Open Research Online

The Open University's repository of research publications
and other research outputs

Learning strategy in Multi Academy Trusts: knowledge as narrative

Conference or Workshop Item

oro.open.ac.uk

Learning strategy Multi Academy Trusts: Strategic thinking in action

Abstract

Multi-Academy trusts (MATs) are groups of schools in England led by an executive head teacher (EHT) and a board of trustees. They are complex organizations consisting of from two to over a hundred schools (Baxter, forthcoming , 2020). In 2017 were over 20,100 state funded schools in England on 01 November 2017. Of these 6,100 were academies of which 1,668 were standalone academies and 4,432 were MATs. These schools may be proximate to one another or widely geographically dispersed (Baxter & Cornforth, 2018). In England's quasi-marketplace of education, one of the key decisions for EHTs and trustees is whether to expand the organization, and if so, what type of schools to take on (Baxer, 2020) ,and over what geographical spread. High profile failures of these organizations raise questions over MAT rate of growth, and the way in which they are managed and governed (DfE, 2018; HMSO, 2017). Studies in the public , private and non-profit sector have identified top management's absence of strategic thinking as a major detractor from performance, (Casey & Goldman, 2010), and long term sustainability (Mintzberg et al, 2005). However, creating strategy for a single organization is very different to creating it for a large multi-site organization (Elmes & Barry, 2017). According to Casey and Goldman, there are four categories of knowledge required to think strategically: Factual knowledge-on the whole organizations as well as its parts, (Mintzberg (1987:4); procedural and conceptual knowledge: Procedural knowledge informs the strategic thinker on how to develop ideas, concepts and frameworks, and different ways of seeing issues, how to identify opportunities, whilst conceptual knowledge includes ideas resulting from taking different perspectives and frameworks for integrating system inputs and the environment for directing the organization. Finally, strategic thinkers must have knowledge of their own thinking, seeing their own strategic thinking strengths and weaknesses as well as those of others. This is the lens through which learning experiences will be interpreted:

This article builds on the work of Casey and Goldman and Mintzberg (1984), to evaluate the ways in which trustees approach strategy as a learning activity in MATs. Asking the research questions, a) Do trustees and CEOs think of strategy in learning terms b) If so how? c) What are the implications of this for Trustee and CEO development in this area? d) what theoretical contribution does this study make to what is known about strategy learning in multi-level organisations. In order to do so the study uses 42 interviews with trustees and CEOs of 8 MATS to evaluate the four areas of knowledge needed in order to think strategically: factual, procedural, conceptual and metacognitive-awareness of their own capabilities in this area. The research concludes that leadership boards in MATs appear to place more emphasis on factual knowledge, at the expense of the other areas of knowledge. It also concludes that whilst trustees and CEOs are aware of the ways in which their strategic thinking is developing, the area of conceptual knowledge is limited by MAT failure to collaborate with other MATs. The study contributes to the international literature on strategic thinking in education whilst also contributing to knowledge on strategic thinking in multi-level organizations across the public sector. It will also be of interest to those in the field of the development of strategic thinking in educational leadership more broadly.

Background

Over the last three decades, new patters of interaction between government and society can be observed across the public sector in an attempt to solve seemingly intractable problems and creating new possibilities for governing.(Kooiman, 1993, P. 2). MATS or Multi -Academy trusts are the British Government's response to solving entrenched problems in English education (education is a devolved service in the UK), and an attempt to govern education in a decentralized fashion. MATs are groups or federations of state funded, autonomous schools that have grouped together for a variety of reasons. These groupings are unique to the English system of education, although different forms of school groupings can be found in the United States as Charter Management organizations (Wohlstetter et al, 1995) . Developed by the Labour Government under Tony Blair, they were established by the Learning and Skills Act , 2000. In November 2017 there were over 20,100 state-funded schools in England on 01. Of these 6,100 were academies, of which 1,668 were stand-alone academies and 4,432 schools were in MATs. They may be small, numbering 3-5 schools or far larger, encompassing over 50 schools.(DfE, 2018).

The development of Multi-Academy Trusts has been driven by a wider impetus across the public sector, to enhance the, 'development and implementation of new ideas that disrupt the common wisdom ,and habitual practices that hitherto dominated the solution context.'(Torfing, 2019, p. 15). The most trenchant problems in English education are the achievement gap between the economically advantaged and disadvantaged (Francis, 2011), and the failure of many poor schools to be able to improve. Such schools are often (but not exclusively) situated in areas of high deprivation and the governance, leadership and staffing of such schools, reflects a failure to attract quality applicants (Gorard, Taylor, & Fitz, 2001). This can contribute to a downward spiral in terms of pupil achievement (Reardon, 2011). A recent government report pointed out, (HMSO, 2017), there is a

2

real risk that these collaborations will fail. Reasons for failure include financial ineptitude, too rapid expansion and failure to improve schools within the organization (see Parliament 2017). The sheer number of instances in which MATs have failed to improve schools within their organizations or have experienced financial difficulties, suggests these multi-level organizations are no easier to manage and govern in the education sector than in other sectors (HCEC, 2014-15). One of the key challenges for these large and complex organizations lies in the ability of governing boards – trustees at the apex of the organization to create a strategy that will best serve school communities and maximise pupil attainment. But as the literature on multi-level governance in both the public and not-for-profit sector reveals (Foss et al., 2010; Cornforth, 2012), providing strategic direction for several organisations, which may also be widely geographically dispersed, creates a number of challenges for those responsible for setting the strategic direction of the organisation. This funded research draws on on data from interviews with trustees and CEOs , and, employs a theoretical framework which views strategy as a learning and narrