aim should be that it is no longer needed. This process is not measurable in the monitoring processed outlined above. The impact becomes invisible.

Literacy coordinators reported feeling that, even with the monitoring they had put in place, the best they could do was see if the approaches had been used, rather than look for any positive effect. This tallied with the feelings of the class teachers, a self- selected group, a majority of whom felt they didn't know enough about the approaches they were meant to implement. It seems that the literacy coordinators themselves were aware that the monitoring system was just that – a monitor that could only capture instances of enactment, rather than support and development or changes in teachers' understanding that could support more than changed visible behaviours.

### **5.3.4 Conclusion**

A key finding of this research is that the establishment and management of whole-school strategies in secondary schools are tenuous and difficult. Literacy coordinators felt enthusiastic about the work they were doing within the PLC, with many commenting on how valuable their participation in the group had been and how they felt their own understanding had developed as a result of their being part of the group. The literacy coordinators valued their engagement with the group and saw it as a key structure that supported their own

professional learning. As Litco 1 noted during one of the PLC meetings, ‘I was booked on a training event today, but I came here because I actually learn things with all of us together’ (Meeting Notes 4, lines 265-266). To that extent, the PLC was a success. The literacy coordinators felt changed by way of their participation and saw it as one of the main ways in which they could develop their self efficacy. What became clear is that disseminating ideas, making decisions on practice and monitoring for consistency and efficacy were difficult to maintain across all subjects within the different structures and systems that shape school practice and accountability.

It seems that part of the problems that can be seen in this research that are concerned with the management and implementation of the whole-school literacy approaches advocated by the literacy coordinators comes, in part, from a need to question what whole-school approaches look like in secondary schools, whether they are, after all, the best way to manage literacy practices, how they can be effectively implemented and how that effectiveness can be monitored. It also seems to come from a linked need to rethink how literacy is seen in the secondary school and how subject teachers can see literacy as something more connected to what they engage with as part of their everyday teaching of subject. There is a sense of dislocation that can be seen between teachers and the processes of policy making and the development of whole-school approaches, as well as between what a great many of the teachers expressed as their main role and the use of additional strategies that were often seen as serving a purpose separate from enhancing the teaching of their subjects. The mechanism for translating the positive personal impacts of the PLC into a similarly informed and enthused school teaching body proved to be elusive during the period of this research for the most part.

#### **5.4 To what extent did collaboration within a PLC change the behaviour of the literacy coordinators?**

As noted in Chapters 2 and 3, there is a body of research that points to the effectiveness of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and the positive results that a collaborative culture provides for increasing pupil achievement (Hattie, 2016). PLCs are seen as providing a vehicle for improving pupil outcomes and professional growth due to the work that comes from its particular practice focused structure (Welsh Government, 2013b; Harris & Jones, 2010). The PLC in this research provided a focused space for the literacy coordinators to

develop their practice in a collaborative way and then implement this practice in their schools. PLCs, as noted in Chapter 2, are goal orientated. The results of the PLC would, therefore, be seen not just in the meetings, but would take meaningful shape in the schools. DuFour et al (2008) suggest that the term PLC needs to have a specific meaning; that it should not simply refer to shared professional discussion. To this end, the PLC that was part of this research worked to maintain a focus on the primary attributes of PLCs, that they are learning-focused, collaborative, and results-driven (DuFour et al, 2008).

In the initial meeting, every literacy coordinator identified literacy as a valuable competence that is important to the individual and society. All of the literacy coordinators defined and interpreted literacy, to varying degrees, in terms of its social purposes beyond the educational context and associated literacy with development, empowerment and opportunities (Gee, 1998, 1999). All but one of the literacy coordinators was an English teacher and held quite strong views regarding the benefits of literacy skills for pupils, as well as a belief that all teachers are teachers of literacy.

#### **5.4.1 Identifying the focus**

In these early discussions, the specifics of how each teacher could or would be a teacher of literacy were not developed. Instead, literacy as a tool for social empowerment led the discourse. Most expressed the notion that literacy was a key to enabling pupils to engage with society. Many expressed beliefs that poor literacy skills diminished pupils' experiences and potentials (National Literacy Trust, 2013a, 2013b). In this initial view, literacy practices that could facilitate this view across all subjects were difficult for the group to envisage. Literacy, as a broad tool for social empowerment was not easily situated within the confines of a whole-school literacy policy or school practices.

Another view that was voiced with some frequency during these early meetings was one that defined and interpreted literacy in association with its academic purposes and acknowledged that while literacy competence is necessary for social purposes, they were more concerned, in their roles as literacy coordinators, about literacy competence for academic achievement in educational contexts. This early talk, centred as it was on definitions, also included some discussion about the multi-faceted nature of literacy and how its definition was evolving to include many factors outside of printed text (Leu et al, 2007), such as computer literacy. In

contrast, there were literacy coordinators who defined literacy more confidently, narrowly and specifically. As it was, in the main, English teachers who had been appointed to lead in literacy across their schools, deciding upon what literacy actually was, a starting point that felt necessary if the PLC was to explore the ways in which it was approached, initially proved elusive.

In part, this may be explained by the lack of specific training in literacy that most of the group had received. All but one of the literacy coordinators in the group had not been trained specifically in literacy. This is in itself worthy of further investigation. Unlike a primary school teacher, who would be expected to have some understanding of how to approach literacy, secondary school teachers, even those who teach language subjects, are not trained in literacy. As could be seen in many of the approaches initially rolled out across the schools, the literacy coordinators' experiences as teachers of English acted as both a support, in that they knew about how to approach text and could provide guidance in terms of the approaches that were common in English classrooms, and a hindrance, in that the specific types of reading that were central to, say, a Geography lesson or a Science experiment, were not part of their experience.

The theoretical framework that informs this research meant that, as a PLC, we were not moving towards a shared definition, agreed by all and not initiated by me. What was more important was that the literacy coordinators came to their own definitions, based on and informed by the engagement with the PLC. The ways in which literacy was defined by each of the literacy coordinators, impacted upon what 'success' in literacy meant. PLCs are defined as focused on outcomes (Harris & Jones, 2010), the broad definitions of literacy meant that results were seen initially in similar imprecise terms. The approaches that the literacy coordinators decided upon were, as outlined earlier, those that were well resourced.

#### **5.4.2 Positionality**

As noted in Chapter 3, my position in the PLC was one that had to be clear and explicit. I was not in the role of 'expert' but was a member of the PLC and part of the collaborative work that was undertaken as a community. The approaches that were discussed and brought to the PLC became part of my developed understanding, too. Alongside this change in my own professional understanding of literacy within the secondary school, my role and participation

changed during the year. As can be seen in Chapter 4, my own patterns of participation and initiation altered as the literacy coordinators patterns altered. As the year progressed, I listened more, initiated less and took less of a leading role in the meetings. My role in the PLC was not, however, uncomplicated.

Traditional models of professional teacher development typically consist of gathering a group of teachers to listen to an external figure disseminate information and strategies that teachers are to take back to their classrooms and use (Tillema & Imants, 1995). As seen in Chapter 4, the early meetings in particular of the PLC did have large portions of time that followed this pattern, with my own role as researcher becoming that of external literacy expert. This was, in part due to expedience as some of the early meetings were necessarily taken up with setting up the research element of the year of which the PLC was a key part and also I came to the community with considerably more understanding of and exposure to literacy theory and research evidence. This model of professional learning has its place in education, but the inquiry based collaborative principles of the PLC were a central part of this research and were established quite quickly, even if partially. This research is framed socioculturally, and as such, it was important that that the literacy coordinators were active participants in their individual and collective development, working collaboratively to explore and reflect upon their own practice (Harris & Jones, 2010; Dufour et al, 2008).

To this end, my role in the PLC needed to shift to that of participant. This was something that did occur during the year but was sometimes difficult to maintain. Our different roles outside of the PLC did become a factor in the meetings, with my assurance being sought throughout the year. This does not diminish the PLC as a collective, but it does suggest that the respective experiences and understanding that community members from quite different professional contexts need to be taken into consideration. This is especially the case if closer collaborative work is to become more of a feature of education in Wales (OECD, 2017; Welsh Government, 2017).

As presented in Chapter 4, whilst patterns of interaction, initiation and so on did change during the year, in some meetings, mine was still the dominant voice. This was especially so when the PLC was discussing matters relating to literacy theory or similar. One of the literacy coordinators, Litco 3, contributed noticeably less frequently than the others; a pattern that did not change a great deal throughout the year. This literacy coordinator was also the one who

implemented the fewest changes to her school approach. Simple causality is not clear here, but it might be suggested that the level of involvement in the collaboration might have some influence not only efficacy beliefs upon returning to schools, but on the development of understanding about the literacy approaches the group explored (Goddard & Goddard, 2001).

In the PLC meetings, this change in my role is situated within increased participation from other members and the group became more cohesive. The degree of direct question and answer to me from PLC members regarding matters of theory or for assurance that a literacy coordinator's understanding or decisions were 'right' was high at the start of the PLC and diminished through the year, though did not disappear. It is very possible that my own experience influenced this, too. My own professional role had for sometime involved running MA courses on aspects of literacy and it is likely that this would have been the site of habits that were inherent and difficult to break. It can be seen in Chapter 4 that whilst my own role can be seen to alter through the year, Litco 1 in many instances, took up this mantle. This literacy coordinator was the most frequent initiator and presenter to the group of all. They also made the greatest number of changes to their school practices and their own practice could be seen to develop and evolve during the course of the year. This suggests that the positionality of all of the PLC members needs to be taken into account. Reflexivity is, in the main, focused on my differences to the other members of the community but it should be noted that whilst the other PLC members were all school literacy coordinators, they were not 'the same' by virtue of this alone. They brought with them different experiences, expectations and understanding. This variety between community members might account for some of the differences seen in the participation levels and might need to be a site of closer consideration in the work of this nature.

### **5.4.3 Collaboration**

The defining characteristics of a PLC, collaboration in particular, can be seen to enhance both teacher and pupil performance in a school (Stoll, et al, 2012). The PLC became an increasingly collaborative group as the year went on and, by some obvious measures, such as frequency of participation, initiation and patterns of discussion (as seen in Chapter 4) the behaviours of the literacy coordinators who made up the community did change as the PLC became more developed. Ascertaining if the presence of a PLC is the root cause of this change is difficult, but the shared aims of the community and the genuinely collaborative

nature of the PLC did become more noticeable throughout the year. The sociocultural nature of the PLC, which situates professional learning as socially constructed, was a key part of this research and of my own professional learning. The PLC provided a mechanism and time for teachers to work together to explore and share information, and construct new meanings that would inform the approaches they undertook in their schools. This collaboration was the site of some teacher change.

Collaboration in this case relates specifically to the process of the community working together towards an identified aim (DuFour, et al 2008). In the PLC, collaborative practices were focused on developing the PLC's understanding of which literacy theories and approaches best fitted the literacy coordinators' views of how to develop effective practice in their schools. The efficacy of PLCs as site of development is situated within and constructed by the purposeful collaboration that takes place in the discussion of the group (Harris & Jones, 2010). In the initial stages of this research, collaboration was not an explicit feature. As can be seen in Chapter 4, many of the literacy coordinators participated infrequently and did not initiate discussion or share ideas. As can be seen in Fig 3 in Chapter 4, initial patterns of talk were between me, as researcher, and individual literacy coordinators.

This pattern changed quite quickly. The PLC began to talk together, as a community, by the third meeting and that pattern continued to develop as the year progressed. The talk about literacy became increasingly collaborative and group led. This was a key change in the behaviour of the group members. Graham and Ferriter (2010) state that this shift from moving from individualistic patterns to collaboration can take time and needs to be developed through the structure of the PLC. This shift from individualised working behaviours to collaborative practices can be difficult to establish (Hord et al, 2010). This can be seen in the behaviour patterns of some of the literacy coordinators. Litco 3, for example, was reluctant to share ideas and present to the group. This behaviour did change, and Litco 3 did share and initiate more as the year went on, but the pattern was quite different to the other members of the group. This may, in part, be because School 3 was not introducing new ideas, but rather focused on shoring up what had already been done in School 3. Litco 5 did not initiate discussion with the group with great frequency – a pattern that remained throughout the year, although they did participate with increasing frequency in discussion initiated by others. They also, presented ideas to the group with increasing frequency.

#### **5.4.4 Collective inquiry**

Collective inquiry was a key underlying principle of the PLC, as noted in Chapter 3. The questions, approaches and readings the community explored were, after my initial input, decided upon by the community. This was not equally shared across the PLC, with some literacy coordinators presenting ideas with much more frequency. The position of collective inquiry as the foundation for the collaborative knowledge (DuFour et al, 2008) developed by the group was inconsistent. Whilst the group did contribute to knowledge building by way of discussion, this was a sometimes uneven pattern of contribution. The PLC was intended to provide opportunity for focused reflection and purposeful engagement with new ideas. It was partially successful in this. To this end, it was important that the literacy coordinators shared and developed each other's understanding; this could be seen in the participation and presentation patterns presented in Chapter 4, including the low levels of participation and presentation of some community members.

Overall, though, this aspect of the group was changed. All of the literacy coordinators asked questions and all but Litco 3 shared ideas with the group and opened them up for discussion. This was most marked in Litco 1, who not only presented the most frequently to the group but who also made the most explicit shift in terms of the literacy position they held, moving towards a more disciplinary literacy focus as the year progressed. The group also became increasingly comfortable with questioning one another's ideas and holding different views from one another. Again, this was a key part of the PLC and of this research, which was, after all, centred on the literacy coordinators developing their own understandings of literacy and establishing their own ways of managing the approaches they decided would be most effective in their schools.

Discussions within the PLC did lead to some reflection on practice and change. Harris and Jones (2010), amongst others (Welsh Government, 2013b; Hord et al, 2010), conclude that it is not the initial experience that is the learning point of a PLC; instead, it is the reflection and conversation that follows the experience that fosters the most learning. This was the case in the PLC. It was during the discussions that followed the presentation of an idea or approach that the group felt to be the most valuable part of the PLC. Connected to this was the way in which the professional learning of the group was established. The process was participated in, increasingly, as key to the professional learning and collective efficacy beliefs of the group.

The aim was not to find the literacy approach that all could adopt, but rather to develop the reflective, inquiring habits that would inform sustainable, continuous professional learning.

Dufour et al (2008), along with Welsh Government (2013b) claim that a key element of a PLC is that it is results focused. That is, the ultimate aim of a PLC is to impact upon pupil learning. The PISA tests results were the most obvious indicator of this in this research. In the main, though, the result that the group was focused upon was to develop the literacy coordinators' own practice, with a longer-term aim of that impacting more explicitly on school practice and, ultimately pupil outcomes. The definitions of successful pupil outcomes offered by the literacy coordinators were broad and difficult to place within a whole-school system. They were phrased in terms generic improved reading and writing by pupils in all subjects. These proved difficult to align with school practices. As such, success measures were amended to relate to themselves as literacy coordinators and their success measures they identified as part of their monitoring systems. This framing of outcome as bound within the presence of assigned literacy approaches, as opposed to the impact of those approaches, was, perhaps, a pragmatic move by the PLC, but one which reduced the potential to explore more closely what success in literacy could look like in subjects. This was identified by Litco 1 and Litco 5 as a perceived limitation in their initial approaches.

The cycles of reflection, review, modification identified in the literature were explicit features of the PLC (Harris & Jones, 2010). This cycle of change could be seen most clearly in these adjustments to practice made during the research by Litco 1 and, later in the year, Litco 5. What did not, however, alter was the ways in which the literacy coordinators organised change in their own schools. DuFour, et al (2008) claim that collaborative relationships among teachers often lead to school improvement as those involved recognise the positive effects of collaboration. What can be seen in this research is that there were clear developments in collaborative practice in the PLC. What seemed to be more difficult was translating this collaborative work to the respective school contexts. This was even the case in Litco 5's introduction of some of the approaches of the PLC in their school by way of the school Literacy Group. This group met and discussed literacy, but the approaches were decided upon and brought to the group by the literacy coordinator, rather than constructed within the group.

#### **5.4.5 The PLC and the school**

Whilst PLCs are seen as effective for effecting change in schools (Harris and Jones, 2010), there seems to be some consensus (Bolam et al, 2005; Welsh Government, 2013b) that they must be structured and focused if they are to have impact. The PLC had focused on the literacy coordinators and their roles in the school, examining how they could manage whole-school literacy practices. In terms of the literacy coordinators, over the year, there is some evidence in the charts and notes relating to the meetings that the literacy coordinators felt and manifested some change in their understanding, behaviour and practices. The ways in which those changes were able to become visible in school practice, however, seem to rely on factors beyond the PLC. These included school monitoring systems, training and professional development practices and an emphasis within the schools on discrete strands of responsibility that are held by one person. The impact of school context made the practices of the PLC difficult to maintain.

When considering the potential for the PLC to impact on pupil learning, a key element to be considered is not simply the changes in behaviour and understanding within the PLC itself, but how this change can then positively influence the attitudes, perceptions and practices of teachers who were not part of the group. The management structure of the school itself and the time given to effective dissemination and management of the work that was constructed within the PLC influenced this potential. The collective efficacy practices that informed the work within the PLC needed a compatible ethos and system when the literacy coordinators were trying to alter and inform literacy practices within the schools.

The PLC members expressed that they felt their personal efficacy had been improved during the research, but the teachers in their schools did not know this work had been going on in this way and so did not feel the benefits. Perhaps what should have been passed on was not necessarily or only a list of literacy approaches that would be monitored across departments, but rather an ethos and a way of working where whole-school does not simply mean 'same' but conveys something instead about a shared ethos that can find expression according to the professional judgement of teachers and their contexts. The lessons of the PLC, including an engagement with ideas and concepts, examining evidence and making informed professional decisions, might have been valuable principles to establish within the schools that the PLC

members might have been well placed to help establish. This would help support placing teachers more firmly in their own professional development (Bruce et al, 2010).

Returning to Tschannen-Moran et al (1998), and the definition of collective efficacy as being ‘about the capability of the group to bring about desired ends’ (p.3), the culture shift within schools and the mechanisms by which the literacy coordinators managed and monitored whole-school literacy, did not lend themselves to collective efficacy beliefs. The class teachers did not seem to feel potential for agency, as can be seen in the seven out of ten who felt the strategies they were meant to use would not be effective in their lessons, but who used them anyway. It can also be seen in the belief, expressed by nine of the teachers that their school, as an institution, could not effect considerable change to structures that would perhaps impact upon practice. This was, in all but one case, tied to external factors such as examinations, national and local priorities and the structure of secondary schools. It does, though, suggest that the collective efficacy identified by Hattie (2016) as most influential on pupil outcomes, was not yet experienced by these teachers. This is in comparison to the literacy coordinators, all of whom expressed a belief that they felt they could make change in their schools, even if this then proved to be more complicated than they had, perhaps, anticipated, and those beliefs became less certain. This seems to support Tschannen-Moran et al’s, (1998) claim that there is a strongly reciprocal relationship between efficacy beliefs and context.

The importance of focused, collaborative dialogue and inquiry (Crockett, 2002) has been explored earlier as a key part of an effective PLC (Welsh Government, 2013b). An element that is identified as an important part of the PLC is its potential to ‘secure improved school performance’ (Welsh Government, 2013b, p.6). The changes in the behaviours and understanding of the literacy coordinators could have been extended to their schools had mechanisms been put in place that are compatible with collaborative, focused inquiry and the sorts of professional learning that effect positively on individual and collective efficacy beliefs (Hord et al, 2010).

At the end of the year, the literacy coordinators reported unanimously that they felt they had a more developed understanding of literacy in secondary schools and felt more confident in their ability to develop approaches that would be effective. They did, though, comment that the development in their own practice was not always matched by their confidence in how to

translate it into practice across their schools; that is the individual efficacy beliefs of the literacy coordinators were not consistent with a belief in their schools to effect the changes they felt would be positive. Several factors were mentioned as barriers to their effective implementation of change. All reported that they did not have sufficient time to develop proper guidance or to train the teachers in their schools. Four of the five felt that they needed more time to consider more carefully the literacy demands and needs of all subjects and would benefit from closer work with subject colleagues:

‘I feel a bit like I am going in and telling them what to do when I am not really sure they need to do it’ (Litco 5, Meeting 8, lines 130-131)

All reported that competing demands on their time when they were in school meant that they couldn’t develop literacy or monitor provision as well as they wanted to. As noted by Litco 4, ‘I collect in samples of work from subject areas, but all I can really see is if they have used a strategy. I haven’t got time to see if it has actually done anything. That is frustrating’ (Meeting 8, lines 136-138). Multiple comments reflected scheduling difficulties and the inability to have a common planning time with colleagues. Responses related to accountability, attitude, and response to change indicated that some teachers had a negative attitude toward change. One commented that ‘I feel that I know now that doing this properly is a long process. There are big things to consider and to do it right takes time. This is something we don’t have in school’. (Litco 1, Meeting 8, lines 166-167).

Three of the literacy coordinators felt they would like to establish PLCs within their schools so as to better explore how literacy could work within each subject. These literacy coordinators felt that the PLC provided an opportunity to meet and share new ideas that they would like to extend to their school colleagues. Time was seen as a mitigating factor to this approach as the time taken for purposeful collective enquiry was at a premium in school. The level of effectiveness of the PLC is then affected because focused collaborative inquiry might require more time than is available in a busy school system. Another felt that they now felt more comfortable with seeing cycles of reflection as a key part of their practice. They also expressed some doubt that this was something they could establish as a principle in their school:

‘I think it’d be great to try things, monitor them properly, see what worked and what didn’t and then change it where needed and then do it again’ ( Litco 4, Meeting 8, lines 111-112). This was echoed by the three members of the group who agreed that they felt this sense of

inquiry was something they wanted to replicate in their schools as part of developing effective literacy practices:

‘what we do instead is get something into place and that takes so long that it just stays there whether it is any good or anyone uses it or not’ (Litco 5, Meeting 8 lines 124-125).

#### **5.4.6 Conclusion**

To sum up, the literacy coordinators that were part of the PLC demonstrated changed behaviours. These were, in the main, connected to an increased willingness to question ideas (their own and those of others), an increased level of participation and initiation of discussion and a shift in their expectation of how to develop their own practice. What became apparent through their discussions at meetings was an increased sense that the experience they had shared in the PLC was difficult to replicate or cascade through a school. This was felt to be especially the case when the group were discussing the efficacy of trying to make decisions that were to be implemented across all subject areas on a whole-school basis. The identified constraints meant that the literacy practices that the literacy coordinators were attempting to implement fell some way not only from the ways in which they felt literacy could be best implemented in schools, but also from their initial definitions of literacy per se. All of the literacy coordinators stated early beliefs about literacy that placed literacy above all as social practice, as outlined in Chapter 2. Key elements of this theoretical positioning include identifying different literacies that are associated with a variety of domains; situating literacy practices as embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices; seeing literacy as fluid, shifting and context dependent (Street, 1984). This view of literacy as existing in and produced by the social plane was not a feature in the literacy approaches that were initiated in the schools. Instead, in the practices, literacy was generally figured as a single, teachable, autonomous entity with a single aim and focus.

Importantly, the literacy coordinators felt that they needed to fully convince the teachers in their schools of the relevance of literacy to their teaching. Teachers seem to respond to change if they see it as something that will improve their practice rather than as something removed from what they actually do in the classroom (Evans, 2014). The perceived disconnection between literacy and subject teaching felt by many of the teachers seemed to indicate that, without the requisite change in understanding and attitude, whole-school approaches might not impact at the meaningful, embedded level for real change to be effected

at the level of the efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 2000; Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Hattie, 2016). This aligns also somewhat with Opfer and Pedder's (2011) assertion that teacher learning is complex and that it must be viewed as a complex system rather than just an event. It also points towards a need to review the ways in which whole-school approaches are used in secondary schools.

### **5.5 To what extent did participating in the PLC impact on school results?**

The use of PISA tests in this research has been discussed in depth Chapter 3. The role and visibility of PISA tests, and the poor comparative performance of pupils in Wales in the 2009 tests were a key catalyst for change in the Welsh education system. It also formed the immediate backdrop to this research. As such, whilst the main aim of this research was to explore ways in which literacy is manifested across subjects in secondary schools, it seemed important to take the opportunity to see if those approaches had a concomitant effect on performance in the tests that had quickly become the key measure of literacy.

The ways in which literacy is measured in PISA tests have, as noted in Chapter 3, been the site of contention and debate. Reading literacy is positioned in PISA as:

‘...understanding, using, and reflecting on written texts, in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential, and to participate in society. PISA examines to what extent adolescents are able to understand and integrate texts they are confronted with in their everyday lives’ (OECD, 2010, p.14).

This view of literacy suggests that it is positioned within a social realm. This type of literacy, despite being defined within lived, social practice, can be assessed. Literacy is increasingly conceptualized as a measureable, high priority feature of education. The increased emphasis on the evidence provided by international literacy assessments are an important part of the educational policy landscape (Baird et al, 2011). Throughout this section, it should be noted that measuring literacy is not a straightforward thing. Literacy (see Street 1984) has been seen as inseparable from the context through and in which it is produced. The quantitative, standardised PISA tests that formed this part of the research seem to move away from that view of literacy to one which measures literacy as a universal, standardized skill, even as it defines literacy as part of everyday life; which begs the question ‘whose everyday life?’ (Sjoberg, 2012).

Literacy as a social practice is transformed into standardised measurable elements that can be compared in international rank order (Hamilton, 2012). This simplification of literacy as something that can be captured and scored has had some impact on policy and also on advice and guidance for schools (Welsh Government, 2013a; 205); it seems to position literacy as a series of discrete skills that can be applied to social contexts rather than as necessarily produced by them. This measurability is an important factor in this part of the research, especially if PLCs are meant to have impacts. The PISA tests data, therefore, provides some quantitative information regarding whether the approaches of the schools had any measurable impact in the particular tests that measured the literacy in which the country was seen as failing.

### **5.5.1 Overall results**

The PISA tests that pupils in each school sat at the start and the end of the research showed significant improvements in pre and post-test for each of the schools. That is, the difference between the scores in the pre and post-tests for each school was not likely to have been a chance finding. This was an encouraging result for the schools. There were no significant differences between the schools in their overall results, which suggest that it might have been the focus on literacy, rather than the specific instances in each school, that had an impact. This is, to some extent, an expected feature of research of this kind, as other studies (Rosenshine & Meister, 1994; Wilkinson & Son, 2011) in different contexts have found that the strategies themselves might not have had the greatest impact on results. This seems to be the same in this case. The strategies and positions that informed the literacy practices in each school did not statistically affect the performance of the pupils in each school. It is also worth noting that, as seen in Chapter 4 and earlier in this chapter, even when there were stated differences in literacy position or a distinct set of practices to be used across the school, much of the actual practice, especially in the earlier part of the year of the research, in each of the schools revolved around a small number of approaches. Four of the literacy coordinators did select strategies instruction as their main underlying principle, too. The impact of maturation cannot be ignored in these results. As the control school unfortunately was not able to continue their involvement with the research, it is difficult to know if the literacy coordinators' involvement with the PLC was what made any impact. Nonetheless, there are some patterns within the data that warrant discussion.

As outlined in Chapter 4, the biggest gains can be seen in Schools 2 and 3, the schools that scored the lowest mean scores in the first test. The types of literacy that was practiced in School 2, one of structured, discrete, hierarchically ordered skills may be seen to fit most neatly with the notions of quantifiable literacy as seen in the PISA test. The literacy in the tests is not context or subject dependent –the pupils would not know the context before they saw the paper and it is not revisable. Hence, the application of removed, discrete skills may have been to the benefit of the pupils in School 2. The types of literacy tested in PISA are also not subject related in the sense of Shanahan’s (2008, for example) disciplinary literacy and so the discrete generic approach of School 2 might have been rewarded in the tests.

The growth in results for School 3 is not relatable to a particular approach to literacy, as the school had not adopted a clear approach nor made radical changes to practice and guidance. It may be the case that a renewed focus on literacy in the school in a broad sense had an impact on the performance of pupils in the tests. Some impact in terms of results may have come from the English scheme of work for the school. The year 9 group that were tested in this school also had, as a whole cohort and as a planned part of their English programme of study, an explicit focus on the English GCSE questions that were most closely related to the reflect and evaluate questions in the PISA tests. It is in this question that School 3 made considerable gains: moving from 29.9% to 69.7% in this question type. This meant that the performance in this type of question by pupils in this school had gone from being the weakest to the strongest. This may support an argument for some generic skills to be taught most effectively in specialised classes.

Whilst the scores for Schools 2 and 3 were the most improved, it is worth noting that these schools did have the lowest mean scores in the initial test. School 3 in particular, had the lowest score across all schools in each question type. There was, in part, more scope for improvement in these schools.

### **5.5.2 Reflect and evaluate questions**

The performance in each school by question type shows a clear pattern of progression across all schools, apart from the slight dip in results for School 1 in the retrieve information questions. For each of the schools, the greatest improvement came in the reflect and evaluate

questions. Responses to questions of this type had the weakest mean scores across all schools in the pre-tests. As noted above, these questions were those most closely aligned to the inference questions found in the GCSE English paper, and so it is likely that, in each, school, this particular type of reading was part of an increased focus as the pupils progressed through year 9. Importantly though, the common literacy approaches that were seen across schools, such as Reciprocal Reading and Eight Reading Behaviours, might have had some impact in the improvement in questions of this type. The decontextualised, broad, generic nature of these approaches, which encourage pupils to apply a range of reading dispositions more explicitly so as to interrogate the meanings found in text and how they can be explored, might have had an impact on the response of pupils to reflect and evaluate questions. These questions in the PISA text require pupils to address the ways in which meaning is constructed in a text.

The literacy approaches that were observed most commonly, whilst not generally related to the text purposes at hand, did focus on helping pupils develop a sense of explicit comprehension strategies; the idea that there were tools that could be used to make sense of text and how it is constructed, how meaning is produced, is central to these generic strategies (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). The skills required to answer the reflect and evaluate questions are the ones most encouraged and supported in these generic literacy approaches seen across all of the schools in one form or another. Whilst these approaches might not have been used as effective tools to support the teaching of subject specific text in many cases, or were used without a clear understanding as to the purpose of these approaches and their appropriateness for the lesson aims, the establishing of a system of explicit text interrogation may have been a contributing factor to the fact that the greatest increases in scores across all schools could be seen in these types of question.

### **Retrieve information questions**

The strongest mean scores in the pre-test were for the retrieve information questions. These questions are, perhaps, the most commonly used in lessons (Taylor et al, 2000) and certainly featured most highly in the form of oral questioning in the observed lessons. These questions were, in the pre and post-tests, the ones with the highest mean percentage of correct answers for each school, with the exception of School 5 which scored equally in the interpret questions. These questions also saw the least improvement of all question types between the pre and post-tests. In part, as noted above, this may be due to the fact that there was less

scope for improvement, especially when compared to the reflect and evaluate questions, which saw the greatest increase in mean scores. It also, though, might be because the strategies that were either part of the school literacy approach or which were observed in lessons were not focused on the ways in which information can be retrieved. In a very small number of lessons, passing reference was made to ‘skimming and scanning’ but the reference was not part of an instructional focus on how to identify and extract key information from a range of texts.

The types of texts used in the PISA tests for these questions involved some texts that included graphs or tables and so the types of reading the pupils would have been required to do were quite different from the continuous text-based strategies that were more focused on comprehending text and how meaning is constructed within them rather than extracting information from text. Again, improvements in the scores in these questions were highest in School 2 and 3, who had also had the lowest scores for these types of question in the pre-test.

### **5.5.3 Interpret questions**

The interpret questions saw improvement from each school. The greatest improvement in this type of question was from School 2, which saw a 24% improvement in mean correct responses to this type of question. The improvement in each school for this type of question was not as marked as that for the reflect and evaluate questions, but initial scores were higher for questions of this type in each of the schools. Again, the interpret questions in the tests required pupils to engage with how the texts were working, sometimes in conjunction with another text, to create meaning. This could indicate that the explicit reading approaches seen in the schools, again, had some impact upon the responses to these questions.

### **5.5.4 Conclusion**

There seems to be some evidence that overall the schools made improvements on the literacy measured in the PISA tests over the year. As seen in Chapter 4, this ipsative improvement was significant and suggests that focusing on literacy impacted positively upon results. What is not clear, however, is if the work of the schools in terms of the strategies used and approaches adopted made a difference; also maturation would have had some impact on the results of the cohorts over the year. There do seem to be greater gains made in those

questions that required responses that could have been impacted upon by the use of some of the generic reading strategies used in the schools, but these improvements were uniform; each of the schools improved (albeit to a varying degree) in the reflect and evaluate and interpret questions. They were also the question types that had lower scores in the initial tests. This all means that it is difficult to conclude that the literacy practices put in place in the schools impacted upon the improvements in those questions.

Lingard (2014, p.46) argues that ‘data in policy and research are made, fabricated – not in the sense of falsified, but in the sense of constructed, put together’ (2014, p. 46). As such, it is important to remember that the measured instances of literacy seen in tests such as those represented by the PISA tests are themselves representations of a kind of literacy discovered and measured by tests constructed for that purpose. As noted earlier, literacy is contested and the ways in which it presents itself and is produced by school practices and contexts is fluid and multiple. Hamilton (2012) claims that when literacy is conceptualised and presented in numerical form, literacy is changed from something complex and debatable to something that can be represented by a number; literacy becomes ‘a thing, that can be ordered and classified, and thus measured’ (p.33). Through this, she claims constructed measures are used to create a structure or order that is presented as objective.

The tests used as part of this research produced inconclusive results in the main. Whilst this data forms the quantitative element of this thesis, this is not, as noted above, to suggest that such tests represent a positivist ‘truth’ about what literacy is. Tests such as these are subject to and produced by the definitional debates and prioritising that situate all literacy practices within a framework. Catts and Kamhi’s (2017) description of reading comprehension as a multidimensional, complex skill is important to highlight here; as do definitions from, for example RAND (2002) that also see reading as complex. It might be that a testing regime will not necessarily be able to capture all of these processes. It might also mean that using the data from such tests diagnostically could be difficult, as knowing ‘what’ does not answer ‘why’.

Those who view strategy instruction critically (Hirsch, 2006; Willingham, 2007; Shanahan, 2016), claim that too much time spent on strategy instruction can only lead to a plateau, suggesting that the gains from strategy instruction can be obtained fairly quickly (Shanahan,

2014). Additionally, some claim (Willingham, 2007) that strategy use takes up cognitive effort and space that might be better used on other elements of reading.

It seems, then that each school made gains in their tests scores, but there were not significant differences between the schools in their patterns of improvement. In part, this could be explained by the similarities that could be seen amongst the schools in their approaches. This might account for the gains made in those questions that seem best suited to a strategy instruction model that could then be applied to decontextualised text.

## **5.6 Limitations of the research**

This study is not without significant limitations. As stated earlier, the lesson observations were observed and recorded by me as university researcher, with a focus on reading as part of a whole-school focus on literacy at a time when literacy was a national priority. This, inevitably, leaves questions regarding how instruction would have differed if I was not present and the lesson did not have this specific focus at its centre. This is especially the case as I came to the observations, inevitably, with my own prior knowledge and beliefs regarding reading that would have acted as a foundation, conscious or otherwise, for the knowledge I constructed as a result of the observations and interviews. In making the lesson observations as descriptive as I could, I aimed to mitigate this, but I still need to take this into consideration when reflecting upon what I observed.

Additionally, the only data that focuses on pupil learning is that provided by the PISA tests that were taken by the year 9 pupils in each of the research schools. The progress in the work of the pupils within their subjects was not a specific focus of this research and it is, therefore, difficult to comment on this element and any variation between teachers or schools vis-à-vis pupil achievement in ways other than that measured by the quantitative tests. This is reflected in the comments of many of the teachers who felt that pupil progress should not be seen through a single narrow lens. What was illuminated by these observations was the extent to which shared approaches could be seen across and within schools, certainly during the earlier round of lesson observations. From these observations and subsequent interviews, it became clear that many of the class teachers did not generally use the literacy strategies and approaches in their classrooms with a clear notion of how they will enable pupils to engage with text more effectively, nor with a clear understanding of whether their pupils required

any kind of support in order to engage with that particular text. There were some moves made towards this in the second observation, where four teachers focused in some way on the language of their subjects. A longer period of study, with the cycles of reflection and change given more space to be embedded would have given more insight into whether further integration of literacy and subject could have developed, what this would look like in the classroom and what impact this might have on pupils' work in a number of measures.

The unavoidable loss of the control school meant that the tests data was more difficult to analyse in terms of impact. In this element of the research, too, it would have been useful to allow for a longer period of time to give literacy coordinators the opportunity to alter and embed their practices over a more sustained period of time. Whilst this research focuses on teacher practice, it would have been enriching to have had the timescale to allow for measures of pupil progress other than the tests to have been explored.

Some caution will need to be exercised when making generalisations based on this research. The research was conducted within a group of five schools and with five literacy coordinators. Whilst some patterns can be seen in the results of this research, this does not indicate simple replicability, nor a generalisable truth. The aim of this research was for the literacy coordinators to explore and construct their own understanding. As such, a different group of literacy coordinators might have developed their understanding in different ways with different outcomes. The schools had been selected for their broad similarity across a number of factors, but this does not mean that the same findings would necessarily have been produced had this research been conducted with other school partners. The schools were, though, undertaking work on literacy within a national context that was common across Wales and had shared common characteristics.

This research was conducted over the course of one school year. There is every possibility that the results would have been different with a different time span, where the literacy coordinators had opportunity to examine the practices in their schools and adapt in response. It is also important to note that my multiple roles and the necessary separation of elements of the research from the work of the PLC are factors that need to be taken into account when collaborative work of this nature is undertaken.

## Chapter 6

### **Conclusions and recommendations.**

In this chapter, I present the conclusions and recommendations that I have drawn from this research. This research was conducted to investigate and analyse whole-school literacy in secondary schools. It involved exploring how whole-school literacy can be implemented in secondary schools in Wales; examining if theoretical positions can be seen enacted in literacy practices in the classroom and if the professional practices in a PLC can be seen to change behaviours of literacy coordinators and hence impact upon their schools. This research has, as outlined earlier, limitations and is, in many ways, a first step towards what I hope will be a body of work that explores not only literacy and literacy practices in schools, but also how PLCs and similar collaborative ways of working can affect change in school practices. This chapter will first present an overview of the final findings of this research. This will be followed by a discussion of three key areas: the role of theory in whole-school and classroom literacy practices in secondary schools; the efficacy and management of whole school approaches and the PLC as a vehicle for partnership working. Finally, I present my recommendations for practice and further research.

As Wales moves towards closer partnership and collaborative working between schools, and between schools and other parties including HEIs (Welsh Government, 2017), this research is not only timely but also contributes valuable information concerning the possibilities and limitations of this type of work. It also adds to the discussion about teachers' roles as agents of change at a time when the system in Wales is undergoing rapid development. Lastly, and linked to this, the findings related to the role of theory and evidence in informing and developing teacher professional understanding and capacity to change is timely and important as teachers consider how to define and organise learning in a new curriculum.

The cumulative findings of this research point in part to a series of disconnections between the culture and principles of PLC working and the demands and structures of school systems; between notions of 'whole-school' approaches and teachers' roles and identities, especially in the light of the influence of teacher cognition and efficacy on teacher decision making; between the theory and evidence base for, in this instance, literacy approaches and their

classroom iteration, and between teachers' beliefs and behaviours. These disconnections and their significance are synthesised and outlined below.

The principles underpinning the PLC as a vehicle for individual and collective efficacy are situated within an understanding of teachers' centrality to their own development (Bolan et al, 2005) within a collective and collaborative framework (Fielding et al, 2005). The principles outlined by, for example, DuFour et al (2008) such as shared purpose within a collaborative culture are seen in the PLC. However, this research finds that the principles underpinning the systems within which the literacy coordinators and class teachers worked were not compatible with the ways of working found in PLCs. The capacity of the PLC to enable the sustained promotion of the professional learning of all professionals in a school as outlined by Bolam et al (2005) is not fulfilled by the ways in which literacy practices were decided upon, disseminated or monitored in the schools. Rather than a change in culture and systems that could support this, a new set of mechanisms or events (Ranson, 2007), are used within an existing culture to measure visible instances of performance against set criteria, such as the use of a particular strategy observed in lessons or in pupils' books.

The potential of the PLC to alter the way in which teachers viewed themselves and their roles (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2010) was only partially realisable. Both class teachers and literacy coordinators identify the limitations imposed upon their practice and the potential for change and development by system mechanisms that act as inhibitors. As noted by Harris and Jones (2010) a PLC has to be centred on change in the classroom if it is to be a PLC at all.

Meaningful change in the classroom is, in turn, influenced by changes in cognition (Borg (2009), and exhortative policy practices (Ball et al, 2011) that situate teachers as active participants rather than subjects. This research suggests the cultural shifts required to support this change were not present at a structural level. This in turn implies that meaningful change at all levels –national and local, as well as at school level – is required if this potential is to be realised.

This research finds that teachers, and even the literacy coordinators themselves, participate in practices that they feel to be not only inauthentic (Ball, 2003) but ineffective. For example, the training offered by schools was short term, discrete and informative, in the main. As noted by Opfer and Pedder(2011) and Hargreaves and Shirley (2009), training of this sort is not effective in changing beliefs and practices. This view was echoed by literacy

coordinators, even as they all organised this sort of training. This pattern can be seen throughout this research.

At a classroom level, teachers expressed a clear sense of disconnection between the decisions they made in their lessons regarding literacy and what they saw as their professional role. When literacy is figured in the research lessons as a series of actions, important in a general way, but adjacent to what the teacher believes they should focus on, then not only is effectiveness compromised in the way of sometimes partially-understood and often misapplied strategy use, but also by way of teacher confidence, beliefs and efficacy. This in turn is linked to the negative impacts of being presented with strategies as solutions. The ends focused training and school literacy policies where named approaches are presented as proxies for literacy result in an undermining of the potential effectiveness of those very approaches. Where teachers in the research make purposeful decisions regarding literacy in their lessons, it is because it becomes internalised as part of not only their subject, but their own professional understanding; it is when they feel able to articulate their decision making in terms of their own judgements in relation to what is being taught and to whom, rather than to external factors such as school policy or expectation or national directives. It is here that the beginnings of the kinds of shifts in cognition outlined by Borg (2009) are glimpsed. This research points to a need to reconsider what is meant by whole-school initiatives and approaches and what principles and practices might be necessary to move away from the sorts of imperative practices that focus on delivery rather than informed professional judgement (Ball et al , 2013) and the development of professional expertise (MacFarlane (2015).

The above findings can be situated within discussions concerning the ways in which literacy is performed at all levels, with success measured by way of identifiable and hence measureable elements. This tension between the visible (evidence gathered through book scrutiny, for example) and the invisible (teachers' existing cognitions and beliefs, the ways in which teachers define their professional role, their rationale for teaching decisions) can be seen in this research as an area in need of further investigation.

The potential for positional messiness that might occur during this type of collaborative work between HEI staff and schools also emerges from this research as an important finding. In order to maintain the integrity of the research, it was necessary to separate out aspects of the

research from the collaborative work of the PLC. Without this separation, the lesson observations and interviews were in danger of becoming part of the school performance systems that this research identifies as inhibiting. My own roles within the research were multiple and blurred. My role as PLC member benefitted the research, for example, by providing a space for trusting relationships to be established (Drake, 2010). Nonetheless, my different status and role was explicit and, in fact, necessary to my gathering the information I did from the class teachers Berger (2015). This finding suggests that, if collaborative research between schools and HEIs is going to be a feature of the education landscape in Wales, then further work is needed in negotiating roles and expectations so as to help ensure the integrity of research findings. This in turn brings with it a need to recognise the performativity discourses that help shape systems and practices within HEIs (MacFarlane, 2016), as well as schools.

The following sections examine the implications of some of these findings in more detail.

### **6.1 Theory and secondary school literacy practices**

Commonly, reading comprehension is defined as an interactive process between reader and text (see RAND, 2002, for example). In this process, the reader extracts and constructs meaning through engagement with the text. Strategies that are, then, used in lessons to support engagement with text should be found at this intersection between text and reader. That is, the approaches used should develop and strengthen this engagement and, thus, make meaning more clear. In the lesson observations and subsequent interviews that were part of this research, the reading strategies employed were, on the whole, prioritised and foregrounded at the expense of the text itself. Strategies were used in the observed lessons, but the text was often lost in the strategy. This can, perhaps, be seen as an unavoidable position in a whole-school approach to literacy where recommended strategies are used across all subjects. These strategies, as could be seen in the post-lesson interviews, acted as a synecdoche for ‘literacy’; that is, the use of a strategy in a lesson was seen as an end in itself and teachers did not express their selection of a strategy in terms of pupil need.

This is something that can be seen, too, in many of the monitoring processes used in the schools where the use of a strategy was the focus. The end point of those strategies, a deeper understanding of a particular text, was not a feature of the observed practices, nor of the

monitoring processes put into place in the schools. As discussed in Chapter 2, there is a body of research that supports the use of reading strategies, with the ultimate aim of the use of reading strategies in the classroom being to better support pupil engagement with text; to make explicit to pupils the tools they can draw upon as they engage with text in multiple ways, in a variety of contexts and for varied purposes. It is this multiplicity – a particular feature of the secondary school, where pupils will engage with texts across all subjects – that was missing in the lessons observed. This manifested itself in the disconnection that could be seen between what was being taught (content) and how it was being approached (generic shared strategies that were applied on top of the text).

In a majority of the cases, teachers did use explicit strategies in their lessons and these were justified in the interviews that took place post observed lesson. These interviews often showed that the class teachers made use of the resources and strategies that they had available to them. As noted in Chapter 4, these often came from a number of places, including whole-school training events, as well as personal study. What could also be seen in the post lesson observation interviews was that the class teachers' understanding of the approaches they used was variable. In many instances, the class teachers were not confident in their understanding or application of the strategies. There was no evidence of understanding why they were using particular strategies beyond broad, general principles, nor how these strategies would help pupils understand the particular texts with which they were engaging. The space between what was being read and how it was being approached, the space where strategies should be employed in a focused, purposeful way, was instead a gap. A common feature of the observations and interviews was that instead of the strategies providing ways in to text, they operated alongside them. The teachers expressed a clear sense of distance between what they were teaching and the literacy strategies they were utilising in their lessons. This was even the case where class teachers expressed a clear sense of the importance of pupils developing their literacy skills. A clear message from this research was that this gap between subject and literacy, which was both observed and expressed, would benefit from further research.

OFSTED (2013b), amongst others, are quite clear that reading must not be seen as simply the sum of strategies and the skills that these strategies are intended to strengthen. Reading approaches, in OFSTED's guidance, should enhance understanding and are not to be seen as adjacent to the text itself. Yet even in this document, the recommended approaches are generic and whole-school, with little mention made of just how subject teachers, who are not

experts in reading instruction, should approach subject specific texts within the context of their lessons and select strategies that may best suit their lessons. This message, too, can be seen in guidance in Wales (ESTYN, 2017). The observed lessons seemed to provide some evidence for concerns noted by Fisher and Frey (2008a) that one of the key dangers of whole-school literacy approaches is that the strategies become ‘curricularized’ (p.16); that it is the strategies rather than the text that is the central focus of the lesson.

This may be a definitional problem with ‘whole-school approaches’ and the ways in which implementation is managed. Literacy is centralised and made more visible in recent documents (Welsh Government, 2013a; ESTYN, 2011; ESTYN, 2017) within and across all subjects, yet the message seems to be that literacy is a tangible entity, a body of approaches that can simply be applied to content and then subsequently monitored. This approach was seen in all of the schools involved in this research, and was the site of some pedagogical mismatch in the observed lessons, as well as teacher dissatisfaction in the interviews. This leads to two key points.

Firstly, that the effectiveness of the generic literacy approaches, well-evidenced as it is, depends on common understanding of the approaches and where and when they are most usefully deployed. The lack of explicit understanding of strategy instruction as interacting in the space between text and reader to construct meaning seemed to be mirrored in practices that enacted strategy instruction but did not actually enhance or support understanding. Secondly, as noted by Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) amongst others (see Fisher et al, 2009; Gillis, 2014), beyond simple understanding of meaning, some understanding is needed of how particular texts within specific subject contexts produce certain types of knowledge. This understanding was notable by its absence from most of the lessons observed, with the exception of, to varying degrees, the second lessons of Mr. D, Mr. E, Ms. W and Mr. Pb.

As noted by Barton (2012), the term ‘literacy’ might itself be a hindrance to the effective development of language across the curriculum. This point is picked up by OFSTED (2013b) too, who reframe the topic in terms of teachers considering how to best use language to enhance achievement in their subjects. This disconnection between subject and literacy, though, seems to need more than a rebranding. The teachers interviewed for this research struggled to articulate ways in which something that they acknowledged as extremely important (literacy) could be a meaningful part of their subject teaching.

This may, in part, be due to the relative newness of some of the approaches used in the research schools; the clumsy visibility of strategies lessens as they are used regularly and purposely to teach content (Fisher & Frey, 2008b). It is also the case that the evidence base for the efficacy of strategy instruction as a tool for developing reading rests on embedded professional understanding, development and practice (Fisher & Frey, 2007; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). The literacy approaches adopted in each of the schools required that all teachers had the requisite skills and understanding to utilise these strategies effectively. At most, the teachers in this research had had one whole day of training in the strategy or strategies their school was going to employ on a whole-school basis. Most commonly, they had less training than this.

There seem to be a number of steps missing in the literacy practices observed in the schools involved in this research. The strategies selected in school had an evidence base of efficacy (NRA, 2000; RAND 2002; Pearson, 2002). What seemed to be lost was the teacher development that could ensure that these strategies were used in a focused, purposeful way by teachers making professional choices based on their pupils' needs, the content being taught and the lesson aim, rather than as part of a prescribed literacy curriculum (Fisher & Frey, 2007). As noted in Chapter 2, teacher efficacy is enhanced when teachers feel they are able and trusted to make informed professional decisions. Just as the literacy coordinators were developing this in their own practice, the teachers in their schools were not.

The interviews and observations provided evidence of the need for the literacy approaches utilised in secondary school subject classrooms to be more embedded through professional development, and also for there to more of a genuine sense amongst the class teachers that they had bought into the approaches as a part of their classroom practice, rather than as part of their understanding of school expectation. The gradual release of responsibility model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) discussed in Chapters 2 and 4 could be seen developing in my own practice within the PLC and in the explicitly stated literacy intentions of the literacy coordinators during the period of this research. It did, not, though, figure in the practices in school. The model in each of the schools was of the literacy coordinator controlling literacy practices through centralised decision making. The class teachers used pre-decided generic strategies, and as could be seen in the interviews with the class teachers, those who felt most

confident and invested in the literacy work of the school were those who had been given opportunities to make some decisions in their own practice through informed involvement. The importance of professional development and understanding aside, after a point, generic comprehension strategies might not necessarily be the best tools for engagement with increasingly complex, context dependent text (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008, Fisher & Frey 2009) Comprehension strategies can be useful tools to support general pupil engagement with text, but, once that level has been achieved, their usefulness diminishes (Fisher et al, 2009; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2010; Shanahan et al, 2012). The class teachers in this research were subject experts and expressed concern that they did not have sufficient expertise or knowledge to reliably and effectively use the strategies that were part of the whole-school approaches in their schools. This concern could be seen in both the observations and the interviews and brings up a number of wider issues connected to not only professional development but also domain knowledge, subject teaching, the structure of the secondary school day and the role of the secondary school teacher.

Moje (2008) suggests some reasons why generic literacy approaches within subjects might be limited that might be of particular relevance to a Wales that is moving towards a curriculum that is built upon cross-subject links. She argues that teachers may need to focus more on discipline specific literacy, and that a deep understanding of this is required for building cross-disciplinary knowledge. This can be challenging in a secondary school setting where learning is organised by way of fifty or sixty minute segments. This limitation emerged strongly in the interviews as teachers expressed that they were time limited in their ability to build deep understanding.

A more disciplinary focused literacy could also help refigure understanding of subjects as bound within immovable borders. Disciplinary literacy is concerned with how knowledge is constructed within disciplinary discourses. Knowledge is not seen as discoverable by language, but rather as constituted by it, which positions it contextually. The teachers in this research expressed a sense of competition for time in their lessons between literacy and content. They felt that the lesson time they needed to give to reading strategies was time taken away from their subject content and that the strategies offered as whole-school approaches were not necessarily relevant to their lessons. The class teachers presented the reading approaches as distinct from the content. In this model, they could only really be seen as separate, with knowledge held in one part of the lesson and reading or literacy practices in

another. A disciplinary approach could help refigure the ways in which subject knowledge is viewed as constructed by language practices within disciplines. This would mean that 'literacy' becomes a part of how the subject is defined and approached and literacy would no longer stand outside of the content of lessons.

### **6.3 Whole-school approaches**

The model of a sole coordinator, for literacy in this case, but the case could be made for any number of school responsibilities, does not seem to fit with what the literature suggests about teacher efficacy and change. The lessons of the PLC were not extended beyond the group of literacy coordinators, responsibility was not released and 'literacy' was 'given' to teachers, pre-decided and packaged for them to use in their lessons. Change in teacher and collective efficacy beliefs, supported by clear involvement in collective direction and focused professional development requires more than isolated training events and policy revisions, as recognised by the literacy coordinators themselves. It might require a rethinking of what subjects are, how knowledge is produced within them in a dynamic way within a system that could implement the structural changes that would support this.

The structure of the secondary school also must be taken into account as an influencing factor in how learning is conceptualised and managed. Learning is organised by way of subjects in secondary schools; these are situated discretely and reading or literacy added to them without change being made in the ways in which the subject is viewed and its relationship to language. This can be seen as central to the disconnection observed and also expressed by the class teachers in this research. It might be that subjects need to examine closely and explicitly the knowledges that make up their boundaries and the language that is used to construct their disciplinary texts if literacy is going to become a meaningfully integrated part of secondary school teaching for all teachers. Perhaps if we really do want all teachers to be teachers of literacy in a purposeful way, then there is a need to rethink what we mean by literacy and the relationship it has to meaning in the subject areas. This placing of subjects as discursively constituted would place literacy as an essential aspect of learning in and across each subject. As noted by Ms. W, 'it is all words at the end of the day' (Lines 26-30).

A number of theorists have argued that the subject areas can be viewed as spaces in which knowledge is produced or constructed, rather than as repositories of content knowledge or information (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008) and these positions can be seen to influence some emerging practices in the USA (Shanahan, 2016). In the research for this thesis and in professional documents regarding literacy in Wales, the model of literacy as definable skills that can be strategised, distinct from subject, was dominant.

Changing to a model whereby subject teachers focus on the language practices of their subjects might have training implications in itself. It would certainly mean changes to the ways in which literacy is defined and monitored, not just in individual schools, but nationally. It might also mean rethinking the role of the literacy coordinator. If literacy is seen as residing, at least in part, in the knowledge-producing practices of subjects, then a single member of staff cannot be expected to have the requisite in-depth knowledge of each subject area to facilitate this. Instead, literacy would need to be situated to a degree within the subjects.

Rather than place class teachers even further within their subjects, this approach could allow for deeper cross subject working as teachers can examine the ways in which each discipline constructs knowledge around common concepts, for example. That is, rather than simply assign different content to subject areas and then look for commonality between this content, the ways in which a subject area produces understanding around a shared topic can be explored, revealing the theoretical assumptions and conventions of each subject as well as where they intersect.

Whole-school approaches were taken, by each of the literacy coordinators, with the exception of Litco 1 as the year of the research progressed, to mean that a single body of strategies had to be decided upon and then rolled out across the body of staff in all subjects. Even in those schools where literacy was mapped across subject areas to ensure coverage, the range of approaches that formed the policy or guidance in literacy consisted of generic approaches that were to be used in all subjects. 'Whole-school' became synonymous with 'same'; class teachers were, in all schools asked to draw upon the same narrow range of approaches regardless of content and focus. Although this did alter in School 1 as the year progressed and also became a focus of change for School 5 later in the year, each of the literacy coordinators, for the majority of the year, viewed literacy in their schools as generic. This adoption of

whole-school strategies is, in part, a feature of the expedient management of whole policy and approaches. The management of literacy in the schools involved in this research was, in the main, undertaken by way of auditing whether the strategies adopted by the literacy coordinators could be mapped across practice in all subjects. This typically took the form of book monitoring, the monitoring of strategy mapping across departmental schemes of work and lesson observations. The use of a set, narrow range of strategies, which were to be used in each subject, made this management aspect of the literacy coordinators' roles tangible. The strategies could be 'seen' and monitored, even as the usefulness of those strategies to a pupil's understanding of a particular text couldn't.

The schools in this research participated in school-wide professional learning and consistent approaches; these are referred to as whole-school. Within such a model, opportunities for the iterative, reflective change that can be seen both in PLC models of school change (Harris & Jones, 2010) and in research around school efficacy can be stifled (Ross et al, 2004). For Fullan (2001a), though, this is not necessarily what whole-school approach has to mean. He describes a whole-school approach as an understanding of the multiple interactive elements of a school within a consistent message that is responsive and can be adapted (Fullan, 2001a). If the consistent messages that inform the school practice as a whole can allow for purposeful variation this could allow for some change to practice.

Hopkins and Reynolds (2001) claim that change in schools is difficult and that short term change is frequently not sustained, as different priorities are identified. They also identify factors including time and ownership as essential to meaningful whole-school change. This could be seen in this research where the relationship of the staff to the literacy approaches being cascaded out across all subjects was varied and linked to staff involvement in the development of the practices they were going to use.

Some form of whole staff professional development that was necessary to the implementation of whole-school literacy approaches was a feature in all but one of the schools. This development was designed to deliver shifts in learning, and was then monitored by the literacy coordinators to see whether this had happened. The mechanisms for this monitoring were generally to note whether the suggested strategies were being used across all subjects. This was noted by way of observing schemes of work or pupils' work. What this monitored was that a strategy was being used, something recognised by the literacy coordinators

themselves. In all but one of the schools, there was no mechanism in place to determine whether these strategies were being used effectively, whether teachers felt confident and involved in their use or whether they were informing progress in literacy and/or subject. The separation of literacy from the rest of school practice served to see it viewed and monitored discretely, as something distinct from classroom teaching.

The disconnection between literacy and lessons could also be felt in the difference between the environment, principles and practice seen in the PLC group and those that were then taken into school. The system of literacy coordination within secondary schools lends itself, perhaps necessarily, to a set of reductive, generic, prescribed practices. The advantages of the PLC group, expressed by the group in terms of collective exploration and shared responsibility, were missing from school practice.

It may be time to consider whether this top-down model of managing school practices is the most effective, even if it is the most pragmatic choice. As noted by Fullan (2001a) schools that view themselves as producers of shared knowledge can be effective positive systems for change (Fullan, 2001a), contrasted with those who act more as administrators of structures. Seventeen years on, this still seems to be a much needed change. A focus on whole-school approaches may mean that pupils, subjects and teachers are viewed homogeneously. This can be seen in this research, where literacy is undifferentiated in terms of text, topic, purpose and pupil need and where class teachers view literacy at a distance. This situates class teachers outside of the decision making process and does not afford opportunities for their knowledge and understanding to be used to inform practices that will impact upon them professionally. Again, the efficacy model outlined by Bandura (1986, 1997, 2000) does not seem to feature in this system.

If a teacher's belief in themselves as being able to effect change within a particular domain can be seen as linked to greater achievement, then it would make sense for approaches that support teacher self efficacy would be a part of whole-school approaches. The cycles of reflection that Bandura identifies (1997) as important to developing self efficacy were not present in the schools, even as they were in the PLC. Similarly, the four experiences (enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and emotional states) that Bandura claims support self efficacy did not feature as part of school systems or training.

Even in the training sessions that were used in schools, vicarious experiences, which might be an expected feature, were not present in that ideas were presented rather than modelled.

School change may need to be considered in a way other than that commonly associated with whole-school approaches as a proxy for the same approach used by all, in all contexts. The view of whole-school approaches which positions literacy as a body of strategies to be applied is inflexible and does not allow for change (Fullan, 2005). Following from Fullan, it may be that this approach needs to be reviewed and replaced with something dynamic, fluid and changing that can be adapted for particular contexts, pupils and purposes. This can be seen in Levin (2008), too, who suggests that schools should move towards policy and practice that focus on shared supportive systems that are centred on the commitment of all, and provide purposeful opportunities for teachers to develop their understanding. This would mean a reconsideration of systems that administrate accountability measures and a commitment to a shared mission that afforded professional opportunities for all teachers.

A key finding of this research is how removed class teachers feel from the literacy policies they are expected to enact in their teaching. Teacher efficacy and agency do not, in fact almost cannot, feature in this system. If change in how schools feature literacy within their practices moves towards a disciplinary approach, then this is even more necessary, as this sort of literacy simply cannot be imposed from the top down in the same way as a generic approach can be.

Change of this sort would require a refocusing on a national level about what we mean by both literacy and whole-school. It would also mean commitment to deep rooted embedded collective change with national, school and individual level efficacy beliefs playing a part. Commitment, though, whilst necessary is hardly sufficient. Most of the schools involved in this research did make some provision for teacher inclusion by way of, for example, making literacy an agenda item in all meetings. This provision was, though, largely given to providing opportunities for monitoring. As noted in Chapters 2 and 4, many teachers feel over-burdened by cycles of reform that are viewed as imposing multiple demands in a short space of time (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). This rapid pace of change was, and remains, a characteristic of the Welsh educational landscape. The imposed implementation of multiple changes to practice may not be the best approach to the development of sustained, embedded purposeful change to and development of practice.

As noted by Fullan (2005), change programmes often fail to live up to expectations because insufficient time is allocated to their success. This is especially the case if those who are given the challenge of implementing said change are removed from the site of decision making and exploration. The schools involved in this research each made progress in terms of the PISA tests that their pupils sat, but each school also was the site of some dissatisfaction or disconnection between the literacy approaches expected across the school and the class teachers expected to enact them. Getting past the short-term effects of and lack of clear commitment to whole-school initiatives requires moving beyond (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009) the situation that can be observed in this research, where only those teachers immediately involved in the development or deployment are connected to the initiatives.

#### **6.4 PLCs as a tool for whole-school initiatives and partnership working**

The PLC as a key tool in a self-improving system has become of increased focus in Wales (Welsh Government 2013b). Similarly, the development of partnerships between HEIs and schools, as well as between local consortia and other agencies, has also become a feature of the educational landscape in Wales (OECD, 2017)

This research is, in part, informed by the work of the PLC group. It acted as a key mechanism for exploring the role of PLCs in impacting upon whole-school change and also to examine whether involvement in a PLC impacted upon the behaviours of its members. As can be seen in Chapters 4 and 5, the PLC was a valuable, if problematic, tool for work that involved school partners and university staff. As has been discussed in Chapter 5, the PLC guidelines from Welsh Government (2013b) applied broadly to this PLC group, but could not fit wholly due to the ambiguous position of my role as group member. The group was ‘a group of practitioners working together using a structured process of enquiry to focus on a specific area of their teaching to improve learner outcomes and so raise school standards’ (Welsh Government, 2013b, p.5), but the site of practice for me, as a member of HEI staff and a researcher, was different and included the PLC itself. Leadership of the group was also difficult to establish as recommended in the literature surrounding PLCs. Leadership was not distributed amongst the group (Welsh Government, 2013b; Harris & Jones, 2010). As can be seen in Chapter 4, in most meetings, my role was central as group facilitator, but also as

someone outside of the school experience who had considerably more experience in literacy theory and practice than the other group members. Whilst this lessened as the group became more established, it cannot be discounted as a feature. The duality of my role, as researcher and as PLC member, is something that will need further exploration as increased cross-institution working becomes a feature of the educational landscape in Wales. Positionality, even for the other members of the group, can be seen as something that needs to be considered when establishing PLCs as a method of school improvement. The multiple positions and experiences I brought to the group made my role, and hence the group, different. Similarly, as can be seen in Chapter 4, the experiences and interests the other group members brought to the group can be seen as factors that need to be taken into account. Some group members, Litco 1, for example, initiated, and presented and shared ideas more frequently with the group than others.

The work of the PLC in this research was positive in as much as the members expressed more confidence in their understanding of literacy and explored and evaluated the approaches they were trying in their schools. To that end, the group was successful. As can be seen, however, the line from the ideas and confidence shared and constructed within the PLC group into the classrooms of their school colleagues was not clear. The PLC should not be an end in itself. Its impact should, ultimately be measured in changes to teacher development and pupil achievement. Research conducted by Bolam et al (2005) concluded that the PLC was an effective approach to school improvement, but that certain barriers needed to be recognised, particularly in the secondary school setting where working practices are more atomised than in other sectors. These barriers can be seen in the implementation of literacy approaches in the schools. The mechanisms by which knowledge constructed through PLCs are then embedded in whole the school practices of those who may not necessarily have been part of the PLC group needs to be investigated. The organisational structures used to develop and manage literacy in the schools involved in this research were, largely, top-down with little involvement from teaching staff, nor much resemblance to the approaches used within the group. Factors including time for purposeful and focused professional development, and measures in place to increase motivation and draw upon teachers own expertise and experiences need to be factors that are prioritised when moving from small group understanding to whole-school implementation within and across subject areas.

The report of the Boston Research Group (2014) found that teachers do not feel that PLCs are valuable as a professional learning tool, despite the increased focus on this approach by local authorities and bodies. In part this can be seen in this research, where the group members expressed the professional benefits they had experienced as part of the group, but the teachers within their schools did not feel those benefits. It should be noted that the PLC that was part of this research and the practices that emerged were still quite new and that, in the spirit of cyclical review and evaluation, the ways in which literacy is managed, defined and evaluated in the schools may have changed as part of an ongoing process.

### **6.5 Recommendations for Further Study**

This research has highlighted some important disconnections that seem to act as obstacles to effective practice. The following recommendations offer possible areas of further research that could examine ways in which these disparate elements could be connected as interlocking strands that support the kinds of professional engagement that could develop practice in schools. There are key areas for further research that have taken shape in this thesis. These will be described below.

#### **How to more closely align subjects with literacy practices in secondary schools.**

The role of literacy in the secondary school and what it means in a variety of contexts needs to be examined further. The body of work that exists on literacy is, as noted earlier, predominantly focused on earlier stages of education or different national contexts. The relationship between knowledge and how it is produced and presented within subject areas should be a site of research within the particular contexts of secondary schools in the UK in general and in Wales specifically as it moves to a period of considerable curriculum change. The reported distance and dislocation found in this research between teachers, and their professional identities and efficacy, and the literacy practices in classrooms is an important site of enquiry in the current context as Wales seeks to reposition teachers as curriculum producers, with a literacy responsibility running through each Area of Learning.

#### **To examine how to use evidence and theory to inform and support the ways in which approaches seen to emerge from them are used in classrooms.**

In a national landscape where calls for evidence based practice in school are frequent and increasing, the move from research evidence or theoretical position to classroom practice would benefit from further research. The evidence base for strategy instruction, for example, in this research, was predicated on a number of elements such as teacher understanding, text complexity, direct engagement with how meaning is constructed in text, that were generally not features of the observed lessons in this research. Evidence that a practice seems effective is insufficient. The theoretical through-line that makes, say, group discussion a potentially effective practice, needs to be understood. Without this, much of the potential of various approaches is lost. This is especially the case when much national and local literacy guidance identifies strategy instruction (and in some instances individual strategies) as good practice. There needs to be focused work done on what theory means in terms of actual practice and how professional development can be used to develop and deepen understanding, so as to affect change at the level of knowledge and beliefs rather than behaviours.

**To reconsider whole-school approaches as an effective tool for school change and collective and individual efficacy.**

The role of whole-school approaches is another area that is in need of further research. There is a need to examine how a school can best organise and structure itself to manage and develop multiple and sometimes competing demands. This notion of how a whole-school ethos could develop teachers' efficacy beliefs so as to support different practices within a collective is in need of further exploration. The disconnections between the culture found in the PLC and the culture of school systems is in need of closer, focused exploration. Work of this kind would also need to explore the role of elements such as teacher cognition and performativity in school and system change. This is especially so in a time of change where practices and systems are in flux.

**To evaluate partnership working practices and the role of PLCs in school development**

The establishment of learning communities as a common feature of practice within as well as across schools to provide change to long term practices may be a way forward for this (Dufour et al, 2008), ultimately leading to a place where the literacy policy of the school and the national literacy framework become focus points for an exploration of teaching and learning, rather than a distillation of strategies. Further research in this area would include the possible tensions that arise when PLCs are comprised of members from various stakeholders, such as HEI staff. This would include a close evaluation of the sometimes competing roles

and aims of those working within a PLC, particularly where there is a research outcome. The ways in which roles and positionality can be maintained within a framework of co-learning (Jaworski, 2003) where what each party learns is not necessarily the same is a potentially exciting area of further exploration as schools work in increasingly close partnership with HEIs to research practice.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

**Letter outlining project**

**Letter of consent**



11<sup>th</sup> May 2011

Dear,

We would like to take this opportunity to formally invite you and your school to be part of the professional learning community we are establishing in partnership with five schools across South Wales.

The primary aim of this group will be to participate in a research project which seeks to evaluate and inform whole school approaches to literacy and numeracy. This project will last for the duration of the coming academic year and will be bookended by pre and post testing of that year's year 9 pupils using PISA style tests.

During the year, the group would meet on eight occasions to discuss progress and identify ways in which the research can be most effectively moved forward. The university researchers would also visit schools once per half term so as to observe lessons and interview class teachers.

The core team from Swansea Metropolitan University consists of Dr Howard Tanner, Dr Sonia Jones, Angella Cooze and Ishmael Lewis, although we would like to involve other members of staff in some aspects of the work.

For our initial meeting, we would like to meet with Head teachers so as to establish and agree key principles and aims for this timely and important project. After this initial meeting, headteachers may wish to select key staff members who will take the project forward.

Literacy and numeracy have been, rightly, identified as key national priorities. It is hoped that the reach of our findings will be far wider than our research group and that the learning community that is established may act as a spur to further sharing and development of good practice.

We would like to set a date for the initial meeting of headteachers for the early part of June. The following dates have been suggested:

June 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup>.

An early response would be much appreciated.

If you would like to discuss this further prior to the meeting, please feel free to contact me by telephone or e-mail.

We look forward to hearing from you soon,



SWANSEA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY  
PRIFYSGOL FETROPOLITAN ABERTAWE

23<sup>rd</sup> June 2011

Dear Parent,

We are pleased to announce that our school is working in partnership with researchers from Swansea Metropolitan University to examine how we can develop the ways in which we teach literacy and numeracy in across the school. The research will run from September 2011 until July 2012 and will include lesson observations and also literacy and numeracy tests for all year 9 pupils in September 2011 and July 2012. The teaching and tests will form a normal part of your child's learning throughout the year and will provide us with valuable information regarding how we approach literacy and numeracy in our school.

The lesson observations will be focused on the teachers' work, rather than the pupils. The results of the literacy and numeracy tests will be evaluated as part of the research. Any analysis of test information will be anonymous and **no** pupil will be identifiable in the writing up of the research.

While your child will be a part of the teaching and learning going on in the school, the use of their test results as part of the research is voluntary. You and your child may choose to opt out of having their test results used as part of the research at any time. If you would like to opt out, please contact \_\_\_\_\_ who will remove your child's tests from the writing up of the research.

If you would like any further information or have any questions regarding this work, please contact \_\_\_\_\_ who will be able to answer any queries you might have.

We are looking forward to taking this opportunity to explore and develop our work in literacy and numeracy for the benefit of all of our pupils and would like to thank for your continued commitment to the school and its work.

Yours sincerely,

Head teacher signature

## **Appendix B**

### **Teacher and school outlines**

## **Teacher and school outline detail**

### **School 1**

The literacy coordinator of School 1 was, as can be seen above, a committed member of the PLC group who participated fully in the group meetings. In the initial meetings, Litco1 had expressed interest in several generic, broad-based approaches to reading, most obviously Reciprocal Reading and The Eight Reading Behaviours. To this end, Litco 1 arranged a whole day's literacy training for their school which included input from Litco 1 on these on these approaches. Litco 1 set up a Literacy Group made up of members of staff from each subject. This group met twice per term, typically after the PLC group had met, to share ideas and readings in much the same vein as the PLC. Litco 1 also set up an online system for each subject, which was open to all staff, where literacy approaches and resources could be shared. Litco 1 had started the year interested in generic literacy approaches that explored generic skills and saw literacy as a set of skills that could be learned and then applied to context. As the year went on, Litco 1 expressed increasing interest in the PLC meetings in developing an understanding of subject-based language practices and encouraging a focus in the Literacy Group on the language practices found in subject areas. Some of the readings from the PLC had been shared with the Literacy group for discussion and then placed on the shared literacy online drive of the school.

### **Ms C**

Ms C was a teacher of Science who had taught in the same school since qualification. She had attended a full day of whole-school training on how to incorporate literacy in subjects led by the literacy coordinator of School 1. This training day took place early in the autumn term, after the initial meetings of the PLC group. The lessons I observed with Ms C were with a year 7 class. In each of the lessons, the class had to engage with a piece of text so as to extract information as then use this information to provide an explanation of, for example, cell structure.

### **Mr.D**

Mr D was a Geography teacher in School 1 who had also attended the whole-school literacy training in School 1. He too had taught in School 1 as a pupil teacher and since qualification. Mr. D was the member of the Literacy Group for Humanities. The class I observed for Mr. D's lessons was a Year 9 group.

## **School 2**

School 2 had been involved in a literacy project led by their consortia. I will not add any detail regarding this work that may identify the school, but will provide a broad overview of the work undertaken in the school in literacy, some of which was a part of this wider, consortia-wide work. The school was following a literacy toolkit approach that separated literacy into strands of oracy, reading and writing and prescribed a focus and activities for each year group every half-term. This could mean, for example, that the literacy focus for Year 8 in the first half-term might be oracy: debate and persuasion, then for the second half-term, it might be writing to inform. At the initial meetings, the literacy coordinator of School 2 expressed some reluctance to share the toolkit they were using in the school. The toolkit was discussed with the PLC group in terms of the approach that could be seen within its practices and these were seen as belonging to a generic skills-based approach. Literacy was approached as a set of discrete skills and these were taught sequentially within year groups.

In School 2, the literacy coordinator followed the guidance of the consortia and disseminated this to the teaching staff at the school. Each staff member had a copy of the Literacy Handbook and toolkit, which explained what literacy focus each year group had each half term, and pupils in each year group were given Literacy Booklets which outlined the focus for each half term and provided tasks for pupils to work through. Samples of work were called from subject areas each half term to monitor this work. There had been a meeting of the whole-school where the toolkit was shared with all staff and the monitoring of literacy across subjects explained. During the PLC meetings, Litco 2 had become more involved in discussing and exploring ideas and approaches with the group, as can be seen above. During the period of the research, the use of the Literacy Handbook altered so that certain types of literacy practice were focused on in different subject areas rather than in a uniform way across all subjects.

### **Ms.L**

Ms. L was a History teacher in School 2. She had attended the whole-school meeting where the Toolkit and Literacy handbook that the school were going to use had been explained to the staff body. She had taught in the school for one year prior to the year of this research. Ms L had been trained in England and her first job was in a school in England. The class I observed for Ms. L's lessons was a year 8 group.

### **Ms.E**

Ms. E had taught RE in School 2 for eleven years. She was head of subject and had been part of some early, broad discussions about the use of the Literacy Booklet across the school, as well as having attended the whole-school briefing regarding the implementation of the booklet as an organising principle for literacy across the school. The observed class for each of her lessons was a Year 7 group.

### **School 3**

School 3 had not introduced any new literacy strategies in response to the significantly raised profile of literacy in Wales at this time and the clear direction from Welsh Government (Andrews, 2011a, 2011b) that literacy was to be a priority. During the PLC meetings, the literacy coordinator had explained that the school was using generic approaches such as wall displays in each classroom of text types and had a common marking policy for literacy errors in the classroom, but that no specific literacy approaches had been part of the approach in the school. As part of local consortia work, the school had had some brief input on the Eight Reading Behaviours as part of a whole-school training day, but this approach was not adopted on a whole-school basis, Book monitoring took place within the school each term to check that the literacy marking policy was being used across departments. The literacy coordinator was conscious of the fact that literacy was going to become more of a focus in the school. They had been literacy coordinator for only five months but had held the role previously in the same school until the role was discontinued and then resumed the role. Litco 3 participated more frequently as the PLC meetings developed through the year and initiated discussions with some frequency. They presented to or shared ideas with the group less frequently than any of the other literacy coordinators. School 3 was the smallest of the schools involved in the research and some departments consisted of one or two teachers

### **Mr.P**

Mr P had taught History for three years. This was his first year in the school. He had been made aware of some literacy approaches in his training schools and in the school in which he was employed previously. These approaches were not used across the whole-school in School 3. The observed lessons were with a year 9 class.

### **Ms. D**

Ms D was an Art teacher in School 3. She had taught in the school for two years, having relocated to the area from another part of Wales. She had been part of a literacy working party in her previous

school and, as such, had some familiarity with some literacy approaches and strategies such as writing frames and text types. Ms. D had been present for the whole-school training day that had included a session on literacy. The class that was observed for Ms. D's lessons was a year 10 group.

#### **School 4**

School 4 had recently appointed an experienced staff member to the role of literacy coordinator. They had taught at the school and had successful experience in leading a number of whole-school initiatives during their 12 years at the school. School 4 had invested in providing some literacy resources for each classroom, as well as setting up whole-school training on literacy. This included work on breaking down the language of the lesson (with a particular focus on subjects such as Maths and Science), as well as Reciprocal Reading. Literacy was an agenda item for every departmental meeting and the work in literacy of each department was reported back to the literacy coordinator after each meeting. Schemes of work in each department were mapped for literacy. This work was new at the start of this research and was finalised across all subjects halfway through the year. The literacy coordinator for this school had expressed a keenness to look at what types of literacy can be found in and across subjects. They, unusually, did not come from a languages background (alone amongst the literacy coordinators who formed the PLC). From the outset of the PLC work, the literacy coordinator for School 4 wanted to look into subject areas and audit what types of reading, writing and oracy pupils participated in a part of their studies, and to explore which literacy approaches could best enhance or support teaching in each subject. They were keen to explore a number of approaches and felt that this work was a long term project of which this was just the beginning.

#### **Mr. Pb**

Mr Pb had taught at School 4 since qualification. He had been tasked with mapping literacy across the schemes of work for RE, and also was the link for the Humanities subjects to the literacy coordinator. Mr Pb had attended the whole-school training in literacy and had volunteered to be part of the group of staff who were looking at how literacy fitted across schemes of work. The class that was observed for each of Mr. Pb's lessons was a Year 8 class.

#### **Mr. E**

Mr E had taught in School 4 for five years. He had followed a literacy module as part of an MA course he was studying and was interested in how to use the knowledge he had developed as part of this module in his classroom. Mr E had done some work with Litco 4 as part of a small group of cross-subject volunteers who were charged with considering which literacy approaches might best fit in each subject area. The observed class for Mr. E's lessons was a year 9 class.

### **School 5**

The literacy coordinator in School 5 had been in post for a year prior to this research but had, up until that point, been continuing the work of the previous literacy coordinator. At the start of the academic year, in the role as literacy coordinator, they had identified a member of staff from each subject area that was going to report back on literacy work within their subjects. As with some other schools, literacy was made an agenda item for each departmental meeting. The literacy coordinator in School 5 had expressed an interest in developing a set of approaches that were to be used in all subjects, as and where appropriate. This included the use of subject-specific vocabulary tools and also the initiation of a set of writing frames that would be developed within subject areas to be used by all teachers. This viewpoint was one of broad, generic literacy skill used for particular reasons within subject areas. The broad literacy approach was shared with the whole-school at the start of the academic year. This had been supplemented by external literacy training for a group of interested teachers from each subject area on a broad range of approaches. These included Reciprocal Reading, Eight Reading Behaviours and text types.

### **Ms. Db**

Ms Db had taught Science in School 5 for one year. She had previously worked in another school in the same area. Ms Db had attended the voluntary literacy training at the start of the year. The observed class for Ms Db's lessons was a year 7 class.

### **Ms. W**

Ms W had taught Geography at School 5 since qualification. She had participated in the voluntary training at the start of the year and had volunteered to be part of a group of teachers who considered approaches to be used in each subject area. Ms W was observed with a year 8 class.

The following section presents observation findings centred on the strategies used and if these correlated with the stated intentions of the literacy coordinators. The data is presented first, followed by a discussion of any key observation notes for the individual lessons that are either

representative of the findings as a whole or which are notable in some way. This section also provides information regarding each of the lessons so as to provide detail, context and richness to the findings for this and the following sections.

## **Appendix C**

### **Lesson Observation Proforma**

|  |         |          |
|--|---------|----------|
| Lesson Observation Proforma<br>Class info: | School: | Teacher: |
|--|---------|----------|

| Strategies used:            | Obs 1 | Obs 2 | Across whole class<br>Obs 1 | Across whole class<br>Obs 2 | Differentiated<br>Obs 1 | Differentiated<br>Obs 2 | Pupil / teacher<br>Obs 1 | Pupil / teacher<br>Obs 2 |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Reciprocal reading          |       |       |                             |                             |                         |                         |                          |                          |
| Eight reading behaviours    |       |       |                             |                             |                         |                         |                          |                          |
| Text types                  |       |       |                             |                             |                         |                         |                          |                          |
| Group discussion            |       |       |                             |                             |                         |                         |                          |                          |
| Question and answer re text |       |       |                             |                             |                         |                         |                          |                          |
| Modelling                   |       |       |                             |                             |                         |                         |                          |                          |
| Approach instructed         |       |       |                             |                             |                         |                         |                          |                          |
| Approach explained          |       |       |                             |                             |                         |                         |                          |                          |
| Links made to the text      |       |       |                             |                             |                         |                         |                          |                          |
| Focus on subject content    |       |       |                             |                             |                         |                         |                          |                          |
| Other approaches            |       |       |                             |                             |                         |                         |                          |                          |

## **Appendix D**

### **Completed sample lesson observation proforma**

| Strategies used:            | Obs 1 | Obs 2 | Across whole class<br>Obs 1 | Across whole class<br>Obs 2 | Differentiated<br>Obs 1 | Targetted<br>Obs 2 | Pupil / teacher<br>Obs 1 | Pupil / teacher<br>Obs 2 |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Reciprocal reading          | x     |       | x                           | x                           |                         |                    | T                        | T                        |
| Eight reading behaviours    |       |       |                             |                             |                         |                    |                          | T                        |
| Text types                  |       | x     |                             |                             |                         |                    |                          |                          |
| Group discussion            | x     | x     | x                           | x                           |                         |                    | T(P)                     | TP                       |
| Question and answer re text | x     | x     |                             |                             |                         |                    | T                        | TP                       |
| Modelling                   |       | x     | x                           | x                           |                         | x                  |                          | TP                       |
| Approach instructed         | x     | x     | x                           | x                           |                         | x                  | T                        | T                        |
| Approach explained          |       | x     | x                           | x                           |                         |                    |                          | T                        |
| Links made to the text      |       | x     | x                           | x                           |                         |                    |                          | TP                       |
| Focus on subject content    |       | x     |                             |                             |                         |                    |                          | TP                       |
| Other approaches            |       |       |                             |                             |                         |                    |                          |                          |

## **Lesson notes: Lesson 1 Human and physical environments: Rivers**

Lesson start topic and lesson objective on board. Class write down. Topic explained. Aswan Dam will be focus of lesson as part of work on human impacts on physical environments. Mr D says he doesn't imagine any pupil will have heard of the dam yet, but asks for some opinions re how people could affect a river. Mr D class Q&A T to P to T. Notes on board. Four pupils respond. Mr D asks class 'in what ways do people make use of rivers?' two minutes thinking time given. Five pupils respond. Q&A T to P to T. Notes taken on board.

Class put into 5 groups of between four and five pupils. Groups given same four texts about the Aswan Dam. These present a series of different views about the dam, positives and negatives. Mr D explains what the Aswan Dam is, picture displayed on board. Instructions given for reading task. Class are given Reciprocal Reading handouts and told to allocate roles in their group and to use these to read the texts and come up with five good points about the dam, five negative plus the groups' overall view. The notes on board are not used. No further instruction given re: roles.

Texts are of different types : first person account of a person living in the Nile Delta about their life, a short environmental report about the dam's impact, a magazine article aimed at tourists, an information text presenting facts about, eg., impact on farming, its size, when it was built, impact on other regions and so on. This text is three pages long. The other texts vary between one page and one and a half. The differences in texts and purpose are not mentioned to the class. Class are given 25 minutes to read the texts and complete the task.

Due to the roles given, they have to read all of the texts as a group. Mr D adjusts time of task as reading taking longer than planned. Extra five minutes given. Mr D circulates. Suggests to one group that they pick a text to read each and then feedback to one another. Info text split between two members. Group reminded that they should still use RR roles, but at the end of the group work when they share their ideas before presenting to the class.

Group work finishes. Mr D directs class to the information text. This is read to the class by Mr D. 10 questions are asked during reading. Checking understanding of key facts such as flooding, fertilisation of soil problems etc.

Groups given five minutes to make any changes to their group feedback to class. Groups feedback in turn. Group feedback allocated ten minutes –two minutes per group. Groups all comment on the facts focused on in questions. Key points? Three groups presented with only two (or possibly three) differences in their negative and positive points. These are written on board. One group made more mention of Nile Delta as a positive. Remaining two groups are asked to share any different points they might have from those already shared. Time is up. Class focused on the negative and positive points from the board. Mr D explains that human impact on physical world can have positive features and that the groups seemed to feel that these outweighed the negatives. He asks who they think might feel most negatively about the dam. Pupils give responses. Mr D explains that it is important to be aware that impacts always work both ways. This is a key part of Geography. Class pack away and dismissed.

### **Lesson notes: Lesson 2 Threatened environments.**

Lesson start Topic and objective on board. Class focus will be on exploring how facts are presented in explanations of threatened environments. Preparation for pupil's own writing of an explanation text as part of a case study. Mr D says that class have written explanation in English but this is about not only writing a clear explanation but also about how geographical events are explained.

The class is shown a short film by the Raintrust Foundation. The geographical definition of threat is on the top of the note sheets each pupil has been given. This is explained to the class. The sheet includes sections for level of threat, plus areas of threat such as deforestation, potential effects of climate change, illegal wildlife trade, infrastructure and so on. It also includes section on why it is at its current level and what could be put in place to halt this. The pupils are instructed to take note of anything highlighted in the clip that seems to be threatened. Pupils are instructed to place what they see within a category on the sheet and assign it a level.

Feed back is taken after the film clip. A copy of the note sheet is displayed on board. Mr D takes feedback from class. Supplementary questions are asked regarding, for example, whether infrastructure is the place for comments about illegal logging. Pupils respond to

one another's comments with initial reminding from Mr D. Seem familiar with this. Agreed set of comments on board. Pupils add/amend their own notes. Before doing so, pupils asked if there is anything missing that stops them filling in the sheet. First pupil says that he can't fill in section on why something is threatened because it wasn't in the film. Pupils asked to take three minutes to think about what could help them fill in the rest of the sheet.

Pupils asked for ideas about what they need. They need to know why certain aspects are threatened, what happened to make it so. One pupil says, if we don't know why it is happened then we can't say what could stop it. Mr D explains that what they have described is that explanation is missing. Without explanation we cannot understand how something has come about. Geography, he says, is partly about finding explanations.

Opening paragraph from a text about deforestation displayed on board. Mr D reads through this introduction. He identifies some key phrases and pieces of geographical vocabulary. Checks understanding. Explains what a word might be in a non geographical text (main river –principal river) and that in geography there are certain words that are part of the way texts are written. Asks class to highlight these in pairs and come up with everyday words that might mean the same. Five minutes given. Feedback taken and put on board. 'Going to create a geography dictionary'. Pupils asked to see if they can in pairs write down what the rest of the text will be about just from the introduction. Given five minutes. Pupil feedback. Pupils encouraged to amend or alter the list of content that Mr D is writing on the board.

Pupils given the rest of the two page explanation text. This is also displayed on the board. The text is clear and organised with topic sentences and a clear introduction and conclusion. Mr D asks class to highlight the opening sentence of each paragraph. Class realise it is the same as the list they just made. Mr D explains how the introduction sets up what will be discussed in order and that each paragraph start connects to this. Explains how this will help them in their own writing but also in their reading.

Mr D reads the first topic paragraph to the class, stopping to question the class about language that is used to explain. Pupils highlight this in yellow on their texts. He also stops to discuss geographical terms or processes. These are highlighted in green. Pupils ask questions about some words for clarification. Pupils are given a paragraph of the text to work on in pairs, highlighting in this way. Ten minutes are given.

Pupil feedback is shared using the displayed text to create a shared highlighted text. The last part of the lesson is carried over in the next due to timing. This will be to use this highlighted text to create a support for the pupils own writing of explanation text.

## **Appendix E**

### **Interview schedule**

## **Interview Schedule Interview 1**

1. Have you had any training in literacy in the last year?

What did it involve?

What approaches did you learn about?

Where was it/ Who trained you?

Had you had any literacy training before this?

2. What approaches are in your school literacy policy?

How do you find out about it?

Has it been updated?

Do you use them? Why?

3. What approaches did you use in the lesson?

4. What made you select those approaches? Pupil? Text?

5. Do you find the approaches helpful in your lessons?

Why?

6. Do you feel you know enough about the literacy approaches in your school?

Literacy in general?

7. Do you think there is anything that might be helpful to you in including literacy in your lessons?

What would help make this happen?

8. Do you see any benefits in including literacy in your teaching?

9. Do you see any limitations in using literacy in your lessons?

10. Do you think literacy is important?

Why?

What role can the school or you as a teacher have?

11. Is there anything you'd like to add?

**Appendix F**

**Sample of transcript**

**Sample of initial coded interview transcript**

**Sample of next stage coding**

**Table of responses**

## MS E Interview one transcript

| Line | Comments   |
|------|--|
| 1.   | Thank you. I hope you enjoyed it. Was it any good? It's still a bit nerve racking...hope it was ok?  |
| 2.   | oooh, I can answer this one yes we have had training.  |
| 3.   | the school has been part of a big literacy project with the consortia. They came and did some stuff with us all but it has been going on a while..I went to some earlier meetings about it all |
| 4.   | No, not really. Maybe as part of my PGE but that seems like a lifetime ago now   |
| 5.   | It is becoming more of a priority now..I think everyone I know who is a teacher has had something  |
| 6.   | We all follow the Literacy Booklet   |
| 7.   | it has a different focus for each year each half term  |
| 8.   | I think it could be useful..it makes us think about ti at least which is a start   |
| 9.   | I often get the pupils to look at something together as a group and see what they make of it together.   |
| 10.  | I call it group reading because they are reading it as a group, but it probably isn't really   |
| 11.  | We looked at text types too  |
| 12.  | it's interesting...you get them to say, write a newspaper article or a poem or something about   |
| 13.  | for me, Hanukah or some ethical dilemma  |
| 14.  | and it helps them remember it because it's in a different format...it sticks more..I haven't really had the chance to use it yet   |
| 15.  | I know that the school policy will have the Literacy Booklet in...that is a big thing this year so it is what we are using   |
| 16.  | I think Litco 2 will have updated the policy to include all of that. She is really organised and gets all of the information out that we need. You have to be a think for a job like that      |
| 17.  | I think we are just expected to read it when we have time it's on the system so its easy to find   |
| 18.  | I do use them.   |

|     |   |
|-----|---|
| 19. | where I can anyway  |
| 20. | it doesn't always fit or something else crops up but i try to use them  |
| 21. | but I try to use them. It is all pretty new still so it'll become more part of the routine on class for us and the pupils   |
| 22. | I used a lot of group work today. I do that a lot in my subject.  |
| 23. | it helps them learn from each other and they can discuss things and get new ideas from each other   |
| 24. | They always like learning about the festivals.. they become quite enthusiastic...we try to take them out too so they can go to different places and hear about the religions first hand..that's important I think |
| 25. | I gave them roles in the group to make sure they all have to participate in some way  |
| 26. | I tend to give the Reader role to the strongest reader if I can...this lot are all pretty good really but some lack a bit of confidence..   |
| 27. | I used skimming and scanning  |
| 28. | that is helpful. It gets them to really think about what they need to look for...sometimes they need the general gist but sometimes they need something really specific only.                                     |
| 29. | I want them to write a summary so those two things would help them with that  |
| 30. | I didn't think about their levels or anything; apart from things like making sure the Reader was a strong reader  |
| 31. | the examples might have been a bit easy actually..for some of them at least   |
| 32. | I did look at the booklet and included it at the end  |
| 33. | it just didn't really work with the lesson today  |
| 34. | once it has been in place a bit longer and we all know it all a bit better we can plan for it   |
| 35. | it is a time of change for everyone I think   |
| 36. | there seems to be a lot of pressure on people to include a lot of elements in all of their lessons and  |
| 37. | I think that can knock confidence   |
| 38. | even if it is something that people can do  |
| 39. | At the moment it isn't really that helpful  |
| 40. | I may be doing topics which will end on a piece of assessed writing during a particular term,   |

|     |   |
|-----|---|
|     | but the literacy focus for that time might be oracy or writing instructions   |
| 41. | It needs to fit together better   |
| 42. | I'm not really sure if the booklet is the best way for us all   |
| 43. | I have to time my lessons so I can fit the literacy work in   |
| 44. | and it doesn't always fit with the lesson   |
| 45. | I think that is being looked at though  |
| 46. | I don't think I know enough really about all of the things in there when I have looked through it   |
| 47. | It will make me learn them, perhaps that's a good thing   |
| 48. | I don't really feel I know enough at the moment at least  |
| 49. | I mean know it is important and I can see that, especially in my subject  |
| 50. | I just think that I could do with some time to go away and look through everything and really see how I can use it  |
| 51. | That is hard though in school for everyone  |
| 52. | I do like to read around things, go online, see what other people are trying out  |
| 53. | Again, though, time is a problem  |
| 54. | and also I need to know more about what the school is trying out first  |
| 55. | more training would definitely be helpful   |
| 56. | but it needs to be followed up or something I think   |
| 57. | or it needs to be different or more often   |
| 58. | I am sounding off now I don't mean to...everyone is busy I know and I don't know how it would fit in with everything else, the school has to cover so many things |
| 59. | I would just like to feel I know a little bit more...I like to know what I am doing   |
| 60. | we were shown through the booklet, which was helpful  |
| 61. | but I think I wanted more detail about what we should be doing with it  |
| 62. | there wasn't enough about the subjects and how to apply it in different ways  |
| 63. | this is why at the moment we are just using the booklet even when it isn't really a good fit  |
| 64. | It is a bit easier in RE I think in that a lot of it is about reading lots of different texts, writing  |

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|     | ..there's a lot of discussion too  |
| 65. | It can't be easy for subjects like Maths or PE to fit it..it doesn't fit with all subjects, or it doesn't fit as naturally maybe as it does for me in my subject                                 |
| 66. | For me there are huge benefits   |
| 67. | they need to read and understand lots of different texts and write clearly   |
| 68. | I think the limitations for me really are how to fit it in   |
| 69. | and what else I could do that would help them with what they are looking at in RE..  |
| 70. | I think it is really important   |
| 71. | for everything really, for life, for employment, for enjoying books, films...  |
| 72. | it helps with subjects too...if you can read and write well it can help a pupil do better across the board I think..especially in something like RE  |
| 73. | I think that as a teacher I can do lots of things  |
| 74. | encourage them to read, not just in school, but outside too  |
| 75. | I can try to make sure i learn as much as I can to help them in my lessons. That is most important for me as a teacher really how I can help them feel more confident in the reading and writing |
| 76. | I think the school has made a good start.  |
| 77. | The booklet will be a good thing and everyone is doing it  |
| 78. | The school is making it more of a priority   |
| 79. | I think everyone is at the moment  |
| 80. | It is hard to try to do what you want though   |
| 81. | even if we all had the time  |
| 82. | we have to think about the GCSEs, we have not long had training in numeracy so that has to be considered too   |
| 83. | and all in an hour's lesson  |
| 84. | it does make you feel a bit pressured at times   |
| 85. | because I want to be a good teacher and I want to try to help them all in all of these different things...that is important to me  |
| 86. | and then the day happens and assembly runs too long or your form are fighting and you  |

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|     | have a pile of marking and the day is gone    |
| 87. | No not really. I think i have said everything |
| 88. |   |

## MS E Interview one coded transcript

| Line | Comments   | Broad initial codes   |
|------|--|---|
| 1.   | Thank you. I hope you enjoyed it. Was it any good? It's still a bit nerve racking...hope it was ok?  | Observation as judgement<br>Negative connotations: lesson observation           |
| 2.   | oooh, I can answer this one yes we have had training.  | Training in school  |
| 3.   | the school has been part of a big literacy project with the consortia. They came and did some stuff with us all but it has been going on a while..I went to some earlier meetings about it all | Training in school<br>Local consortia<br>Training as single event               |
| 4.   | No, not really. Maybe as part of my PGE but that seems like a lifetime ago now   | External training   |
| 5.   | It is becoming more of a priority now in Wales..I think everyone I know who is a teacher has had something   | Welsh Government  |
| 6.   | We all follow the Literacy Booklet   | Approaches given to staff   |
| 7.   | it has a different focus for each year each half term  | Use of approaches from training   |
| 8.   | I think it could be useful..it makes us think about it at least which is a start   |   |
| 9.   | I often get the pupils to look at something together as a group and see what they make of it together. I did it in the lesson today.   | Identification of approaches used in lessons                                    |
| 10   | I call it group reading because they are reading it as a group, but it probably isn't really   | Misidentification of approaches   |
| 11   | We looked at text types too  | Identification of approaches used in lessons<br>Misidentification of approaches |
| 12   | it's interesting...you get them to say, write a newspaper article or a poem or something about   | Identification of approaches used in lessons<br>Misidentification of approaches |

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| 13 | for me, Hanukah or some ethical dilemma   | Identification of approaches used in lessons<br>Misidentification of approaches |
| 14 | and it helps them remember it because it's in a different format...it sticks more..I haven't really had the chance to use it much yet   | Identification of approaches used in lessons<br>Misidentification of approaches |
| 15 | I know that the school policy will have the Literacy Booklet in...that is a big thing this year so it is what we are using  | Identification of stated school approach  |
| 16 | I think Litco 2 will have updated the policy to include all of that. She is really organised and gets all of the information out that we need. You have to be a think for a job like that       | Identification of stated school approach  |
| 17 | I think we are just expected to read it when we have time it's on the system so it's easy to find   | Approaches given to staff   |
| 18 | I do use them.  | Part of school approach   |
| 19 | where I can anyway  | Barriers - curriculum space   |
| 20 | it doesn't always fit or something else crops up but i try to use them  | Literacy as adjunct<br>Barriers- curriculum space                               |
| 21 | but I try to use them. It is all pretty new still so it'll become more part of the routine on class for us and the pupils   | Part of school approach   |
| 22 | I used a lot of group work today. I do that a lot in my subject.  | Use of approaches not found in school policy/approaches                         |
| 23 | it helps them learn from each other and they can discuss things and get new ideas from each other   | Use of approaches not found in school policy/approaches                         |
| 24 | They always like learning about the festivals.. they become quite enthusiastic...we try to take them out too so they can go to different places and hear about the religions first hand..that's |   |

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|    | important I think   |   |
| 25 | I gave them roles in the group to make sure they all have to participate in some way  | Use of approaches not found in school policy/approaches           |
| 26 | I tend to give the Reader role to who I think is the strongest reader if I can...this lot are all pretty good really but some lack a bit of confidence..                      | Consideration of text challenge/pupils' skills                    |
| 27 | I used skimming and scanning  | Identification of approaches used in lessons                      |
| 28 | that is helpful. It gets them to really think about what they need to look for...sometimes they need the general gist but sometimes they need something really specific only. | Use of approaches not found in school policy/approaches           |
| 29 | I want them to write a summary so those two things would help them with that  | Use of approaches not found in school policy/approaches           |
| 30 | I didn't think about their levels or anything; apart from things like making sure the reader was a strong reader  | Consideration of text challenge/pupils' skills                    |
| 31 | the examples might have been a bit easy actually..for some of them at least   | Consideration of text challenge/pupils' skills                    |
| 32 | I did look at the booklet and included it at the end  | Use of approaches from training                                   |
| 33 | it just didn't really work with the lesson today  | Barriers –curriculum space  |
| 34 | once it has been in place a bit longer and we all know it all a bit better we can plan for it   |   |
| 35 | it is a time of change for everyone I think..   | External drivers  |
| 36 | there seems to be a lot of pressure on people to include a lot of elements in all of their lessons and  | Teacher self doubt/pressure                                       |
| 37 | I think that can knock confidence   | Teacher self doubt/pressure                                       |
| 38 | even if it is something that people can do  | Teacher self doubt/pressure                                       |
| 39 | At the moment it isn't really that helpful to me  | Concerns about literacy and subject                               |
| 40 | I may be doing topics which will end on a piece of assessed writing during a particular term, but the literacy focus for that time might be oracy or writing instructions     | Concerns about literacy and subject<br>Barriers –curriculum space |

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| 41 | It needs to fit together better   | Concerns about literacy and subject                               |
| 42 | I'm not really sure if the booklet is the best way for us all   | Concerns about literacy and subject                               |
| 43 | I have to time my lessons so I can fit the literacy work in   | Literacy as adjunct<br>Concerns about literacy and subject        |
| 44 | and it doesn't always fit with the lesson   | Barriers –curriculum space<br>Concerns about literacy and subject |
| 45 | I think that is being looked at though  | Identification of stated school approach                          |
| 46 | I don't think I know enough really about all of the things in there when I have looked through it   | Teacher self doubt/pressure/confidence                            |
| 47 | It will make me learn them, perhaps that's a good thing   | Potential for development   |
| 48 | I don't really feel I know enough at the moment at least  | Teacher self doubt/pressure                                       |
| 49 | I mean know it is important and I can see that, especially in my subject  | Literacy as potential to improve subject                          |
| 50 | I just think that I could do with some time to go away and look through everything and really see how I can use it                                    | Barriers time prof learning                                       |
| 51 | That is hard though in school for everyone  | Barriers time prof learning                                       |
| 52 | I do like to read around things, go online, see what other people are trying out  | Potential for development   |
| 53 | Again, though, time is a problem  | Barriers time prof learning                                       |
| 54 | and also I need to know more about what the school is trying out first  | School approach   |
| 55 | more training would definitely be helpful   | Desire for more or different training                             |
| 56 | but it needs to be followed up or something I think   | Desire for more or different training                             |
| 57 | or it needs to be different or more often   | Desire for more or different training                             |
| 58 | I am sounding off now I don't mean to...everyone is busy I know and I don't know how it would fit in with everything else, the school has to cover so | Limiters on school change   |

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|    | many things  |   |
| 59 | I would just like to feel I know a little bit more...I like to know what I am doing  | Desire for more or different training                           |
| 60 | we were shown through the booklet, which was helpful   | Approaches given to staff                                       |
| 61 | but I think I wanted more detail about what we should be doing with it   | Desire for more or different training                           |
| 62 | there wasn't enough about the subjects and how to apply it in different ways   | Concerns about literacy and subject                             |
| 63 | this is why at the moment we are just using the booklet even when it isn't really a good fit   | Concerns about literacy and subject<br>Literacy as adjunct      |
| 64 | It is a bit easier in RE I think in that a lot of it is about reading lots of different texts, writing ..there's a lot of discussion too                         | Literacy as potential to improve subject                        |
| 65 | It can't be easy for subjects like Maths or PE to fit it..it doesn't fit with all subjects, or it doesn't fit as naturally maybe as it does for me in my subject | Concerns about literacy and subject                             |
| 66 | For me there are huge benefits   | Literacy as potential to improve subject                        |
| 67 | they need to read and understand lots of different texts and write clearly   | Literacy s potential to improve subject                         |
| 68 | I think the limitations for me really are how to fit it in   | Barriers time in lessons<br>Concerns about literacy and subject |
| 69 | and what else I could do that would help them with what they are looking at in RE..  | Literacy as potential to improve subject                        |
| 70 | I think it is really important   | Broad literacy aims   |
| 71 | for everything really, for life, for employment, for enjoying books, films...  | Broad literacy aims   |
| 72 | it helps with subjects too...if you can read and write well it can help a pupil do better across the board I think..especially in something like RE              | Literacy as general benefit to school performance               |
| 73 | I think that as a teacher I can do lots of things  | Potential for development                                       |

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| 74 | encourage them to read, not just in school, but outside too  | Broad literacy aims                        |
| 75 | I can try to make sure I learn as much as I can to help them in my lessons. That is most important for me as a teacher really how I can help them feel more confident in the reading and writing | Potential for development                  |
| 76 | I think the school has made a good start.  | School context                             |
| 77 | The booklet will be a good thing and everyone is doing it  | School approach                            |
| 78 | The school is making it more of a priority. It will be looked for...   | Performance systems                        |
| 79 | I think everyone is at the moment in Wales generally but here especially   | Welsh Government<br>Local consortia        |
| 80 | It is hard to try to do what you want though   | Limiters on school change                  |
| 81 | even if we all had the time  | Barriers time                              |
| 82 | we have to think about the GCSEs, we have not long had training in numeracy so that has to be considered too   | Barriers curriculum space<br>Barriers time |
| 83 | and all in an hour's lesson  | Barriers time                              |
| 84 | it does make you feel a bit pressured at times   | Teacher self doubt/pressure                |
| 85 | because I want to be a good teacher and I want to try to help them all in all of these different things...that is important to me  | Potential for development                  |
| 86 | and then the day happens and assembly runs too long or your form are fighting and you have a pile of marking and the day is gone   | Barriers time                              |
| 87 | No not really. I think i have said everything  |  |
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## Next stage coding sample

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Thank you. I hope you enjoyed it. Was it any good? It's still a bit nerve racking...hope it was ok?  | Teacher efficacy and confidence |
| I do like to read around things, go online, see what other people are trying out   | Teacher efficacy and confidence |
| I think that as a teacher I can do lots of things  | Teacher efficacy and confidence |
| I don't think I know enough really about all of the things in there when I have looked through it  | Teacher efficacy and confidence |
| It will make me learn them, perhaps that's a good thing  | Teacher efficacy and confidence |
| I don't really feel I know enough at the moment at least   | Teacher efficacy and confidence |
| it does make you feel a bit pressured at times   | Teacher efficacy and confidence |
| because I want to be a good teacher and I want to try to help them all in all of these different things...that is important to me  | Teacher efficacy and confidence |
| ooh, I can answer this one yes we have had training.   | Training as vehicle for change  |
| the school has been part of a big literacy project with the consortia. They came and did some stuff with us all but it has been going on a while..I went to some earlier meetings about it all | Training as vehicle for change  |
| No, not really. Maybe as part of my PGE but that seems like a lifetime ago now   | Training as vehicle for change  |
| more training would definitely be helpful  | Training as vehicle for change  |
| but it needs to be followed up or something I think  | Training as vehicle for change  |
| or it needs to be different or more often  | Training as vehicle for change  |
| We all follow the Literacy Booklet   | Training as vehicle for change  |
| I would just like to feel I know a little bit more...I like to know what I am doing  | Training as vehicle for change  |
| we were shown through the booklet, which was helpful   | Training as vehicle for change  |
| At the moment it isn't really that helpful to me   | Literacy within/without subject |
| I may be doing topics which will end on a piece of assessed writing during a particular term, but the literacy focus for that time might be oracy or writing instructions                      | Literacy within/without subject |
| It needs to fit together better  | Literacy within/without subject |
| I'm not really sure if the booklet is the best way   | Literacy within/without subject |

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| for us all   |  |
| I have to time my lessons so I can fit the literacy work in  | Literacy within/without subject              |
| there wasn't enough about the subjects and how to apply it in different ways   | Literacy within/without subject              |
| this is why at the moment we are just using the booklet even when it isn't really a good fit   | Literacy within/without subject              |
| It is a bit easier in RE I think in that a lot of it is about reading lots of different texts, writing ..there's a lot of discussion too                         | Literacy within/without subject              |
| It can't be easy for subjects like Maths or PE to fit it..it doesn't fit with all subjects, or it doesn't fit as naturally maybe as it does for me in my subject | Literacy within/without subject              |
| For me there are huge benefits   | Literacy within/without subject              |
| they need to read and understand lots of different texts and write clearly   | Literacy within/without subject              |
| and it doesn't always fit with the lesson  | Literacy within/without subject              |
| I mean know it is important and I can see that, especially in my subject   | Literacy within/without subject              |
| and what else I could do that would help them with what they are looking at in RE..  | Literacy within/without subject              |
| We all follow the Literacy Booklet   | Teachers' relationship to school approach    |
| it has a different focus for each year each half term  | Teachers' relationship to school approach    |
| I think it could be useful..it makes us think about it at least which is a start   | Teachers' relationship to school approach    |
| We looked at text types too  | Theoretical understanding and interpretation |
| it's interesting...you get them to say, write a newspaper article or a poem or something about   | Theoretical understanding and interpretation |
| for me, Hanukah or some ethical dilemma  | Theoretical understanding and interpretation |
| and it helps them remember it because it's in a different format...it sticks more..I haven't really had the chance to use it yet                                 | Theoretical understanding and interpretation |
| I often get the pupils to look at something together as a group and see what they make of it   | Theoretical understanding and interpretation |

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| together. I did it in the lesson today.  |  |
| I call it group reading because they are reading it as a group, but it probably isn't really   | Theoretical understanding and interpretation           |
| I used a lot of group work today. I do that a lot in my subject.   | Theoretical understanding and interpretation           |
| it helps them learn from each other and they can discuss things and get new ideas from each other  | Theoretical understanding and interpretation           |
| but I try to use them. It is all pretty new still so it'll become more part of the routine on class for us and the pupils  | Teachers' relationship to school approach              |
| I did look at the booklet and included it at the end   | Teachers' relationship to school approach              |
| once it has been in place a bit longer and we all know it all a bit better we can plan for it  | Teachers' relationship to school approach              |
| At the moment it isn't really that helpful   | Teachers' relationship to school approach              |
| I think that is being looked at though   | Teachers' relationship to school approach              |
| and also I need to know more about what the school is trying out first   | Teachers' relationship to school approach              |
| The booklet will be a good thing and everyone is doing it  | Teachers' relationship to school approach              |
| Again, though, time is a problem   | Perceived restraints                                   |
| I think the limitations for me really are how to fit it in   | Perceived restraints                                   |
| I can try to make sure I learn as much as I can to help them in my lessons. That is most important for me as a teacher really how I can help them feel more confident in the reading and writing | Perceived restraints                                   |
| even if we all had the time  | Perceived restraints                                   |
| and all in an hour's lesson  | Perceived restraints                                   |
| and then the day happens and assembly runs too long or your form are fighting and you have a pile of marking and the day is gone   | Perceived restraints                                   |
| I think everyone is at the moment in Wales generally but here especially   | Context/drivers for literacy focus in lessons:external |
| it is a time of change for everyone I think..  | Context/drivers for literacy focus in lessons:external |
| It is becoming more of a priority now in Wales..I think everyone I know who is a teacher has had something   | Context/drivers for literacy focus in lessons:external |
| it helps with subjects too...if you can read and write well it can help a pupil do better across the board I think..especially in something like RE  | Rationale for approach use                             |
| encourage them to read not just in school but outside too  | Rationale for approach use                             |
| I think it is really important for everything really, for life, for employment, for enjoying books, films...   | Rationale for approach use                             |

## Table of responses sample

| Initial Coding  | Theme                           | Description  | Respondents who referenced code                               | Examples   |
|---|---------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Lesson observation as tool for development                  | Teacher efficacy and confidence | Teachers see lesson observation as positive in terms of developing professional understanding. | Ms D<br>Mr D<br>Ms E<br>Ms C                                  | ‘although it can make you nervous and worry about things you wouldn’t normally, it motivates you to up your game’<br>‘it forces you to reflect on your teaching and to make positive improvements to your practice’<br>‘It’s good to get another pair of eyes on what you do.’   |
| Negative connotations lesson observation                    | Teacher efficacy and confidence | Lesson observation viewed as having negative impact on classroom teachers                      | Mr Pb<br>Mr E<br>Ms W   | ‘I was really nervous today, I don’t know why, it is silly really. I suppose you don’t want to be seen and for it to go wrong. Or even worse you think it goes really well but it hasn’t’<br><br>‘I still dread being observed’<br><br>‘I am so glad that is over. It always makes me feel so on edge even now’                            |
| Observation as judgement<br>Teacher efficacy and confidence | Teacher efficacy and confidence | Teachers view lesson observation in terms of external judgement on teaching performance.       | Mr D<br>Ms L<br>Ms E<br>Ms C<br>Mr Pb<br>Mr E<br>Ms W<br>Ms D | ‘what did you think?’<br><br>‘was it any good?’<br><br>‘Is that the sort of thing you were looking for?’<br><br>‘I do want to know if I am ‘good’... in other people’s eyes...if I am doing what I should be’  |
| Teacher effectiveness outside of external measures          | Teacher efficacy and confidence | Reference made to teacher effectiveness in terms of factors other than assessment data.        | Mr D<br>Mr Pb<br>Ms C<br>Mr E<br>Ms E<br>Ms D                 | ‘...if you don’t get them to score better, it doesn’t mean they’ve not learned or not developed. I think there is more than meeting targets to teaching’<br><br>‘hopefully it (whether a teacher is seen as ‘good’) is about more than just results...there are other things’<br><br>‘it isn’t just about how well they do in their GCSEs’ |

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| Professional identity concerns | Teacher efficacy and confidence    | Teachers expressed a worry that they feel a negative impact on their professional confidence.          | Mr Pb<br>Mr P<br>Ms Db<br>Ms W                 | ‘I think I am good RE teacher. I hope I am anyway, but then with things like this I just feel a bit like I am not really able to do it as well as I’d like, which is frustrating’<br><br>‘it does make me worry about whether I know as much as I thought I did’   |
| Teacher self doubt/pressure    | Teacher efficacy and confidence    | Teachers express feeling unsure that they will be able to use the literacy approaches of their schools | Ms E<br>Mr E<br>Mr Pb<br>Ms W<br>Ms L<br>Mr P  | ‘if I really knew it all and had the time to really get to know it I’d probably feel really excited but it just makes me worry about not really getting it right’<br><br>‘I don’t think I know enough really about all of the things in there when I have looked through it’<br><br>‘when you have training in things at the start of term you sometimes end up questioning yourself, even if it is actually stuff you have done for years, just not with those terms. It can sound so complicated that it puts you off’<br><br>‘I do it, or at least I do what I think it is, but I am not really sure why I am doing it or how I would know if it was right’ |
| PISA                           | Context/drivers for literacy focus | Teachers name PISA results as factor influencing current focus on literacy.                            | Mr D<br>Mr Pb<br>Mr P<br>Mr Db<br>Ms W<br>Ms C |  |
| Welsh Government               | Context/drivers for literacy focus | Welsh Government named as driver for literacy focus in schools.  | Mr Pb<br>Ms E<br>MrP<br>Ms D<br>Ms Db<br>Ms C  |  |
| Local consortia/advisors       | Context/drivers for literacy focus | Explicitly named as driver for literacy work in schools.   | Mr L<br>Ms E<br>Mr P<br>Ms D                   |  |
| Limiters on school change      | School efficacy                    | Teachers’ beliefs that their school is limited in what it might want to                                | Ms E<br>Mr Pb<br>Mr P<br>Ms D                  | ‘I think their hands are tied, really’<br><br>‘There is only so  |

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|  |   | change or do due to external limiters such as examinations, Welsh Government, local consortia.   | Ms Db<br>Ms C<br>Ms L<br>Ms W<br>Mr E  | much a school can do..the decisions come down to us and schools just implement them'<br><br>'...schools can only do so much, they are told what they need to focus on and have to find their way within that'                        |
| Other external (out of school) factors for including literacy in lessons | Context/drivers for literacy focus in lessons:external  | Factors outside of the schools in which teachers work given as reasons for their including literacy work in their lessons.                             | Ms E<br>Mr D<br>Mr Pb<br>Ms Db<br>Ms W<br>Mr L                                 | 'We all have to do it in Wales now – it is the government's new push'<br><br>'I know ESTYN are going to look at it'<br><br>'I need to show evidence (of literacy) for inspections'   |
| Performance systems  | Context/drivers for literacy focus in lessons: internal | School performance systems cited as driver for teaching decisions  | Mr D<br>Ms E<br>Mr Pb<br>Mr P<br>Ms D<br>Ms Db<br>Ms C<br>Mr L<br>Ms W<br>Mr E | 'I do it because I know I have to; it will be looked for'<br><br>'I know that we have to show we are using certain things in pupils' books'<br><br>'We have all been told what will be looked for in books and what we must include' |
| Training received in school  | Training as vehicle for change                          | Explicit training in literacy undertaken by teachers in whole school setting   | Mr D<br>Ms E<br>Mr Pb<br>Mr P<br>Ms Db<br>Ms C<br>Mr L<br>Ms W<br>Mr E         | Ms D was absent for the training day in School 3   |
| External training  | Training as vehicle for change                          | Training undertaken externally   | Ms D<br>Mr E<br>Ms Db<br>Mr W  | MA<br>Voluntary events x 2<br>literacy group   |
| Training as single event   | Training as vehicle for change                          | Instances where school training was a discrete and singular event delivered at the start of the school year.   | All schools  | 'They came in and did something at the start of the year'<br>'We had an inset in September..that was it I think'<br><br>'We were all given some training in an inset day'  |
| Use of approaches from training  | Training as vehicle for change                          | Instances where teachers expressed their use of the named approaches in their lessons that had been part of the literacy training they had undertaken. | Mr D<br>Ms E<br>Mr Pb<br>Mr P<br>Ms Db<br>Ms C<br>Ms L<br>Ms W<br>Mr E         | 'I used Reciprocal Reading; we had some training on that earlier in the year'<br><br>'We had an inset on Eight Reading Behaviours'   |
| Desire for   | Training as vehicle for                                 | Teachers make  | Mr D   | 'I would like to have  |

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| more/different training                                 | change                                      | direct reference to desire for additional training in literacy and/or literacy approaches used in their school          | Ms E<br>Mr Pb<br>Mr P<br>Ms D<br>Ms Db<br>Ms C<br>Ms L<br>Ms W<br>Mr E         | more training. It is all so hectic at the start of the year'<br><br>'I think we would all like a bit more training –I know I would'   |
| Approaches given to staff                               | Training as vehicle for change              | Literacy approaches delivered to teachers as predefined expectations.   | Mr D<br>Ms E<br>Mr Pb<br>Mr P<br>Ms D<br>Ms Db<br>Ms C<br>Ms L<br>Ms W<br>Mr E | 'we were told what looked for'<br><br>'It was given to us in the training day'  |
| Irrelevance of training to subject teaching             | Training as vehicle for change              | Teachers express some uncertainty about how the training they have received is relevant to their subject teaching       | Mr D<br>Ms E<br>Mr Pb<br>Mr P<br>Ms D<br>Ms Db<br>Ms C<br>Ms L<br>Ms W<br>Mr E | 'it will help generally but not really in Xcience'<br><br>'I don't see how it will fit with what I need to be doing'<br><br>'I think I needed more on how I should fit it in with what I teacher' |
| Identification of stated school approach                | Teachers' relationship to school approach   | Teachers are able to name the approaches of their schools and can identify what the school has put in place.            | Mr D<br>Ms E<br>Mr Pb<br>Mr P<br>Ms Db<br>Ms C<br>Ms L<br>Ms W<br>Mr E         |   |
| Concern that they would be able to use approaches       | Teachers' relationship to school approaches | Teachers are concerned that they will not be able to use the school's approaches.                                       | Ms E<br>Mr E<br>Mr Pb<br>Ms W<br>Ms L<br>Mr P                                  | 'at the moment I am not sure I will feel more confident in it'<br><br>'I am not really that confident I know what it is'  |
| Use of approaches not found in school policy/approaches | Teachers' relationship to school approaches | Instances where teachers used literacy approaches or tasks that were outside of a school's stated policy or approaches. | Ms E<br>Ms D<br>Ms L<br>Mr Pb  | 'I wanted to try some things out'<br><br>'I had heard about it from someone on another school'  |
| Positive view to making literacy part of their teaching | Teachers' relationship to school approaches | Teachers reported feeling that they can see future benefits to literacy in their lessons.                               | Mr D<br>Ms E<br>Mr Pb<br>Mr P<br>Ms D<br>Ms Db<br>Ms C<br>Ms L<br>Ms W<br>Mr E | 'I would like to just be able to think 'oh this would really help them here' and be able to know what I could use to support them that really fits with what                                      |

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|  |  |  |  | I am trying to do in a way that I understand.'   |
| Lack of confidence in current approaches to support more effective use | Teachers' relationship to school approaches  | Teachers concerns that the school literacy approaches can benefit their subject teaching as they stand                 | Ms D<br>Ms E<br>Mr Pb<br>Mr P<br>Ms Db<br>Ms C<br>Ms L<br>Ms W<br>Mr E |  |
| Identification of approaches used in lessons                           | Theoretical understanding and interpretation | Teachers' ability to identify literacy approaches they used in their observed lessons                                  | Mr D<br>Ms E<br>Mr Pb<br>Mr P<br>Ms Db<br>Ms C<br>Ms L<br>Ms W<br>Mr E |  |
| Misidentification of approaches  | Theoretical understanding and interpretation | Teachers' inaccurate or partial identification of approaches.  | Ms E<br>Mr E<br>Ms W   | 'I thought I had. I know I should so perhaps I thought it was in there'<br>'I often get the pupils to look at something together as a group and see what they make of it together. I call it group reading because they are reading it as a group, but it probably isn't really' |
| Coherent messaging   | Theoretical understanding and interpretation | Teachers within the same school who had a shared understanding of what was expected of them in terms of literacy work. | Mr D<br>Mr Pb<br>Ms Db<br>Ms C<br>Ms W<br>Mr E                         | Ms E and Ms L different interpretations of Text Types<br>Mr P and Ms D naming different approaches key approaches for School 3   |
| Awareness of rationale for school approaches                           | Theoretical understanding and interpretation | Teachers awareness of the pedagogical reasoning behind the school literacy approaches                                  | 0  | 'I know they worked on it for a long time and wrote the guidance...it was really well thought out and they used lots of research...'   |
| Part of school policy or approach                                      | Rationale for approach use                   |  | Mr D<br>Ms E<br>Mr Pb<br>Mr P<br>Ms Db<br>Ms C<br>Mr L<br>Ms W<br>Mr E | 'We all have things we are expected to include'<br><br>'it is in the policy'<br><br>'The school literacy policy says we should use it in our lessons'<br><br>'The handbook tells us what literacy we must include'<br><br>'I know that I need to get them (pupils)               |

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|   |                                  |  |  | to use certain things, like Eight Reading Behaviours'<br><br>'it is part of our school approach'  |
| Broad literacy aims                               | Rationale for approach use       | Teachers express view that literacy is included in lessons to support broad literacy aims such as future employment, social skills, benefits to society and so on. | Mr D<br>Ms E<br>Mr Pb<br>Mr P<br>Ms Db<br>Ms C<br>Ms L<br>Ms W<br>Mr E<br>Ms D | 'I want them to have practice in writing and reading...these things are important in school but later too'<br><br>'It is important for these kids to have good literacy...it opens doors for them and makes them more confident'<br><br>'It's a vital part of education and preparing them for the world'<br><br>'We need a more literate work-force...if they can understand things better and can write more accurately, it just opens up opportunities for them' |
| Literacy as general benefit to school performance | Rationale for approach use       | Teachers comment on literacy as of being a general support to cross subject success  | Mr D<br>Ms E<br>Mr Pb<br>Mr P<br>Ms Db<br>Ms C<br>Ms L<br>Ms W                 | 'it will help them read more effectively for all subjects'<br><br>'if they can write well, say, it makes them better across the board'  |
| Consideration of text challenge/pupils' skills    | Rationale for approach use       | Teachers' literacy decisions as based upon factors such as text difficulty or pupils' ability to access/produce text without support                               | 0  | 'I am not sure why I didn't think of that. I do with everything else. It's really obvious'<br><br>'they could have understood them without...they weren't difficult...in fact, I had made them really simple on purpose so that they just got the main points'<br><br>'I didn't consider that; I just use them whenever they do a piece of reading'   |
| Literacy as adjunct to subject                    | Literacy within/without subjects | Teachers express view that literacy is an additional element to their subject teaching   | Mr D<br>Ms E<br>Mr Pb<br>Mr P<br>Ms Db<br>Ms C<br>Mr L<br>Ms W<br>Mr E         | 'It is an add-on; I plan my lesson and then put in the literacy focus. It isn't the way I'd choose to do it, I know'<br><br>'It is something I put  |

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|   |                                  |   |  | <p>in after I have planned my lesson mostly'</p> <p>'It is an add-on. I don't feel it is a natural part of my teaching'</p>   |
| Concerns about literacy in subject                | Literacy within/without subjects | Teachers reference concerns that literacy work they do is possibly to the detriment of their subject teaching.                      | <p>Mr D<br/>Ms E<br/>Mr Pb<br/>Mr P<br/>Ms Db<br/>Ms C<br/>Mr L<br/>Ms W<br/>Mr E<br/>Ms D</p> | <p>'I feel like I am sometimes shoe-horning things in that don't really suit the lesson because I know that is what I am meant to focus on, even if it doesn't fit with what I have planned subject-wise'</p> <p>' I may be doing topics which will end on a piece of assessed writing during a particular term, but the literacy focus for that time might be oracy or writing instructions. It needs to fit together better'</p> <p>'It worries me that I won't have enough time for my subject of I have to spend time doing this as well as other things'</p> |
| Literacy as potential to improve subject          | Literacy within/without subjects | Expressed beliefs that literacy could improve the teaching of subject   | <p>Mr D<br/>Ms E<br/>Mr Pb<br/>Ms C<br/>Ms W</p>   | <p>'I think it could really help them in my subject –there is a lot of writing'</p> <p>'It could be a real asset in Geography'</p>  |
| Desire for more subject based literacy            | Literacy within/without subjects | Teachers comments that reflect the view that a more subject specific literacy would be of benefit.                                  | <p>Mr D<br/>Ms E<br/>Mr Pb<br/>Mr P<br/>Ms Db<br/>Ms C<br/>Mr L<br/>Ms W<br/>Mr E<br/>Ms D</p> | <p>'I'd like to see it fit more with Geography and I think it could'</p> <p>'I do feel that there are things that could help me and them become better at the sorts of things we do in RE'</p> <p>'It would be great if I could get them to become better at, say, writing up experiment or explaining processes. That's the sort of thing I would see as helpful'</p>  |
| Not enough time to find out more about approaches | Perceived restraints             | Teachers' identification of insufficient time for professional learning to enable them to become more informed about their practice | <p>Mr D<br/>Ms E<br/>Mr Pb<br/>Mr P<br/>Ms Db<br/>Ms C<br/>Mr L<br/>Ms W<br/>Mr E</p>          | <p>'I would love to find out more, but it just never seems the time'</p> <p>'If I had the time I would find out how I could best do this'</p>   |

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| Not enough time to put into place in lessons | Perceived restraints | Teachers' identification of insufficient time during lessons to put effective literacy practices into | Mr D<br>Ms E<br>Mr Pb<br>Mr P<br>Ms Db<br>Ms C<br>Ms L<br>Ms W<br>Mr E | 'I can't fit everything into an fifty minute lesson'<br><br>'There just isn't the time to do everything' |
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## **Appendix G**

### **Meetings Notes PLC Meetings**

1 **PLC Meeting 1**

2 Present: Litco 1, Litco2, Litco3, Litco 4, Litco 5, AC, IL (non-participant)

3 AC welcomes group to the meeting.

4 Group introductions –all members offer information regarding their school, their role,  
5 previous experience and so on.

6 AC outlines the project.

7 AC outlines research aims and what measures she will be using in the research.

8 AC explains what PLCs are and shares the Welsh Government guidelines.

9 Litcos agree this is a positive way of working together for the year.

10 Litco 1 asked how it would work in practice.

11 Discussion led by AC about how the group might be organised.

12 Group asks question to AC about what the group will be expected to do and produce.

13 AC explains that the PLC should have shared and agreed aims.

14 Litco 1 asks AC what she thinks these should be.

15 AC explains that the group should consider what they want to achieve as a result of the work  
16 of the group.

17 Litco 2 says that they would be happy for AC to start them off.

18 Litcos agree.

19 AC returns to the WG guidance asks the group what their shared outcome is.

20 Litco 1 suggests that it should be to improve literacy in their schools.

21 AC asks how the group would like to define and measure this outcome.

22 Litcos express feeling that that is too general and ‘big’.

23 AC suggests that each meeting has an explicit aim and outcome which leads to an overall  
24 outcome that might well be to improve literacy –although his might need to be refined

25 Litcos agree.

26 Litcos ask what the first shared outcome should be. General discussion about setting aims and  
27 how hard it is to come up with clear practical ones.

28 A series of suggestions are made by AC who reemphasises that the PLC is a collaborative  
29 group.

30 Litco 1 agrees but says that they haven’t been part of one before.

31 Litcos agree.

32 Practical elements discussed and agreed: group members agreed to host meetings in rotation,

33 group members agreed to share their work with the group, meeting notes would be shared and

34 agreed for each meeting and that the general aim was to improve the ways in which whole  
35 school literacy was managed across all of the schools.

36 Litco 1 'it will be important for us all to be open to criticism then, as well as to sharing ideas'  
37 Group agreed.

38 AC discusses norms and expectations of the PLC.  
39 These are agreed upon regarding facilitation, turn taking, meeting times, confidentiality and  
40 so on.

41 Role of AC in the group discussed.

42 AC explained that she would be part of the PLC, but would also be conducting research  
43 which would mean that some elements of her work would be outside of the group.

44 AC outlines her experience in literacy and her role in the group.

45 AC explains that she won't be providing literacy training, but will be part of the group as it  
46 explores literacy. Part of this will reflect her work as a literacy coordinator in her institution  
47 but also as a literacy trainer and researcher.

48 Litco 1 expresses concern that they have not done a huge amount of reading on literacy.  
49 Litcos concur.

50 Litco 2 asks AC if that would be more her role in the PLC.

51 AC explains that the PLC provides the space for knowledge and understanding to develop  
52 collaboratively, but that it is likely that she will have initial access to readings and research  
53 that the group might find useful.

54 Group agrees that this would be helpful.

55 AC Revisits aims and outlines PLC practices.

56 AC explains that the PLC is a tool for self and group development. That the Litcos would be  
57 exploring practices and coming to their own conclusions about what would work best within  
58 their context.

59 The group expressed agreement that this approach gave them more say over their own  
60 professional development and the work they would put into place in their schools.

61 All Litcos agreed that literacy was much more of a priority now in their schools and in Wales.  
62 Litco 2 'this has become a big priority for us. I think it has for everyone'  
63 Group agrees.

64 Litco 1 'the literacy coordinator, numeracy too, is in focus now. I don't think I have really  
65 been much aware of it before'  
66 Litcos agree.

67 AC asks group why they think this is the case.

68 Litco 1 'PISA!'  
69 AC asks group if all agree that is the reason.  
70 General agreement that PISA has been a spur to changes in schools but that literacy is  
71 important.  
72 Discussion about importance of literacy.  
73 This includes role in adult life, societal benefits, general access to subjects.  
74 Litco 1 'it helps them in life; it's central to everything'.  
75 Litcos agree. Brief discussion about importance of literacy for employment prospects,  
76 involvement in society.  
77 Litcos 1, 2, 4, and 5 expressed the notion that literacy was a key to enabling pupils to engage  
78 with society.  
79 Litcos 1, 2, 3 and 5 expressed beliefs that poor literacy skills diminished pupils' experiences  
80 and potentials  
81 Group agreed and expressed that this was the most important reason for literacy being a focus  
82 in schools.  
83 Litco 1 'it helps them in all subjects too. If they read and write well it makes them better at all  
84 subjects'  
85 Litco 2 and 4 suggest that literacy now encompasses other elements such as digital literacy  
86 and emotional literacy.  
87 The group agreed that this was the case but that their focus needed to be on literacy in a  
88 narrower sense.  
89 Litco 1 asks AC how she would define it.  
90 AC discusses competing ideas about literacy and her work in school and as university tutor  
91 and how her position has changed and keeps changing.  
92 AC asks the group what the starting point should be. Revisits PLC group working principles  
93 and asks the group to consider what the intended outcome of the PLC should be.  
94 Litco 5 'I think it should be what we expect to see out of it. What it will be in school and how  
95 we get there?'  
96 AC suggests that some definitions and principles might help to clarify key points and ensure  
97 that the group has a shared understanding of terms etc and a clear focus on a shared goal.  
98 Discussion of what the members of the group want to gain from it.  
99 AC returns them to the PLC principles.  
100 Litco 1 asks AC if they all have to do the same thing.  
101 AC says they didn't but that the group should be working towards something specific.

102 Group agree that aim of the group will be to make informed decisions about literacy in their  
103 schools; to establish systems to ensure that the literacy approaches of the litcos are spread  
104 throughout school and impact upon practice in classrooms.  
105 Litco 3 passes to group the school literacy marking policy to look at.  
106 Discussion about literacy and whether it is best taught in an explicit way or not.  
107 AC poses questions to the group about whether literacy skills should be taught in all subjects,  
108 taught in English lessons and used in other subjects  
109 Litco 2 suggests that literacy needs to be something everyone does in a school.  
110 Litcos agree.  
111 Litco 1 'it is everyone's responsibility. Even more now'  
112 AC asks what 'it' is and how we will know if 'it' is done.  
113 Litco 1 'I think we want to set up a set of clear expectations and guidelines and then we need  
114 to put in place checks to see it is being done'  
115 Litcos agree this point.  
116 AC repeats question about what 'literacy' is. Says that if 'it' is being presented and  
117 monitored, there needs to some understanding of what 'it' is.  
118 Litcos agree that more information is needed about different ideas concerning literacy.  
119 Litco 2 'I am an English teacher so I know about language but I am not sure how it might be  
120 seen by other teachers from different subjects'.  
121 Litco 4 says that they are not and this makes them concerned that they will be out of their  
122 depth.  
123 AC presents some key theoretical ideas about how literacy is situated within different  
124 theoretical positions – whole language, strategies, disciplinary literacy.  
125 Group asks AC to explain the key differences in more detail.  
126 AC explains differences and key principles.  
127 AC hands out three readings (Moje, 2007; Palinscar and Brown, 1984; Daniels et al, 2000).  
128 Explains they come from different positions about literacy  
129 Group agreement to read papers for next meeting.  
130 Group agreement that one aim will be to explore ideas about literacy and reading and  
131 consider how these might link to school practices.  
132 Litco 1 'yes, it should be based in something. That is important'.  
133 Litcos 2 and 5 asked if they would be expected to share readings etc.  
134 AC asked group if they wanted that to be a part of what the group did.  
135 Litcos agreed but asked AC to be the main source of this initially.

136 Litco 1 'I'd love to know more about the theory side of it all, but I don't think I am there yet'  
137 Litcos agreed.  
138 AC presents research elements to the group. Reiterates that the findings won't be shared  
139 directly with the group.  
140 Lesson observations not to act as a judgement on 'good practice' but more as an instrument to  
141 see if the literacy practices that the litcos put in place are seen in practice.  
142 Group agree this is in line with the aims of the group.  
143 Discussion of lesson observations.  
144 Group agrees that volunteers would be asked for and that the PLC would input into the lesson  
145 observation proforma.  
146 This was discussed by group.  
147 Group agreed that they would know what types of approaches they would expect to see and  
148 so it was expedient to include this in the lesson observation capture form.  
149 The form was to be descriptive –it would capture what was done in the lessons.  
150 AC presents the interviews and the role they play in the research.  
151 Litcos agree that the questions need to focus on the decision making process and whether  
152 class teachers felt the literacy approaches were useful or not.  
153 Discussion of the importance of good literacy to success in all subjects revisited.  
154 Litcos 1, 2 and 5 felt that this was key in a secondary school.  
155 Agreed actions for the next meeting: read three articles distributed by AC; email any readings  
156 that are seen as useful to group members prior to next meeting; review school literacy policy  
157 and approaches in time for next meeting; bring notes regarding training that had taken place  
158 in schools; review approaches decided upon.  
159 Meeting closes

**1 PLC Meeting 2**

2

3 Present: Litco 1, Litco2, Litco3, Litco 4, Litco 5, AC, IL (non-participant)

4 Litco 3 welcomes the group.

5 Meeting notes 1 checked and agreed.

6 Litco 3 presents agenda. Group agrees to discuss their thoughts on the three readings first  
7 before discussing progress since last meeting.

8 Litco 3 asks AC to initiate discussion of the readings.

9 AC provides summary of the key positions found in the readings. Links them to different  
10 ideas about language and their relationship to teaching/acquisition.

11 Litco 2 asks AC if she preferred any of the readings over the other two.

12 AC picks out the key ideas again and the points of disagreement in the positions.

13 AC 'it really depends upon how you view language and how you view literacy and whether  
14 you think it is the same set of skills in different contexts'.

15 Litco 1 'I have to say I think I need to read them again. I really liked the strategy reading. It  
16 just makes sense to me'

17 Litcos agree.

18 Litco 3 asks AC if she would recommend any particular strategy.

19 AC 'the use of a strategy really depends upon what it is you are trying to improve'

20 Lico 3 asks AC to outline the main points readings again.

21 AC summarises key positions.

22 Litco 2 says they can see good things in elements of all of them.

23 Litcos agree.

24 Litco 1 says that strategies would be most useful as they could be used by all subjects.

25 Litcos 2, 4 and 5 agree and express a view that literacy was best taught as part of a skills-  
26 based approach that could be used in all subjects.

27 Litcos 1 and 4 mention that resource packs for use in secondary schools, such as table mats  
28 for Reciprocal Reading roles, could be found online.

29 Litco 4 'I think that is so useful'.

30 General agreement that resource availability is a key factor to take into consideration when  
31 considering which approach to take forward in school.

32 Litco 4 asks AC which strategies she has used.

33 AC responds with examples but also says that strategy use is one of a number of approaches.  
34 Litco 1 says that they have been considering this sort of approach in their policy for school.  
35 Litco 2 and 4 say they have done this too.  
36 Litco 3 moves on to next agenda item.  
37 Litco 1 volunteers to share their progress first.  
38 Litco 1 outlines new literacy policy. Shares key points with group.  
39 Litco 1 has identified key strategies that will be used across the school  
40 Litco 1 'they break reading down into manageable parts that we can give to teachers.'  
41 The named strategies for School 1 are Reciprocal Reading and Eight Reading Behaviours.  
42 These strategies are seen in the policy document which outlines the key elements of these  
43 approaches.  
44 Litco 1 explains that they want all teachers to use these approaches and will form a group  
45 with representatives from each subject to form a Literacy Group in the school.  
46 A whole day training event had taken place in School 1 on the approaches.  
47 AC asks how the approaches will be managed.  
48 Litco1 will use book monitoring to look for strategy use and has asked all departments to put  
49 literacy as an item in each meeting.  
50 Litco 2 asks who did the school training.  
51 Litco 1 responds that they did some of the training, with support.  
52 AC asks what led to the selection of those particular approaches.  
53 Litco 1 responds that they felt those approaches would be useful in all subjects. Mentions  
54 resource availability and that the approaches identify generic reading skills that can be  
55 applied across all subject areas.  
56 Litco 1 'it makes it easier for everyone to know what they are expected to do in their lessons'.  
57 Litco 1 offers to share their policy and supporting documents with the group. Reciprocal  
58 reading cards shared with the group.  
59 Litco 1 asks AC how she would use these sorts of resources.  
60 AC explains how Reciprocal Reading can be organised.  
61 Litco 1 confirms that this is what they had thought.  
62 The group discusses the cards and how the roles might be used in lessons.  
63 Litco 4 'we are doing something similar with Reciprocal Reading. This sort of thing will be  
64 really helpful'  
65 Litco 2 explains that they are not able to share their literacy handbook they are using but  
66 offers to talk through the generic principles of their work.

67 Litco 2 explains that a designated literacy focus for each year group is given to teachers each  
68 half term.

69 Litco 1 asks ‘so all subjects focus on the same thing each lesson with a class?’

70 Litco 2 confirms this.

71 Litco 2 explains that pupils were also given a literacy handbook that they worked through  
72 each half term.

73 They explain that they feel it makes things very clear for everyone in the school –teachers  
74 and pupils-and that expectations are presented up front –‘everyone knows what they need to  
75 do and when’.

76 Litco 2 said there had been a whole staff meeting where the literacy handbook and tool kit  
77 were shared with staff and the principles explained.

78 Litco 2 asks AC if she would look at the handbook and see if she thought that sort of  
79 approach would be helpful. The work had been worked on by a number of different people.

80 Litco 2 expressed their positive feelings towards the approach.

81 AC agreed to look over the handbook.

82 Litco3 tells the group that they have not changed their policy but had made staff aware of the  
83 existing policy and expectations.

84 Litco 3 said that their school used wall displays of text types in each class and that there was  
85 a common marking policy in place for literacy.

86 AC asked if any specific approaches had been identified.

87 Litco 3 said that this had not been much of a feature but that the school had had some input  
88 from local consortia staff during an INSET day at the start of the term on Eight Reading  
89 Behaviours. Teachers were not expected to use this –it wouldn’t be a named focus as such,  
90 but they were aware of it.

91 In School 3, book monitoring took place within the school each term to check that the literacy  
92 marking policy was being used across departments.

93 Litco 3 ‘Is that the sort of thing you’re after?’

94 AC replies that it is more about what Litco 3 wanted to put in place.

95 Litco 2 asked about Eight Reading Behaviours.

96 Litco 1 gave an overview then asked AC if this was correct.

97 AC said yes as far as she understood it too and offered some background detail.

98 Litco 2 –‘so it is a strategy?’

99 Litcos 1, then 3 and 5 agreed.

100 Litco 4 explained their literacy policy was already in place but had been refined.

101 'I am not an English teacher so I probably come from a slightly different angle here'  
102 School 4 had invested in providing some resources for each classroom. This included  
103 dictionary and thesaurus sets, highlighters for key words.  
104 Litco 4 had set up some whole-school training which focused on breaking down the language  
105 of the lesson as well as Reciprocal Reading.  
106 Litco 4 asks AC if Reciprocal Reading and Eight Reading Behaviours are the same thing.  
107 AC discusses the similarities in these approaches and some differences, but says she is not  
108 very familiar with Eight Reading Behaviours.  
109 In School 4, literacy was an agenda item for every departmental meeting and the work in  
110 literacy of each department was reported back to the literacy coordinator after each meeting.  
111 Schemes of work in each department were mapped for literacy.  
112 Litco 4 'I know literacy is going to be a big deal in schools right now but this is a long term  
113 thing for us I think'  
114 Litco 4 said they wanted to see what types of literacy might be used or were used in subjects  
115 and make this more of a focus.  
116 'That is longer term though, for now I want us all on the same page'  
117 Litco 5 said that they had revised the literacy policy and outlined key elements to the group.  
118 Litco 5 was keen to identify approaches that could be used across all subjects in the school.  
119 This included the use of subject-specific vocabulary tools and also the initiation of a set of  
120 writing frames that would be developed within subject areas to be used by all teachers.  
121 Litco 5 'I think we all need something that we can give to people to say 'this is how you do it,  
122 this is what you use''  
123 Litco 5 had identified staff from each subject area who would report back on literacy within  
124 their subject area and outlined broad literacy expectations to the whole staff.  
125 Literacy was an agenda item in all departmental meetings.  
126 Interested teachers from across subject areas had been invited to attend training events on a  
127 range of approaches, most notably Reciprocal Reading, Eight Reading Behaviours and text  
128 types.  
129 Litco 1 asked AC if she thought what they were doing was ok.  
130 AC shares some of the work she has undertaken in her role in university. Asks if the group  
131 had any questions or queries about any of the work of any of the group so far.  
132 Litco 3 says she has done the least of all but she had held the role previously and so was  
133 using what was in place.

134 Lico 1 says that the group all seemed to be doing fairly similar things. They asked Litco 4  
135 what they wanted to do regarding the subject areas.  
136 Litco 4 says they are not quite sure yet but will probably asks subject areas to look at what  
137 types of texts they read or write in each subject and use this as a start.  
138 Litco 4' Does that sound sensible?' to AC.  
139 AC says that it would be useful information to gather. AC asks Litco 4 whay they want to do  
140 this.  
141 Litco 4 replies that they are not an English teacher and so they can see that other subjects  
142 might not be dealing with reading in the same way.  
143 Litco 1'I did like the reading on disciplinary literacy. I'm just not sure how I could go about  
144 it'  
145 AC asks what they liked about it.  
146 Litco 1 says that the idea of having the subjects look at the language of their subject made  
147 sense but that they also wanted to focus on 'basic literacy too'  
148 AC asks how the group thought that might best be developed.  
149 General discussion mainly consisting of questions to AC about using the same approaches  
150 with a shared focus in all subjects and then looking for improvements in that area.  
151 Litcos agree that this way seems to be the most useful.  
152 Litco 4 says 'for now at least'  
153 Litco 1 agrees.  
154 AC asks the group what had been the response to the proposed literacy work.  
155 Litco 1 says that there seemed to be some enthusiasm.  
156 Litcos agree.  
157 Litco 2 'People seem pleased to have some focus; they want to know what is expected of  
158 them'  
159 Litco 5 says that they felt that they already felt that some colleagues felt it might be an  
160 additional piece of work to do.  
161 Litcos agree.  
162 General agreement that colleagues have little time and lots of competing demands and so the  
163 initial enthusiasm falls away as daily demands take over.  
164 AC asks the group about the 'whole school' element of the literacy work.  
165 Litco 1 asks if she means the training.  
166 AC replies that she is talking about how they aim to get their ideas about what literacy should  
167 be in their schools into every classroom.

168 Litco 2 says the documentation does much of that.  
169 General agreement that the policy and supporting documents that outline approaches etc will  
170 be the key way of sharing the literacy approaches across all subjects.  
171 Litco 4 ‘training too;  
172 Litco 1 ‘yes, definitely’  
173 Litco 4 asks AC if there was anything else she thought they should be doing.  
174 AC describes the things she did as a literacy coordinator in school and currently.  
175 Litco 1 says they are going to monitor books  
176 Agreement from group.  
177 Litco 4 says they aren’t doing that yet but will be looking at some way of monitoring across  
178 subject areas.  
179 ‘We need to check if it is being done’  
180 Agreement from group.  
181 Litco 3 moves onto next item  
182 Lesson observation proforma is looked at by all group.  
183 AC is asked what she will be looking using the lesson observations for.  
184 She explains that the lesson observation will be to capture what happens in lessons. They will  
185 not be used to judge the teaching but to observe what literacy approaches are used, if any, and  
186 to look for any patterns and links to the whole school approaches the Litcos have put in place.  
187 Ethics discussed by AC including that the teachers can opt out at anytime and that, as agreed  
188 previously, the lesson data will not be shared with the Litcos.  
189 Litco 1 ‘I think they will feel better about that –even if I would like to be a fly on the wall’  
190 General agreement from group.  
191 AC asks if the approaches they expect to see across their schools are represented in the  
192 proforma.  
193 Litco 4 asks what the blank area on the form is for.  
194 AC explains it will be to record a description of the lesson as it happens.  
195 All agree that the form is simple and descriptive. Any suggested changes are to be shared  
196 with the group via email in the next week before it is trialled in pilot observations.  
197 AC asks what the group think the next steps should be.  
198 Litco agree the next stage of work –to develop resources and approaches in their schools and  
199 to monitor the use of approaches in the ways they have established within their schools.  
200 Each member of the group agrees to review their progress and bring with them their thoughts  
201 next meeting.

202 Meeting draws to a close

1 **PLC Meeting 3**

2

3 Present: Litco 1, Litco2, Litco3, Litco 4, Litco 5, AC, IL (non-participant)

4 Litco 1 welcomes the group and presents agenda.

5 Meeting notes 2 agreed.

6 Litco 2 says they agree the notes but feel they have some different thoughts now.

7 Litco 1 says they have too.

8 Agreement from Litco 5.

9 Litco 1 asks group to share progress since last meeting.

10 Litco 1 Starts off by showing the group the shared inline area they have set up for staff to  
11 upload and share literacy resources, as well as readings, things of interest.

12 These are organised in subject areas in the main, with a generic area for general literacy.

13 This area included the readings that had been discussed by the group as well as some  
14 practical professional documents about practical approaches to literacy in secondary school.

15 Litco 1 explained that this was relatively new to the school and that, as could be seen, some  
16 subject areas were engaging with the online resource more than others.

17 Litco 1 ' I am really trying to encourage people to use this more for lots of reasons'

18 AC asks what the aim is.

19 Litco 1 explains that it was to have a central place for literacy across the school but also to  
20 include the staff more.

21 It also serves a monitoring purpose.

22 Litco 1 'I can see what people are looking at or doing. I might also get examples of work  
23 from each subject uploaded'

24 General agreement from group that this would be useful.

25 AC asks what the uploaded work would do.

26 Litco 1 'It could do a couple of things. It could show good practice so that people can see  
27 what other people are doing'.

28 Litco 1 also says it would be time saving as book monitoring was proving to be laborious.

29 Litco 5 agrees.

30 Litco 2 says that they sampled work from their subject teachers – partly to save time.

31 AC asks what the monitoring and sampling was for.

32 Litco 1 'to see that it is being done'

33 AC asks what would happen if it wasn't or if there was anything else being looked for other  
34 than instances of approaches.

35 Litco 2 asks for clarification.

36 AC says that she wondered if, for example, there was consideration of whether the  
37 approaches were used appropriately, if improvement in pupils' responses to text or written  
38 work etc would be a focus.

39 Litco 1 says that there wasn't, it's to check if approaches could be seen –which is not always  
40 the case.

41 Litco 1 asks AC if there should be.

42 AC replies that that would depend on the intended aim of the group although ultimately that  
43 is the intended aim of all of their work.

44 Litcos agree but want the initial focus to be on establishing literacy approaches and systems  
45 in their schools that can help ensure consistency.

46 Litco 4 says that there is a need to get things down in clear policy and expectations even if  
47 these might not always be followed.

48 Litco 4 'People are busy and things get left by the wayside. It is frustrating..but what can be  
49 done?'

50 Litco 1 agrees and says that it was a first step though.

51 'I have found this more difficult that I thought'

52 Litco 1 they know more was needed but as a first step 'it shows the teachers and the pupils  
53 the sorts of things a good reader does when they read so that they can use it in all of their  
54 subjects'

55 Litcos agree.

56 Litco 1 asks the group what they have found difficult.

57 Litco 4 asks if the group could revisit some of the ideas found in the first set of readings.

58 Litco 3 'I haven't read this sort of thing since university...I'll just listen to you all'

59 Litco 4'I just want to check I am clear on some things'

60 General agreement.

61 Litco 4 asks AC to explain the difference between whole language and strategy use.

62 AC provides an outline of key points, focusing on key points of diversion.

63 Litco 1 says they thought in a more whole language way before. That practice would be the  
64 best way to develop skills.

65 AC asks if this is what they do in their own lessons.

66 Litco 1 'no, I don't. I teach them how to read for inference or how to examine character'

67 Litco 2 says they probably all do that as English teachers, Litco 4 aside.

68 AC asks what that might look like in a lesson from a different subject.

69 Litco 3 says that they wouldn't really feel confident in knowing that.  
70 Litcos agree.  
71 Litco 4 says in their experience it is quite different. Asks group how they'd teach that sort of  
72 thing.  
73 Litco 5 describes process of teaching reading for inference –looking for clue words, focusing  
74 in on language and then out to whole text.  
75 Litos 2 and 1 agree.  
76 Litco 4 says they didn't think other subjects did that.  
77 AC asks if they should.  
78 Litco 1 'not really'  
79 Litco1 says they think that is reading in English lessons. Asks AC if that is what they need in  
80 other subjects?  
81 Litco 5 says this is what they have found difficult.  
82 Litcos 1, 2 and 4 agree.  
83 Litco 4 asks AC how they could find this out.  
84 AC offers some suggestions, pints to what Litco 1 has initiated.  
85 Litco 4 says this is what they would like to do eventually but they are not sure how to start.  
86 Litco 4'I might adapt what you (Litco1) have started if that is ok?  
87 Litco says of course.  
88 Litco 1 says that they feel they want the teachers to be more involved and see what best fits  
89 their subject –'as you said last meeting' – to Litco 4 but finds it difficult to know how to do  
90 this whilst also trying to make sure that there is overall coverage of the literacy policy across  
91 subjects.  
92 The subject area online system was a start to this as was the literacy group they had set up.  
93 Litco 1 discusses the literacy group in their school and says that they feel this could be a  
94 positive step in getting teachers more involved.  
95 Litco 1 asks AC if she thought that was a good step forward.  
96 AC asks Litco 1 what the aim of the group was.  
97 Litco 1 responds that it was to include the subjects and spread some of the workload but also  
98 to beginning to find out which sorts of approaches work in which subjects best.  
99 Litco 1 says to Litco 4 that their comments on subject areas last meeting made them think  
100 that they should be looking more at what the subject teachers do.  
101 Litco 4 says that Litco 1 is already ahead of where they are with this sort of work.

102 Litco 5 asks AC about the disciplinary literacy reading the group engaged with and how she  
103 would see that working in a school.

104 AC outlines the principles of disciplinary literacy to the group.

105 Litco 1 asks AC to clarify whether she thinks this approach would also help with ‘basic  
106 literacy’

107 AC asks the group where they think ‘basic literacy’ is best placed. Is it best taught explicitly?  
108 Is it best taught by experts in language? Is it best taught in the context of subject lessons?

109 Litco 5 asks AC to expand on these questions.

110 AC asks the group what they mean by basic literacy.

111 Litco 1 ‘accuracy’

112 Litco 2 says being able to read with focus, write for a range of purpose, punctuate well.  
113 Litcos agree.

114 Litco 3 asks AC what she thinks it is.

115 AC discusses notions of literacy as defined by e.g. PISA, Welsh Gov., RAND.

116 Litco 1 says they see it like that – a practical thing not necessarily academic.

117 Litco 1 says they had thought it should be taught just as part of all lessons but ‘I am not sure I  
118 think that now’.

119 Litco 2 says they had seen some problems in this approach in their school.

120 Litco 2 ‘Teachers are telling me it just doesn’t always fit with what they are doing’

121 Litco 5 agrees and says it can easily be just an add on.

122 Litco 1 asks the group to explain what they have been doing.

123 Litco 5 volunteers to go next.

124 Litco 5 shows the group the text types resources they have made for each classroom.  
125 They explain they want these to support teachers and pupils in identifying the types of text  
126 they are reading and writing.

127 They will be displayed in each classroom and looked for in pupils’ work.

128 Litco 5 also shared vocabulary work they have started with a group of teachers.  
129 This was both generic –language to signpost, for example – and subject specific –key words  
130 from subjects.

131 They explain they next want to produce a set of writing frames to support extended writing in  
132 all subjects.

133 ‘The pupils struggle with this’

134 Litco 3 asks if the resources could be shared amongst the group.

135 Litco 5 agrees.

136 Litco 5 asks AC if ‘that sounds like I am on the right track?’  
137 AC asks Litco 5 what the resources were aiming to do –would they be given to all staff,  
138 would there be input from subjects, would there be some training/explanation?  
139 Litco 5 explains that a small group of volunteer teachers had been part of some of the work.  
140 Litco 5 asks AC if she thinks they should feedback to subject areas.  
141 AC discusses various options and focus in on what the feedback would do and improve.  
142 Litco 5 says they would do that (feedback).  
143 Litco 5 ‘this is what I have found hard’  
144 Litco 5 explains that they want to have something that is clear and used across the school, but  
145 the more they think about it the more they move towards seeing that subjects might need  
146 different things.  
147 Litco1 agrees.  
148 Litco 5 says they are going to have to try to do two things at once –have whole school  
149 approaches that everyone must use with additional subject specific elements.  
150 Litco 5 ‘If I can. It is hard enough getting one thing in place’  
151 Litco 1 agrees.  
152 Litco 1 ‘This is something I think we need to look at’  
153 Litco 2 says that they might need to separate out ‘literacy’ from subject uses of language.  
154 General agreement  
155 Litco 2 says they think that litcos should be focused on the general literacy first, then subjects  
156 can pick up the subject based work.  
157 Litco 2 asks AC if she agreed with this.  
158 AC asks the group if they thought that ‘literacy’ then should not be seen across all subjects  
159 but that subject language work should?  
160 Litco 1 ‘no. It should be both, I think’. Asks AC what she thinks.  
161 AC says that a number of things might need to be taken into account. Asks the group if their  
162 colleagues would be in a position to do this, what might be needed, etc  
163 Litco 5 says that this is what they have been thinking about.  
164 ‘It just becomes too huge’  
165 Litco1 and 2 agree.  
166 Litco 1 ‘also, how could we monitor it if everyone was doing their own thing?’  
167 Litcos agree.  
168 AC asks if there might be other ways of approaching whole school work that might not  
169 involve things such as book monitoring.

170 Litcos agree that is something they would like to explore at a later stage in the year.  
171 Litco 1 asks AC to elaborate.  
172 AC discusses monitoring and explores the idea that not all things might be easily captured as  
173 she has found in her own literacy work.  
174 Litco 1 says that they think they need to see where everyone is first before they could think  
175 about that.  
176 Litcos agree.  
177 Litco 3 shares their work with the group.  
178 They have kept in place the policy the school already had.  
179 They have shared the literacy marking policy with colleagues again and drawn attention to it  
180 in a staff meeting.  
181 Wall displays of text types were in classes.  
182 Litco 3 says they will be conducting book monitoring over the coming weeks.  
183 AC asks what would be looked for during this.  
184 Lito 3 says they will look to see what was being done in the lessons.  
185 Litco 3 explains that they haven't put in place as much as others because staff were already  
186 familiar with what was in place.  
187 'It is really interesting though seeing what everyone else is doing. I will look at changing this  
188 once I know more about where we are'  
189 Litco 3 asks AC what she would put in place in School 3 next.  
190 AC replies that Litco 3 is in the best position to know what literacy approaches best suit their  
191 school.  
192 Litco 1 'I feel the same –I know it is all about me listening and discussing and making my  
193 own decisions but sometimes you just want someone to say 'do this!''  
194 Group laugh.  
195 Litco 2 explains to the group the work they have done with the handbook and tool kit in their  
196 school.  
197 They don't give specifics but say that the expectation that all staff will do the same thing for  
198 each year group in all subjects has been difficult.  
199 Litco 2 'It just doesn't always fit with what they are doing'  
200 Litco 2 says they are going to look at ways of fitting the tool kit in more with the  
201 departmental schemes of work.  
202 This is to make it more useful for all teachers and to make monitoring more focused.

203 Litco 1 says that they seem to be saying lots of the same things- that they need to look a bit  
204 more at how the strategies can work for everyone.

205 AC asks group if they are all thinking that strategy use is working well in their schools  
206 Litco 1 'I think it's the most practical. The reading we looked at last time was talking about  
207 how the strategies can be used across all subjects which is what we need'.

208 Litco 4 says that they have put into place some common elements in their school.  
209 This included seeing if Reciprocal Reading was being used in all subjects.

210 Litco 4 says that they can see this sort of thing fairly easily but the subject based literacy they  
211 wanted to look into had not been started yet.

212 'I feel that some of you are already beginning to look at this when I said I would and I  
213 haven't yet!'

214 Litco 4 says that they get feedback from departmental meetings about literacy and that this  
215 had been useful.

216 AC asks in what way.

217 Litco 4 replies that they are able to see what is being discussed and what the departments aim  
218 to do next.

219 Litco 4 says that they think they need to get in to lessons.  
220 Litcos agree.

221 Litco 2 asks AC if she thought that would be a good idea.  
222 AC says that it could be –they just need to know what the purpose it and decide if observation  
223 is the best tool to fulfil that.

224 Litco 1 distributes a reading to the group which is focused on using strategies in subject areas  
225 (Alice Horning, Reading Across the Curriculum).

226 Litco 1 has read this having been given it by a friend who is following an MA course.  
227 'I found this really helpful'

228 Litco 1 outlines the reading and suggests ways in which they might use the key points.  
229 Litco 1 explains how the article's focus on the ways in which reading can be supported in a  
230 general way which then leads to a focus on more subject specific texts and language was  
231 helpful in working out how to combine 'general skills' with more specialist ones.

232 AC asks what they will put in place.  
233 Litco 1 says they were not yet sure but something that might be staged or different parts of  
234 literacy being led by different people.

235 Litco 5 says that this is the sort of thing they were thinking.  
236 Group agrees to read the article for next meeting.

237 Litco 1 moves agenda forward.  
238 Litco 1 asks AC to outline the practical aspects of next set of lesson observations and  
239 interviews.  
240 Actions for next meeting agreed.  
241 These will include updates on evaluation of use of whole school literacy approaches and  
242 expectations.  
243 It will also include exploration of monitoring and how this information has been used to  
244 develop approaches or systems.  
245 Litco 1 suggests each member reports back on how successful their approaches have been,  
246 including what evidence they have used to come to their conclusions. Agreed by group.  
247 Meeting closes.

1 **PLC Meeting 4**  
2 Present: Litco 1, Litco2, Litco3, Litco 4, Litco 5, AC, IL (non-participant)  
3 Litco 2 welcomes group to meeting  
4 Meeting notes 3 agreed.  
5 Litco 3 asks AC for confirmation regarding a point about literacy policy discussed in meeting  
6 3.  
7 Litco 3 wants to know whether the group agreed to look at ways of having different subjects  
8 cover different parts of literacy.  
9 AC says that wasn't an agreed action but was part of the discussion.  
10 Litco 1 says yes, this was the case. It was about the group exploring this as a possibility.  
11 Litco 5 'Yes, we don't all have to do it, it's something that some of us are interested in'.  
12 Litco 3 thanks them for the clarification.  
13 Litco 3 asks the group to start by feeding back on progress made since last meeting.  
14 Litco 5 volunteers to share their work first.  
15 Litco 5 has been evaluating the visibility of literacy approaches across the whole school.  
16 They did some book monitoring across all subjects and year groups and found some mixed  
17 results.  
18 Shares grid with group which shows that some areas –notably English- are showing high  
19 instances of strategy use. For other subjects, the results are less obvious.  
20 Litco 1 asks whether the book monitoring was carried out at the same time for each subject?  
21 Litco 5 says yes –it was organised by year group so that all subjects would have had the same  
22 amount of time to put approaches into practice.  
23 Litco 2 asks if all books in a year group had been taken in?  
24 Litco 5 says yes. They wanted to see a more realistic picture of what pupils had done.  
25 Litco 5 said that there were clear pockets of strategy use but it was not consistent. The next  
26 step was possibly to reinforce the literacy approaches in a meeting. Asks AC if this is a usual  
27 expectation.  
28 Litco 5 'I am a bit disappointed I think'.  
29 AC asks group if similar patterns could be seen in other schools.  
30 Litco 1 says they had seen this. Litco 2 agrees.  
31 Litco 5 says they might need to revisit what they want to happen in each subject.  
32 'It is quite early days, I know, but not that early' Litco 5 asks the group what they might  
33 suggest.

34 Litco 1 says maybe ask subject teachers or reps to feedback regarding strategy use and what  
35 reasons there might be for the patchy evidence of use.

36 AC asks what 'evidence' they were looking for.

37 Litco 5 says they looked for clear instances of reference to an approach that was part of the  
38 literacy policy/approach of the school.

39 This was sometimes in the form of a stated literacy objective in some lessons –shows  
40 example.

41 In others it was more implied, such as a pupil mentioning text types in their work.

42 Litco 5 says that the instances of strategy use were found in each subject but inconsistently.

43 Litco 5 they need to find out if there was a lack of opportunity in some subjects or if there is a  
44 lack of clarity.

45 Litco 1 says that they have found similar patchiness in school, although this was in part being  
46 discussed with the literacy group they had set up in tier school.

47 Asks if they could go next.

48 Group agrees.

49

50 Litco 2 asks AC if they could all say what they found and then have a discussion at the end.

51 Group agrees.

52 Litco 1 shared the results of book monitoring, online system and literacy group meetings with  
53 the group.

54 Group looks at documents.

55 Litco 4 'you have done so much more than me'

56 Litco 1 replies that they have been given some allocated protected time to do some of the  
57 literacy work.

58 Litcos agree that this is something they would like to pursue with their own schools.

59 Litco 1 'it isn't a lot of time, but it makes it easier'.

60 AC asks if this was negotiated or given at the start of the work.

61 Litco 1 replies it was a mixture. It had been suggested by SLT, but they then pursued it.

62 Litco 1 'It makes it seem more of a priority too'.

63 Litcos agree.

64 Litco 2 asks Litco 1 if they would mind them citing Litco 1's situation when discussing this  
65 with their own SLT.

66 Litco 1 agrees.

67 Litcos 4 and 5 says they will do the same.

68 Litco 1 talks the group through their findings.  
69 'It has been a mixed bag as it has been for most of us'  
70 Litco 1 says they feel literacy is still seen as a 'bolt on'  
71 Litco 5 'If literacy is seen as separate from learning, this is a problem'  
72 Group agrees.  
73 Litco 1 shows group grid that identifies that most subjects have some evidence of the literacy  
74 approaches that Litco 1 has put in place.  
75 Litco 1 says that what the grid doesn't show is how the approaches have been used.  
76 'That is where there is a real difference'  
77 Litco 1 explains that sometimes there was evidence that, for example, a table of Reciprocal  
78 Reading roles had been pasted into books but that there was no evidence that the roles had  
79 been used or if they had made any difference.  
80 Litco 2 says that it might be that they were used but not in written form –the evidence might  
81 just not be available.  
82 Lacto 1 agrees this and says monitoring the use of approaches was hard partly for that reason  
83 and also because they find themselves sometimes asking 'so what?'  
84 AC asks Litco 1 to clarify.  
85 Litco 1 says that they have been doing book monitoring and that gives them some overall  
86 idea of which teachers and subjects have been following the literacy guidance with which  
87 year groups or classes but not if they did it well or if it was right for the lesson.  
88 Litco 1 says that they have also had a little feedback via the literacy group that the use of  
89 approaches might not be embedded.  
90 Litco 1 asks which of the readings talks about this and if AC could recommend anything  
91 more.  
92 Litco 2 says that one of the readings did talk about strategies as useful for only a period of  
93 time.  
94 Litco 1 says that they were trying to use them all of the time for everybody.  
95 Litcos agree.  
96 Litco 1 discusses the positives of the findings from their school.  
97 Most teachers seem on board as is seen in the broad spread of strategy use across subject  
98 areas and the staff are willing to participate in the literacy group.  
99 AC asks what the purpose of the group is.  
100 Litco 1 says that it was initially partly to distribute work load but has now become something  
101 else too.

102 Litco 1 explains that they wanted to work a bit more like the PLC in their school.  
103 Litco 1 'I am not sure I am doing that –I make the decisions about what we do'  
104 Litco 1 says it is a start though. They want to find out more about what goes on in subjects.  
105 AC asks if it will impact upon what Litco 1 does?  
106 Litco 1 says that that was the intention, but it is difficult to work out how to have lots of  
107 different ideas about literacy going on at the same time 'especially when I am the one who is  
108 responsible for it'.  
109 Litcos agree.  
110 Litco 1 says that they are beginning to see this as much longer term work.  
111 Litcos agree.  
112 Litco 2 shares their progress with the group.  
113 They have looked at samples of work from each subject and across year groups.  
114 They have found that the stated literacy work for each half term is not compatible with the  
115 schemes of work for some subject areas.  
116 'The schemes of work were in place before this and they don't always fit'  
117 Litco 2 had decided as a result to adapt the literacy expectations so that the half termly  
118 literacy focus is taken up by those subjects where it most closely fits with what they were  
119 doing in subjects.  
120 This was going to be undertaken in the coming weeks and department heads were going to  
121 share with Litco 2 their schemes of work.  
122 Litco 2 was going to make the decisions about which literacy focus would best fit in with  
123 subject schemes of work.  
124 'I need to ensure there is coverage of everything'  
125 Litco 4 shared the results of their monitoring since the last meeting.  
126 Literacy had been mapped across departmental schemes of work.  
127 AC asked Litco 4 if this had been checked by Litco 4.  
128 Litco 4 comments they had looked over the schemes of work but it was extremely time  
129 consuming.  
130 Litco 1 suggests Litco 4 gets a group of teachers together who can support the work.  
131 Litco 4 says that they might have to do that. This would help with workload but also with  
132 seeing what subjects do in terms of literacy.  
133 Litco 2 asks if they will know what they are looking for?  
134 Litco 4 replies that some might, but they (Litco 4) would still need to oversee the work.

135 Litco 4 shows the group where instances of approaches such as Reciprocal Reading can be  
136 seen.

137 There are examples of it being used in all subject areas, although not in all year groups.

138 Litco 4 comments that it is individual teachers who are using it rather than their being  
139 subjects who are either using or not using the approaches.

140 Litco 1 says that they have noticed the same thing. It is more about individual teachers  
141 showing evidence than whole departments.

142 Litco 2 comments that they found it more along department lines, but that this might be  
143 because of the handbook and the alignment or not with schemes of work.

144 Litco 1 asks if Litco 4 has made any progress regarding subjects and their use of literacy.

145 Litco 4 says that at the moment they are focusing on getting ‘the basics right’ and will move  
146 onto that at a later stage.

147 Litco 3 says that they have monitored books and that some departments are focusing on  
148 literacy.

149 They have checked that displays are in each room and that is in place.

150 Litco 1 asks what sorts of things are seen in the books.

151 Litco 3 replies that there has been some evidence of approaches such as Eight Reading  
152 Behaviours

153 But this is not in all subjects.

154 AC one asks if other elements of literacy are being monitored as School 3 has not formalised  
155 the use of any particular approaches.

156 Litco 3 says that the literacy marking scheme can be seen in most of the books.

157 Litco 1 asks what they will be acting upon next.

158 Litco 3 says they want to ensure the mark scheme is used by all staff and will be reinforcing  
159 this message in a staff meeting.

160 AC asks the group if they felt they had evidence for the effectiveness of their approaches.

161 Litco 1 asks AC what she means by effectiveness.

162 AC replies in terms of the ‘whole school’ element and also any impact I lessons.

163 Litco 1 comments that this has been the focus of their thought since last meeting.

164 ‘We can see if the approaches etc are in the books; we can’t see if it is making a difference in  
165 the classroom’

166 Litco 5 and 2 agree.

167 AC asks for some clarification.

168 Litco 1 says they feel that the monitoring shows them only some information.

169 Goes on to say that some will perhaps show that an approach has been used just for book  
170 monitoring.

171 Litco 1 says that the book monitoring does show who is doing what in the school, but it  
172 doesn't really allow for quality to be seen.

173 AC asks them to elaborate.

174 Litco 1 and 5 reported feeling that, even with the monitoring they had put in place, the best  
175 they could do was see if the approaches had been used, rather than look for any positive  
176 effect.

177 Litco 2 says they are beginning to come to the same conclusion.

178 Litco 1 says that they think that it is likely there is a positive effect but the book monitoring  
179 isn't really the way to see this perhaps.

180 AC asks the group what would be?

181 Litco 5 shares with the group old and new versions of their school literacy policy with  
182 theoretical positions mapped across the document.

183 Litco 5 'I don't know what I am going to do with this yet. It was a bit daunting'

184 Litco 5 shows the group that the old policy had many approaches that were within what they  
185 saw as whole language –independent reading, for example.

186 The new policy had a much higher focus on strategy instruction approaches.

187 Litco 5 explained how they had presented this to staff and explained the strategies that were  
188 part of whole school literacy expectations.

189 Litco 5 this is what is then monitored.

190 Litco 1 says they had done much the same thing, but without the mapping.

191 Lito 1 says they had put into place the other elements as the book monitoring only showed  
192 that a strategy had been used.

193 AC asks what else could be used to explore the literacy practices in their schools?

194 Litco 2 'lesson observations?'

195 Litco 1 says that even then, it is likely that teachers will 'put in some literacy' just for that  
196 lesson'.

197 Litco 5 says that maybe that is enough for now.

198 Litcos general agreement that it might be as a start but that longer term more focus should be  
199 on pupils' work or teachers' engagement.

200 AC asks if they all still feel their approaches are the best way forward for their schools.

201 Litcos generally agree. Litco 1 says the do want to be able to look at the impact on pupils'  
202 work too.

203 AC asks what they would all look for in terms of pupils' work.  
204 Litco 1 replies that they would look for accuracy; for the pupils to be better at reading texts;  
205 looking at inferences.  
206 Litco 2 agrees and adds they would look for improvement in pupils' reading skills and for  
207 accuracy in their writing.  
208 Litco 4 says they would also look for more extended writing in subjects.  
209 Litco 5 says they would want to compare pupils' work to see if they had stronger literacy  
210 skills that before; they might do this at the end of the year to give things time to be  
211 embedded.  
212 Ac asks what that would look like? Would it be necessarily easy to see? Would it look the  
213 same in all subjects for all pupils?  
214 Litco 1 'no. It probably wouldn't'  
215 Litco 5 says that more skilled reading is hard to evidence in an easy way.  
216 Litcos agree.  
217 Litco 4 says that it might be that for this initial stage they focus on looking at how well they  
218 as Litcos are able to get literacy policy or practices in place across their schools and then  
219 look at pupils' work later.  
220 Litco 3 says this would be easier to begin with.  
221 Litco 4 says that seeing of the literacy approaches are in place is manageable and is  
222 something they can share across their schools and act upon.  
223 Litcos agree.  
224 Litco 5 comments that once that is done and working well, they can focus on impact in terms  
225 of pupil outcomes and so on.  
226 Litco 1 asks the group if they read the reading they shared last meeting?  
227 Group affirm that they have.  
228 Litco 1 comments that they think the reading fits in with this approach.  
229 It separates out different levels or layers of literacy and they could build up to the more  
230 subject literacy and the impact of the approaches at a later stage.  
231 Litco 5 says that they enjoyed the reading.  
232 'It made me think about some of the things I have been noticing'  
233 AC asks what these might be  
234 Litco 5 replies that they had been trying to consider how they could get whole school  
235 approaches in place but also look at differences in subjects.  
236 AC asks the group if the reading suggest these different elements are sequential?

237 Litco 1 comments that that might be how it could best be used?  
238 Litcos agree.  
239 Group discuss what outcomes they could look at and reinforce that initially, it would be at  
240 their ability as Litcos to get a shared understanding as seen by way of approaches utilised  
241 across their schools.  
242 Litco 1 says that this might be limited but it is a sound step at this stage.  
243 Litco 5 agrees but adds that they feel that they need to also be doing something else.  
244 AC asks the group what they feel has been successful and what they want to revisit or  
245 amend?  
246 Litco 1 says that this is a mixed response.  
247 Litco 1 says they have successfully established a literacy group, that book monitoring has  
248 taken place, that the online system is up and beginning to be used.  
249 'I don't know yet if any of it is making any difference'  
250 Litcos 2, 4 and 5 agree.  
251 Litco 5 says that they feel they want to explore how to embed literacy more into teachers'  
252 lessons, but is not sure yet how to do this.  
253 AC asks group if any have canvassed the views of teachers in their schools, for example.  
254 Litco 1 'the ones in the literacy group but not generally'  
255 Litco 4 says they intend to do this at the next staff meeting.  
256 General agreement that this would be useful.  
257 Litco 5 says that they feel they want to make changes to what they have done but aren't yet  
258 sure quite what these would be.  
259 Litco 4 suggests that the group bring with them some evidence of any revisions of their  
260 approaches or developments they have made.  
261 Litco 1 suggests the group also share their resources, systems and practices for sharing  
262 approaches and expectations.  
263 Litco 2 says that they feel more confused now than at the start of the meeting, but that this  
264 was good.  
265 Litco 1 'I was booked on a training event today, but I came here because I actually learn  
266 things with all of us together'  
267 General agreement from group.  
268 Meeting closed.

1 **PLC Meeting 5**

2 Present: Litco 1, Litco2, Litco3, Litco 4, Litco 5, AC, IL (non-participant)

3 Litco 4 welcomes group and presents agenda

4 Meeting notes 4 agreed.

5 Litco 2 asks to share their work first as they have to leave the meeting early.

6 Litco 2 explains to the group that they have put into place a shared system of literacy work  
7 across the departments.

8 Litco 2 felt that as the tool kit expectations were cumbersome for subjects due to clashes with  
9 schemes of work, they needed to revisit how the work was spread across the year and  
10 departments.

11 Litco 2 had mapped literacy across the departments and therefore subjects focus in on the  
12 literacy skills that most fit the schemes of work for a particular term.

13 Litco 2 found that this was seen as a positive move by departments, but that it had meant that  
14 literacy was not seen across all subjects each half term in an explicit way. .

15 ‘This might change, but with the skills in the toolkit, they seem to fit with English the most’.

16 Litco 2 explains that at the moment, English are covering lots of literacy skills but the spread  
17 is not across all departments yet.

18 ‘This does change a bit later in the year’.

19 Litco 1 comments that that is complicated and that Litco 2 might need to move away from the  
20 tool kit.

21 Litco 2 says that they can’t do that and have already made changes to the suggested approach.

22 Litco 2 asks AC what they could do.

23 AC replies that whilst School 2 might be committed to the tool kit, Litco 2 could do  
24 additional things alongside it.

25 Litco 2 comments that they might think about this as they are keen to ensure that literacy is  
26 seen as everyone’s responsibility.

27 Litco 1 says that sounds like a good idea as Litco 2 is the literacy coordinator and is making a  
28 professional judgement about their own school.

29 Litco 2 says that they are going to review several elements of the approach with the consortia.  
30 They feel the toolkit approach it is easy to monitor but too rigid to be really effective.

31 ‘It tells us what we need to do and when but school doesn’t really work like that’

32 Litcos agree.

33 AC asks if the subject areas would be using reading or writing or oracy in their lessons as part  
34 of their teaching –even if not as described in the tool kit.

35 Litco 2 replies that they would; they all do that every lesson.  
36 AC says that maybe this could be the focus of the literacy development work Litco 2 wants to  
37 do.  
38 Litco 5 says that they are moving more in this direction –‘it is reinventing the wheel  
39 otherwise’  
40 Litcos agree.  
41 Litco 2 says they are interested in some of the things found in the reading Litco 1 had shared.  
42 Litco 2 said they wanted to look at perhaps looking a bit more at different subjects and which  
43 parts of literacy each department could do.  
44 AC asks for clarification regarding what ‘literacy’ was in this.  
45 Litco 2 replies that it might be that History might be focusing on persuasive speech and so  
46 they could cover that, whereas science might look at explanation texts.  
47 AC asks if the literacy elements would come from the subjects or if they would be decided in  
48 advance and mapped across subjects.  
49 Litco 2 says that they would be mapped across having been pre-decided so as to ensure  
50 coverage.  
51 Litco 4 says that this would be useful in their school, too.  
52 Litco 5 says that they had looked at this kind of mapping but they didn’t know enough about  
53 what the subjects did to make it really effective.  
54 Litco 5 ‘I might say that Reciprocal Reading would fit in with something I see in RE but I  
55 don’t really know how they teach that bit’.  
56 Litco 1 comments that they would also need to be certain that the RE teachers know how to  
57 use Reciprocal Reading.  
58 Litco 5 agrees ‘exactly’.  
59 AC asks how this could be known?  
60 Litco 1 says that the literacy group has been useful with this; making sure key messages get  
61 to departments and so on.  
62 Litco 1 adds that resources such as the Reciprocal Reading cards they had shared with the  
63 PLC had been distributed to subject area via the school literacy group and on the online  
64 system they set up.  
65 Litcos 3 and 5 thank Litco 1 for these and say they have shared them too.  
66 Litco 1 asks if they had been useful.  
67 Litco 5 says that they were great ‘really simple and clear’, but that they could only really see  
68 if they were in books.

69 Litco 5 explains that some of the teachers had attended additional training and so those  
70 teachers seemed to be more confident, but they were not certain the same was true of all staff.  
71 Litco 5 says that they had looked again at the readings around more subject based literacy –  
72 Shanahan and Moje – and felt this was something they were interested in.  
73 ‘It just makes sense to me, but working out how to do it properly is huge’  
74 Litco 1 agrees  
75 Litco 2 asks what makes it so huge; says they are not very familiar with that approach.  
76 Litco 5 gives brief overview of disciplinary literacy.  
77 Outlines that for most secondary school pupils and subjects, literacy becomes more about  
78 how they read and write in subjects.  
79 Litco 1 says that they could see the sense in this approach –it seems to fit more with how  
80 secondary schools ‘work’  
81 AC asks what about subject teachers? What did the group think their relationship to literacy  
82 is?  
83 Litco 1 ‘probably a bit more like this’  
84 Litco 2 asks what they think it actually means in practice.  
85 Litco 2 says they can see how it makes sense in secondary school but wasn’t sure how it  
86 would be used in a way that was consistent.  
87 Litco 1 said that was their concern.  
88 Litco 1 discussed what they saw as benefits of using a more subject-based approach, but felt  
89 there were three main worries.  
90 These were identified as time to ensure that there had been staff training and scoping; what to  
91 do about more general literacy skills –who would ‘do’ these? And monitoring -how to know  
92 if it was being done if it was so embedded in subject work.  
93 Litco 2 says this is what would worry them  
94 Litco 2 ‘Ultimately, we are responsible for it’.  
95 Litcos agree.  
96 Litco 1 says to the group that they are aware of this in their work even with the literacy group  
97 in their school.  
98 Litco 5 asks how that group works.  
99 Litco 1 replies that they meet regularly and share what has been done in terms of literacy in  
100 each department but that Litco 1 decides what literacy approaches will be used.  
101 The meetings are more to monitor and discuss how that has gone.  
102 AC asks Litco 1 if they would like the subject reps to have more input.

103 Litco 1 says that at this stage they don't, but in the future that would be something to aim for.  
104 Litco 4 asks how successful the literacy group has been.  
105 Litco 1 says that they think it has been successful in that key messages are shared into  
106 departments more directly and the work can be monitored more easily.  
107 Litco 5 asks if the group is making a difference in the classroom.  
108 Litco 1 replies that this is difficult to see as the group said last time.  
109 'That is something we will probably see longer term'  
110 Litcos agree.  
111 AC asks what would make that shift happen.  
112 Litco 1 says that they would eventually like to see more and more literacy work being done  
113 within departments in a way that fits better with subjects.  
114 Litco 5 says they would like this too but time and training means that this would be longer  
115 term.  
116 AC asks what would change longer term to make this more likely.  
117 Litco 5 'I don't honestly know '  
118 Litco 1 agrees that time and training would be key to this.  
119 Litco 5 says that would also let subject teachers see literacy as part of their teaching  
120 'properly'  
121 'It is still a bit separate now I think'.  
122 Litco 2 'Yes, I think it is sometimes done because they know I will be asking for work'  
123 Litcos agree.  
124 Litco 1 'I do the same, like with numeracy, I think we all do'  
125 Litco 1 comments that for now it might be about seeing if systems work and getting basics  
126 right.  
127 Litcos 2, 3 and 4 agree.  
128 Litco 5 says that they feel quite frustrated at what they are able to do.  
129 Litco 3 comments that it is still early stages and that changes can be made.  
130 Litco 4 moves the meeting on and asks the group to share their progress and evaluations since  
131 last meeting.  
132 Litco 2 leaves the meeting.  
133 Litco 5 says that they have said much of what they have been doing.  
134 AC 'yes, it has been more of a discussion amongst us all'  
135 Litco 2, 4 and 5 agree.

136 AC shares work she has undertaken in literacy and discusses ways she has tried to engage  
137 staff from different subject areas with differing priorities.

138 Litco 5 asks AC about different types of engagement and ways of getting staff invested in  
139 approaches.

140 AC discusses ways she has tried to involve and still drive literacy work.

141 Litco 1 says that they want to look into this but time is difficult to find in school.

142 AC agrees.

143 Litco 4 says that is probably the biggest thing. Not only their time as literacy coordinator, but  
144 the time to 'really go into things in depth with people when they don't have time either'.

145 Litco 1 says that they don't have time at 'the same time too'.

146 Litcos agree.

147 Litco 3 says they haven't shared much and show the group a document that shows where  
148 literacy has been part of subject meetings.

149 All subjects have put literacy on their departmental meeting agendas.

150 Litco 3 says that they are looking at what sorts of things each department is looking at.

151 For example, History and Geography have tried Eight Reading Behaviours in some lessons.

152 Litco 3 shares a table of where the use of literacy approaches can be seen as discussed in  
153 meetings.

154 Litco 1 asks what Litco 3 thinks the overall picture is like in School 3.

155 Litco 3 says that it is a mixed picture as others have said.

156 Litco 3 says that having looked at more books, some departments do seem to be using  
157 literacy more than others. This will be fed back to staff in a whole school meeting.

158 Litco 3 says that they are also going to look at giving more explicit expectations to staff  
159 during the meeting so that Litco 3 can see more easily what is being done and where.

160 Litco 1 says that they have found looking at how effective the literacy policy and work has  
161 been in being spread throughout the school quite challenging.

162 Litcos agree.

163 AC asks why this seems to be challenging.

164 Litco 1 says that it is easier to decide what to do 'because it is only you'  
165 Putting it into place across all subjects is hard even with the literacy group to support.

166 Litco 1 says they feel the literacy group are positive about it but they are less certain about  
167 what other teachers feel.

168 Litco 1 shares the online work they have put in place with the PLC.

169 Talks the group through some of the resources that can be seen.

170 Litco 5 says it seems like a useful way of getting staff involved and also in being able to  
171 monitor some of the work across the school.

172 Litco 1 agrees but points out the inconsistent use of the online system –lots of this is from the  
173 members of the literacy group’.

174 Litco 1 wants it to be used more by staff not involved in that group.

175 Litco 1 comments that they agreed to look at their own outcomes as literacy coordinators –  
176 how successfully approaches have spread across the school.

177 Litco 1 feels that they can see some evidence of this but not a full picture.

178 Litco 5 agrees and says they are looking at rethinking what they do.

179 AC asks what changes they are considering.

180 Litco 5 replies that they want to consult with the staff members that have attended additional  
181 training and find out what benefits this had.

182 Litco 5 ‘I should have done this before probably’

183 Litco 4 says that they are at a different stage ‘I am still trying to get things in place before I  
184 can think about what to change’

185 Litco 4 says that time is running out. For the meeting and pushes group to decide what the  
186 focus is to be until the next meeting.

187 Litco 5 says they would like to read more about different approaches as they are uncertain  
188 what next steps to take to try to ensure more engagement.

189 Litco 1 suggests that the group each finds a reading –academic or not –that they find  
190 interesting and useful for their work.

191 Group agrees to each find a reading and share with the PLC within the next 7 days.

192 Litco 4 says that the reading should be something that they are going to try to use in some  
193 way.

194 ‘Even if it is something really simple’

195 Litcos agree.

196 Litco 3 asks AC if she will send readings too.

197 AC replies that she will and is looking forward to seeing what people find, too.

198 Litco 4 sums up that the PLC is going to look at some readings that might be useful in the  
199 next stages and to look at any changes they want to make to their work as literacy  
200 coordinators in the light of what they have found so far.

201 PLC agrees.

202 Meeting closes.

1 **PLC Meeting 6**

2 Present: Litco 1, Litco2, Litco3 (arrives part way through meeting), Litco 4, Litco 5, AC, IL  
3 (non-participant)

4 Litco 5 welcomes the group. Apologies from Litco 3 who would be arriving late due to  
5 another commitment.

6 Meeting notes 5 agreed.

7 Litco 1 presents to the group.

8 They have been interested in the use of shared reading as well as at some work on subject  
9 literacy. This was partly due to the readings the PLC shared but also from their own interests.

10 Litco 1 shows the group where these practices have been mapped by subject areas and shared  
11 onto the online system in School 1.

12 Litco 1 had shared the readings the PLC had shared with the school staff and used some time  
13 in a staff meeting to talk staff through the literacy expectations and online system.

14 Litco 1 said they had tried to focus on how literacy was an expectation of all teachers but also  
15 on some acknowledgement that there will be some differences between subjects.

16 There had been more use of the online system since this meeting as a way of sharing  
17 resources and ideas.

18 Litco 1 talks the PLC through the online system and points out how there is now more use of  
19 the system and by a wider range of staff.

20 Litco 1 takes questions from the group about how this is overseen and if there is any  
21 monitoring for quality.

22 Litco 1 says there isn't but perhaps there should be.

23 Litco 1 says that they are pleased that the system is being used more –but acknowledges this  
24 might be a burst of activity due to the input at the meeting.

25 Litco 1 'I hope it continues, but you never know'

26 Litco 1 feels this is a positive step on from where they were.

27 They comment on how they feel more staff know what they should do and that Litco 1 has  
28 tried to explain the place of subjects more clearly.

29 Litco 1 still has shared expectations of all teachers but says they are going to look at those  
30 expectations more closely to see what role they might play.

31 Litco 4 asks what happened to Reciprocal Reading and The Eight Reading Behaviours in  
32 School 1.

33 Litco 1 says that these are still things they would expect to see but 'they aren't the be all and  
34 end all'

35 Litco 1 says that they are increasingly feeling that expecting everyone to do the same things  
36 in all lessons might not be the way forward for School 1.

37 Litco 1 says that the literacy group members have been more involved lately and that they  
38 have picked up some interesting things from the group.

39 Litco 1 'Science is never going to do the same things as English in terms of literacy'

40 Litco 1 says that they are moving more towards looking at the differences between subjects in  
41 language and literacy.

42 Litco 1 has tasked the literacy group in school with looking at what types of texts they read  
43 and write in each of their subjects and using this as a focus for more work within subjects.

44 AC says that is a shift.

45 Litco 1 says that it is but it should get more teachers involved.

46 Litco 5 asks how they will monitor literacy.

47 Litco 1 replies that they are looking into that as they will still need to do it.

48 Litco 1 says that they will possibly have tandem expectations –some approaches that should  
49 be seen in all subjects but then subject specific literacy work too.

50 Litco 1 says that they feel more positive in the past few weeks that they had at the time of the  
51 last meeting.

52 They feel this is largely down to the changes they have started to put into place.

53 Litco 1 'they aren't massive changes but a start'

54 Litco 4 asks Litco 1 to expand upon what they expect different subject areas to do.

55 Litco 1 says that they aren't certain yet as they are waiting to see what the subject members  
56 of the literacy group come back with but it will be linked more to what sorts of things  
57 subjects need to do.

58 Litco 1 says that they hope it will include more clear expectations regarding what sorts of  
59 reading and writing pupils do in their different lessons and that staff begin to think about this  
60 themselves.

61 Litco 1 says that a few staff have already been thinking about this but they are 'probably the  
62 usual suspects' and are members of the literacy group.

63 Litco 5 asks about the book monitoring in School 1

64 Litco 1 says this will continue as they still want to have an overview of what is going on.

65 Litco 1 'I have to have a handle on the big picture'

66 AC asks what they will look for.

67 Litco 1 says the whole school approaches at the moment but they are going to look at how  
68 this might change.

69 Litco 1 comments that it has been useful but not as useful as they hoped it would be.  
70 Litco 2 says they would be worried that some might not do anything if there wasn't a set of  
71 clear expectations.  
72 Litcos 4 and 5 agree.  
73 Litco 5 comments that they have been going in a similar direction but have yet to put things  
74 into place.  
75 Litco 5 says that they feel a little stuck between wanting to change some things and not really  
76 knowing how to go about it.  
77 Litco 5, 'I feel as if I only have enough time to tell them about the things I want us all to try,  
78 when I want to give everyone time to really discuss it and come up with their own ideas. I  
79 don't even know what most of them have done'  
80 Litco 4 agrees and says they will look into possibly setting up a group of teachers from each  
81 subject who can meet up to explore literacy, but that this will be for the following year.  
82 Litco 1 says that they can see how it is difficult and reminds the group that they have  
83 protected time to help them set up literacy work.  
84 Litco 5 says that they are hoping to have some time protected for this.  
85 Litco 2 says that they find they still need to keep it as simple as possible and have a small  
86 number of expectations for staff that everyone knows.  
87 Litco 4 asks Litco 1 if they could adapt some of these ideas.  
88 Litco 3 arrives.  
89 Litco 4 says they started the year wanting to look at subjects but haven't done it yet.  
90 Litco 1 replies that any of the group can use anything they have mentioned.  
91 Litco 5 comments that they have come to the conclusion that the teachers in school need to  
92 see why literacy helps their subject as well as helping pupils improve generally.  
93 Litcos agree.  
94 Litco 5 says that they think that more work in subjects would help with this 'make it  
95 more relevant to them'  
96 Litco 2 agrees this point and says that this would be a big help –convincing teachers that it  
97 will help pupils be better in all subjects.  
98 Litco 5 'Not just English'  
99 Litco 2 agrees this but also says that there is agreement that good literacy skills give pupils  
100 better life chances.  
101 Litco 2 'every teacher I talk to says that they know how important it is'

102 Litco 5 comments that it is just convincing them (teachers) that it is also good for their  
103 subjects.

104 Litco 2 'exactly'

105 Litcos agree.

106 Litco 4 says that this has been especially so at this time

107 Litco 1 says that they hope the work they have started will help with this.

108 Litco 5 says that they think it will but what will, say, ESTYN look for?

109 Litco1 says that they will continue to have evidence of literacy across the whole school. It is  
110 finding a balance.

111 Litco 5 shows their literacy policy which has been adapted with some key amendments.

112 Litco 5 says that they were most drawn to the reading about subject based literacy work and  
113 have used some of the ideas to try to make more of how subject specific literacy can be  
114 developed.

115 Litco 5 comments that they are not really sure that people know what they mean yet, but that  
116 it is something they are aiming to develop with the input of others, most likely those teachers  
117 who have already expressed an interest in literacy.

118 Litco 5 says that this is still a work in progress and they still have most focus on shared  
119 expectations but want to add some more subject elements.

120 Litco 5 'like we said before it's about adding some other parts for me'.

121 Litco 2 says that they have gone in a different direction.

122 School 2 is still using the tool kit but in a modified way and Litco 2 is adding in strategies  
123 across subjects to support reading.

124 Litco 2 says that they do see how literacy in subjects in important but feels that as a literacy  
125 coordinator their role is to coordinate the more general literacy approaches and that subjects  
126 can look at reading and writing in their own areas independently.

127 Litco 2 says they read one of the disciplinary readings and it made sense but that that sort of  
128 work should be down to the subjects themselves.

129 School 2 is going to have some reading strategies suggested across the whole school for all  
130 subjects

131 Litco 2 'I am going in the opposite direction to some of you'

132 Litco 2 says that strategy use would be something they could see implemented in all subjects.

133 Litco 2 recognises the things the Litcos who had tried this approach were saying but wanted  
134 to try to implement strategy use as a complement to the tool kit.

135 Litco 3 says that they were looking at doing the same thing.

136 Litco 3 shares with the group a monitoring system that would allow Litco 3 to see more  
137 clearly which strategies had been used in which subjects.

138 Litco 1 asks if there is going to be a list of approaches that everyone is meant to use in the  
139 school?

140 Litco 3 says that there will. Staff can add their own things too but there will be some key  
141 things they must all include.

142 Litco 2 asks what these will be.

143 Litco 3 says that the mark scheme is a main one and that people are already doing this.

144 Litco 3 shares with the group a handout that one of the members of staff in School 3 had been  
145 given in an NQT event.

146 The handout provides an outline of Eight Reading Behaviours with printable descriptions of  
147 the behaviours.

148 Litco 3 says that a number of staff had heard about Eight Reading Behaviours and had been  
149 asking about it.

150 Litco 3 is going to explore rolling this approach out across the school; this might not be until  
151 the next school year.

152 AC asks the group if they used the reading to inform any of the work they had undertaken.

153 Litco 1 'definitely'

154 Litco 1 says they feel more and more that they want to try to incorporate more subject  
155 focused literacy work in school.

156 Litco 1 comments that it has been a big change in the way they think about literacy.

157 Litco 1 'I have really enjoyed reading it all'

158 Litco 5 and 4 agree and say that this element interests them too.

159 Litco 4 comments that they are still at the stage of working out what it could all look like in  
160 school.

161 Litco 5 agrees.

162 Litco 1 says that they are still working it out –the balance between whole school expectations  
163 and then subject specific ones in hard to put into practice.

164 AC asks whether the 'whole school practice' could be that subjects develop disciplinary  
165 literacy?

166 Litco 1 says they partly agree but something else is still needed.

167 'It doesn't feel like it would be enough'.

168 Litco 5 says that is what they worry about. The work they have done since last meeting has  
169 been to try to see how these different elements could be combined.

170 Litco 5 says that the staff who have volunteered for literacy training have seemed keen to  
171 play a bigger role in developing literacy.

172 AC says that some have taken a more subject based path.

173 Litco 1 says that it is not yet a path. It is the beginning of some ideas that will hopefully  
174 involve some more subject work, but not wholly.

175 School 1 will still have generic literacy expectations –these can be tracked and monitored in  
176 books, etc –as well as subject literacy that might not be tracked in this way.

177 AC asks why it wouldn't.

178 Litco 1 says that it might not be obvious if e.g. a science teacher has got their class to focus in  
179 terms for processes.

180 Litco 5 says that this is what makes them feel they need to keep some more shared  
181 approaches that all have to use.

182 Litco 2 agrees and say it also fits with what they think literacy is –the subject work is more  
183 subject, the literacy is what they all do, using the same approaches.

184 Litco 4 moves the group on to sharing resources they have developed or used.

185 Litco 3 says that they have shared the Eight Reading Behaviours resource earlier.

186 Litco 5 shares some work they have done on developing subject vocabulary banks.  
187 This is shared with the group.

188 The word banks will be placed in pupil planners for next school year.

189 They were devised within departments but Litco 5 reduced the lists to make them manageable  
190 for the planners.

191 Litco 4 shares some of the work they have undertaken looking at subject vocabulary too.  
192 At the moment these will be displayed in classrooms but they might form part of a booklet or  
193 online resource.

194 Litco 1 asks if the list could be shared. Litcos 4 and 5 agree.

195 Litco 3 says that these will be useful.

196 Litco 4 asks the group what they want to focus on for the next meeting.

197 Litco 5 says that it is difficult at this due of year due to exams etc.

198 Litcos agree.

199 Litco 4 suggests it might be a good time to get together with staff or some staff?  
200 Litcos agree.

201 Litco 4 says that they should all try to canvas the views or suggestions of staff 9(or a group)  
202 about what has been seen as useful and what improvements they'd like to see,  
203 Litco 5 says they'd like to know what people have actually used.

204 Litco 2 agrees.

205 Meeting closes.

1 **PLC Meeting 7**

2 Present: Litco 1, Litco2, Litco3, Litco 4, Litco 5, AC, IL (non-participant)

3 Litco 1 welcomes the group. This meeting has been changed from School 3 due to examinations. This  
4 meeting has to end precisely due to examinations in schools> The PLC is reminded of this.

5 Meeting notes agreed.

6 Litco 4 shares their work with the group.

7 Litco 4 had got a group of teachers across subject areas to explore literacy in the school.

8 Litco 4 had asked each teacher to bring with them to a meeting their departmental schemes of work.

9 These had been mapped for literacy in each subject.

10 Group look at the documents.

11 Litco 1 asks if the teachers aren't really doing some literacy in every one of their lessons?

12 Litco 1 'they are reading and writing and speaking all of the time'

13 Litco 4 agrees this but says that they had asked subjects to look at where they could best use literacy  
14 approaches such as Reciprocal Reading in some lessons.

15 Litco 2 asks if it is ok that some subjects seem to be mapping more literacy across their work?

16 Litco 4 says that this is fine at this stage as the subjects are different and some do engage with text  
17 more regularly, such as RE or English.

18 Litco 1 asks if this gives them the impression that they only need to focus on literacy in those  
19 particular lessons?

20 Litco 4 replies that this might be the case and was something they would consider.

21 Litco 4 reports back on some comments from their meeting with teachers in their school.

22 Most of the subject representatives in School 4 said they would like more training in how to use  
23 literacy more effectively in their lessons.

24 Litco 4 said that they were pleased with this but surprised as they thought people would like to be left  
25 alone.

26 Litco4 said that perhaps it means that no one knows what they are doing.

27 Litco 1 says it could just be that they want to know more and that is a good thing.

28 Group agrees.

29 Litco 4 replies that that is a more positive way to look at it.

30 Litco 4 asks the group what things they have done to try to get staff more involved.

31 Litco 1 says they have mainly relied on the literacy group and the online system.

32 Litco 5 says they have used a group of teachers to help share messages and so on too.

33 Litco 3 says that staff meetings have been the main way of sharing expectations for them.

34 Litco 2 says that they have used documentation in the main but still think there is some way to go  
35 with this.

36 Litcos agree.

37 Litco 1 says that they asked the literacy group to ask teachers in their subject areas if they had found  
38 the literacy policy useful; if they used the approaches in their lessons; what they found helpful and so  
39 on.

40 The feedback was positive overall, in that most subjects reported that staff found the online system  
41 quite handy and tried to use the approaches in the lessons.

42 AC asks if this fitted in with what they had found in their own monitoring.

43 Litco 1 replies that it did in that there was evidence in books of strategy use and the online system was  
44 being used by all subjects, to varying degrees.

45 Litco 1 says that they too had been asked if there could be more training in literacy, although they  
46 were surprised that strategy use was mentioned most often.

47 Litco 1 'perhaps the subject based work has not been flagged up as much'

48 Litco 5 says that it is also probably less easy to direct people to as it seems more vague.

49 Litco 1 agrees.

50 Litco 1 says that they feel that time is still a factor and that people seem to want clear direction as to  
51 what they do or include rather than anything more complicated.

52 Litcos agree.

53 Litco 2 says they feel this too as a literacy coordinator.

54 Ltco 2 'the more straightforward the better I think'

55 Litco 3 agrees.

56 Litco 1 says that sometimes they need to remember that just because something is a priority for them,  
57 that others have different ones.

58 Litco 1 says that they feel they have stalled a little and that other things have moved up the list of  
59 priorities in school and they were finding it hard to give time to literacy 'let alone anyone else'.

60 Litco 5 agrees.

61 Litco 5 says that is why they have moved back and fore between literacy that focuses on subjects  
62 deciding what best fits their teaching and a more set approach where expectations are given and  
63 monitored.

64 Litco 5 shares their work and shows the group the changes to policy they are hoping into put in place.

65 Litco 5 'I can't really say that it has changed as much as I had thought it would'.

66 Litco 5 explains that they have returned to some more generic literacy approaches as these were easier  
67 and the staff did not seem to be taking up the notion of subject based literacy.

68 AC asks why they thought this was the case.

69 Litco 5 says they might not have explained it properly.

70 Litco 5 also says that it is more straight forward and easier to manage.

71 Litco 5 says that they had had feedback from subject areas and there was a feeling that teachers  
72 wanted to know more about the strategies.

73 Litco 5 'perhaps they think it is easier to do that, too'.

74 Litco 5 says that training had been mentioned and more time to get to know the strategies and what  
75 was expected of them in their classrooms and in pupils' work.  
76 Litco 5 that they agree that this is needed –for them as much as the other teachers –but time is 'like  
77 gold dust' in school.  
78 Litcos agree.  
79 Litco 3 says that they feel that they have made the fewest changes to literacy and that this was because  
80 they had been doing the role before.  
81 Litco 3 comments that it is also because they thought that staff would prefer to have fewer changes.  
82 They asked teachers to feedback at a staff meeting and found that a number said that they wanted  
83 more input and more training.  
84 Litco 3 says that some of the staff had received some training elsewhere, as part of NQT work or  
85 otherwise and that they were keen to have this continued in school.  
86 Litco 3 found this quite surprising.  
87 Litco 4 says that literacy is more of a big deal now and teachers might be worried about this.  
88 Litco 3 says that they probably are and that they feel they need to listen to the sorts of things staff  
89 would want.  
90 AC discusses work she has been undertaking.  
91 Litco 1 asks about how she would try to develop subject literacy.  
92 AC replies that her context is slightly different –she works with a much smaller body of staff for  
93 example and goes on to explain some of the things she is hoping to put in place including lectures  
94 and shared readings.  
95 Litco 2 says that they focused on a small number of things with staff and shared feedback with the  
96 group.  
97 Teachers in School 2 said that they felt that making the tool kit fit more with their schemes of work  
98 was a positive step.  
99 They also reported that they wanted more training on how to use the strategies that Litco 2 had begun  
100 to introduce.  
101 Litco 2 says that as an English teacher it is easy to forget that things like structuring writing or using  
102 reading strategies are unfamiliar to most teachers.  
103 Litco 4 says that as a non-English teacher they can see this as they have found it difficult to keep up  
104 with some of the terminology used in the PLC.  
105 Litco 1 says that they had not given this enough thought and that they maybe need to stop thinking as  
106 English teachers.  
107 Litco 5 asks Litco 4 if they think it is best to have a non-English teacher leading literacy as they have  
108 insight into non-language areas that might be helpful.  
109 Litco 4 says that they are not sure. In some ways the specialist knowledge is an obvious help.  
110 Litco 4 'You all teach this sort of thing all of the time' and so it makes sense to draw upon that.

111 AC asks the group if they think it is hard to separate out what is 'English' and what is 'literacy'.  
112 Litco 1 says that they can separate it out when they think about it but find it more difficult when they  
113 are putting things into practice.  
114 Litco 1 says that they think they are sometimes getting teachers to do things that are found in English  
115 lessons.  
116 Litco 5 agrees.  
117 AC says that she has tried to separate those elements of her work too.  
118 Litco 4 says that one thing is certain and that is that literacy has a much higher profile in the school  
119 than n before.  
120 Group agrees.  
121 Litco 3 says that they have felt this too and it has made them realise that they need to focus on being  
122 more specific in their expectations.  
123 Litco 5 says that it is a totally different 'ball game' now.  
124 Group agrees.  
125 AC says that this is a good thing.  
126 Group agrees and give various reasons why this is so: 'helps pupils with their future'; makes us more  
127 aware', 'getting them to be better at literacy is a no-brainer'  
128 Litco 5 says that it is interesting how everyone agrees that but even within the PLC there are  
129 differences in how people see it being organised.  
130 Litco 1 says that is bound to happen as they are in different schools with different pupils and so on.  
131 Litco 2 says that they aren't that different though.  
132 AC says that maybe the PLC too would like to be told what would be the best rather than working it  
133 out.  
134 Litco 4 says that would be great and would save a lot of time but it would depend on who decided it.  
135 Litco 4 says that they have some similarities in the PLC but also differences and so whether a pre-  
136 decided policy would be good would depend upon what it said and whether that fitted with what you  
137 though.  
138 Litco 1 agrees and says that they have enjoyed being able to make their own decisions even if they  
139 have changed and are more complicated than they first thought.  
140 Litco 2 says that they were in that position in that literacy practices had been pre-decided by way of  
141 the tool kit. They found this quite comforting as the decisions were made and they just had to  
142 implement it.  
143 Litco 2 said they have found the adapting of practices to be challenging.  
144 Litco 2 'I like to know what I am doing and then stick to it'  
145 Litco 1 asks if they thought it worked better now?  
146 Litco 2 said they did but it was still not 100% certain and they found this moved them 'out of my  
147 comfort zone'.

148 Litco 4 says that they no longer have a comfort zone.  
149 Litco 1 says that they have enjoyed reading about literacy and thinking about what it is; that they  
150 hadn't done that kind of thing for a long time and had found it stimulating.  
151 Litco 1 also found it frustrating that they had lots of ideas they wanted to try and then were brought  
152 'back down to earth' when it came to implementation.  
153 Group agrees.  
154 AC talks about implementation with group.  
155 Litco 5 says that they feel that as a group they have come a long way but that they are not sure the  
156 teachers in their schools have.  
157 Litco 3 says that the teachers haven't had time like this.  
158 Group agree.  
159 Litco 1 says that this sort of group is very difficult to manage in school as they have found.  
160 Litco 1 says that there is not the time to read or really discuss and so they end up doing a lot more  
161 instruction.  
162 Litco 5 agrees and says that they have found times when they have heard or read something and get  
163 quite excited but then can't seem to work out how to translate it into school.  
164 Litco 5 says this is why they have moved position and adapted their policy and approach over the year  
165 trying to get the balance right between what they would like and what is realistic.  
166 Litco 1 says that they think the whole group has felt that.  
167 Litco 1 moves the group on to the sharing of documents and resources etc.  
168 Documents are shared. Litco 1 shares electronically.  
169 The group reads through documents with a view to asking any questions etc.  
170 This is cut short due to time and the group agrees to explore the documents and consider what  
171 questions they might have or what elements they might adapt in their own work.  
172 Litco 1 says that they are almost at the end of the year and so this seems like a good time for the group  
173 to consider what their successes have been and what they need to work on as they move towards  
174 refining their work for the coming school year.  
175 Meeting closed.

1 **PLC Meeting 8**

2 Present: Litco 1, Litco2, Litco3, Litco 4, Litco 5, AC, IL (non-participant)

3 AC Welcomes group. Meeting notes 7 agreed. Introduces agenda.

4 Looser agenda today. Focused on reflection and pointing forward as discussed last time.

5 Litco 1 says that they will miss the meetings professionally and personally and suggests that  
6 the group could continue meeting up.

7 Group agree this.

8 Litco 5 starts the conversation. Shows the group the changes to policy they are hoping into  
9 put in place for coming school year. This has changed since it was last shared with the group  
10 in Meeting 6.

11 Litco 5 is aiming to get more involvement from subject representatives to inform what  
12 literacy will look like in the school in different areas and different times of the year.

13 Litco 5 'I think that is what I have learned the most. I need to get other people really  
14 involved'

15 General agreement from the group.

16 All Litcos state they feel they have a better understanding of literacy and feel more confident  
17 that they could develop effective practices in their schools.

18 Litco 4 'I know more that I did definitely. I feel I have much more of a handle on what I  
19 could do'

20 This sentiment was echoed by the group.

21 Litco 5 initiated conversation regarding frustration at not being able to put this understanding  
22 into practice.

23 Litcos 1, 4, 2 agree. All four state that they and their teachers have too many demands upon  
24 their time.

25 Litco 4 'In a way it's more frustrating now because I have more of an idea about what I'd like  
26 to do if we all had the time'

27 All Litcos agree this point.

28 AC comments that she wanted to try to better prioritise. AC asks group what they thought  
29 were the biggest obstacles to their putting their ideas into practice.

30 Responses related to accountability, attitude, and response to change indicated that all Litcos  
31 felt that some colleagues might be resistant to change in their practice.

32 AC comments upon this. Offers personal reflection from experience as a Litco. Also  
33 comments that she has reflected upon this as a result of this research and wonders whether the  
34 changes she wanted to put into place as a Litco and in current role in HEI were appropriate;

35 whether they were given time to embed; whether they were explained; whether colleagues  
36 were given the opportunity to be part of the process.

37 Litco 1 says they have asked some of the same questions.

38 Litco 1 'At the start I just wanted them to do it. Now I think I got that a bit wrong'

39 Asks AC what she concluded about her own practice.

40 AC talks about importance for her of teacher efficacy and agency.

41 AC discusses what the year has been like for her and what she has gained from it in terms of  
42 her own understanding and practice.

43 Litco 5 ' Yes, that is what I have been thinking. I have been thinking it is about me making  
44 these big changes when I need to look at what they already know, what they could do with  
45 etc'

46 Litcos agree with this point but state that this is a huge undertaking.

47 Litco 2 states time is the factor: Litcos 3 and 4 agree.

48 Litco 1 states that it's that time is taken up with demands that mean a new focus for all staff.

49 Litco 1 'to do it properly we'd need to see it through properly. Revisit it, change things, look  
50 at it again. It's hard finding the time when other things crop up that also need attention'

51 Litcos 4, 2 and 5 and AC agree and state they have experienced the same thing in their  
52 schools.

53 AC asks what they would like to do given the time.

54 Several factors were mentioned in discussion between all Litcos.

55 All Litcos agreed they would like more time to train staff and also to develop guidance for  
56 colleagues.

57 Litcos 1, 2, 4 and 5 felt that they needed more time to consider more carefully the literacy  
58 demands and needs of all subjects and would benefit from closer work with subject  
59 colleagues

60 Litco 1 'I have made a start on this and it seems to be better. It is only a start though. I think  
61 Litco 5 and 4 have been trying out a similar thing?'

62 Litco 5 explains what they have been doing in their school and their desire to make literacy  
63 more a part of everyday teaching.

64 Litco 5 'Changing the policy is a part of that'

65 Group discusses the role of policy and who it is for.

66 ESTYN, SLT, consortia, named by all as possible intended audiences. School colleagues  
67 were named by all in group too.

68 Litco 1 asks AC what she thinks a literacy policy should do.

69 AC opens the question to the group.

70 Litco 4 says that writing a policy is very time consuming and did not prove to be the ‘magic  
71 wand’ that they had hoped it might be.

72 Litcos 1, 2, 4 and 5 agree.

73 Litco 4 says that perhaps a different document is needed. One that is a policy for all possible  
74 audiences and then another that is practical guidance and expectations for classroom  
75 colleagues.

76 Litco 5 ‘I think the policy should be useful. It should be something teachers know and that  
77 helps them’

78 Discussion about what a policy is and should do. General agreement that it sets out rationale  
79 and underlying principles and approaches. Expectations.

80 Litco 1 says that policy might be a start but they have found that it can’t do everything. Some  
81 teachers in school don’t really engage with policy; they want to know what to do.

82 Litco 5 agrees this point but adds that this takes them back in a full circle.

83 AC asks for detail.

84 Litco 5 says that the group have all done that ‘tell them what to do’ but that might not be  
85 enough. ‘I might want them to tell me what I should do!’

86 Agreement from group

87 Litco 4 says that perhaps there should be literacy policies –plural. These would be under the  
88 rationale etc decided by the literacy coordinator, but would allow teachers to add their own  
89 understanding of what fits best for their subject etc.

90 Enthusiastic agreement from group.

91 Litco 2 ‘I agree. It has been very difficult for me because we are all expected to do the same  
92 thing at the same time’

93 Litco 2 says the adaptations they made to the toolkit approach were good – it was not a good  
94 fit for all lessons. Feels that it made things more manageable for staff and also the staff could  
95 see that Litco 2 listened to them.

96 Litco 5 ‘That’s a positive move. Literacy coordinators decide key principles – we have the  
97 responsibility to go and find out about it – then subjects adapt their own versions. I love it’

98 Litco 1 agrees but sees it as a long term aim that would need considerable time and work.

99 Group agrees.

100 Litco 3 says that busy teachers sometimes ‘just want it to be made simple for them’

101 Group general agreement

102 Litco 4 ‘It’ll be really hard to change then’

103 Agreement from AC, Litcos 1 and 5.

104 Litco 1 says that the group are all aware of how big a job it would be to ‘really do this  
105 properly’

106 Multiple comments from all Litcos reflecting upon timetable difficulties as a barrier to  
107 common planning and training time for colleagues.

108 Litco 4 ‘This is what we’d need to make this something really effective I think’

109 Litco 3 says that taking a whole body of staff with you is a challenge, but it would be a  
110 positive if time and real commitment was given.

111 Litco 4 ‘I think it’d be great to try things, monitor them properly, see what worked and what  
112 didn’t and then change it where needed and then do it again’

113 Litcos 1, 5, 2, agree that this sense of inquiry was something they wanted to try to put in  
114 place in their schools.

115 The literacy coordinators felt that the PLC provided an opportunity to meet and share new  
116 ideas that they would like to extend to their school colleagues.

117 All Litcos expressed that time is a mitigating factor to this approach.

118 Litco 4 ‘I would like to do it if it wasn’t for time. I just don’t think it’s practical’

119 All Litcos agreed this point, Litcos 1 and 5 expressed that they wanted to see if it could be  
120 accommodated within their schools.

121 AC comments that she has noticed in her own work a clash between the long term embedded  
122 nature of change and the quick moving, time scarce reality of the working day.

123 Group agree.

124 Litco 5 ‘what we do instead is get something into place and that takes so long that it just stays  
125 there whether it is any good or anyone uses it or not’

126 Litco 1 ‘ We have all said we would love to really do it properly but that means not only time  
127 for us but also for the teachers. It means that you have to work out what is realistic rather than  
128 what you think might be best’

129 Group agreement

130 Litco 5 ‘I feel a bit like I am going in and telling them what to do when I am not really sure  
131 they need to do it’

132 Litco 2 expressed some unease about not really knowing enough about subject areas to be  
133 sure that the literacy approaches they put into place are appropriate.

134 AC ‘which takes u back to ideas about how to include colleagues in it all –beyond monitoring  
135 etc’

136 Litco 4, 'I collect in samples of work from subject areas, but all I can really see is if they  
137 have used a strategy. I haven't got time to see if it has actually done anything. That is  
138 frustrating'

139 AC asks group about how they all now thought literacy could be best monitored in schools.  
140 Discusses the aims of monitoring systems and what outcomes should be looked for.

141 Litco 1 states that book monitoring is not effective. Asks AC for her opinion on this she  
142 discusses her own work; asks the group what they have found.

143 AC starts conversation with group about what can be found in book monitoring; what the  
144 benefits might be and what the limitations might be.

145 Litco 5 states that a benefit is that it is easy to manage.

146 Litco 5 'I can see if it's been done or not quickly'

147 Litcos 1 and 3 agree with this

148 Litco 5 'I am not sure that it tells me a great deal though'.

149 Litcos 1 and 3 agree and claim that it is done because it is familiar as a way of monitoring.

150 Litco 4 asks what it is they think they should be monitoring and whether book or work  
151 monitoring does this.

152 Litco 3 asks AC what she would put into place.

153 AC says that it might be worth examining this from the other way –what do they want 'good  
154 literacy' to be? what does it look like? Is it always visible in this way?

155 Litco 1 says that is a difficult question. Literacy is 'big as we have all found out'

156 Litco 4 says that literacy will probably look different for different subjects.

157 Litco 1 asks whether it is possible to have 'literacy' then.

158 AC returns group to their initial discussion about literacy and asks whether the group feel  
159 differently now.

160 AC 'I think I can now see what I would change about my own practice in literacy in school  
161 and now'.

162 AC discusses the articles the group first read at the start of the year and asks the group what  
163 they feel about those positions now.

164 Litco 2 'I think that I thought it was much more straightforward than I do now'

165 All in group agree the point.

166 Litco 1 'I feel that I know now that doing this properly is a long process. There are big things  
167 to consider and to do it right takes time. This is something we don't have in school'.

168 Litco 5 states that they feel more confident in being able to make good decisions about  
169 literacy but didn't feel they could put this into practice in their school.

170 All Litcos agreed this point.

171 Discussion amongst PLC members about the limitations of their role and how they might be  
172 able to make more embedded change.

173 Litco 1 ‘Yes. I have put some things into place, and I know I am lucky to be able to do that,  
174 but it’s hard to see how I could really see if it is right for everyone or if it is something they  
175 all do’.

176 Litco 5 ‘It is the same for me. We don’t really have enough time for training or meetings –  
177 not with everything else too’

178 All Litcos agreed with this point.

179 Litco 4 ‘we of all people though should be positive about this!’

180 Group laughter; general agreement.

181 Litco 1 ‘you are right and I do really. It is just frustration’ Litco 1 says they want to put into  
182 place a system that gave more time and input to school colleagues.

183 Litcos agree.

184 Litco 5 states that they have seen their views changing over the year. ‘I’m an English teacher  
185 and I thought that was it really –show people how we teach writing in English so they can use  
186 it in their lessons...it’s so much bigger than that’

187 Litco 5 goes on to say that they felt this developed knowledge was a benefit.

188 Litco 1 comments that they felt the need to rush to a definitive policy/guidance in school ‘Just  
189 say here it is. I have found the way!’

190 Litco 1 now feels more comfortable with seeing cycles of reflection as a key part of their  
191 practice.

192 Litco 4 echoes this, saying that things will and should change as we all know more and look  
193 at what works and what doesn’t.

194 Litco 4 says that they think it might be that literacy will and should look different in different  
195 lessons and subjects and we all need to just see that’

196 Group agreement.

197 Litco 2 ‘makes it hard though to report back on that!’

198 Group laughter; agreement.

199 Litco 5 ‘that might be the point really. Forget the reporting and concentrate on the doing’

200 Litcos agree

201 Litco 1 ‘I’m agreeing, just as I can see the face of my SLT when I say that!’

202 Group laughter.

203 AC thanks the group for their hard work and for giving her access to their practices and  
204 schools.  
205 Litcos all offer comments regarding how they have found the experience a positive one.  
206 Litco 1 offers to arrange a meeting up in the next academic year.  
207 Group agrees.  
208 Meeting draws to a close.

209

210

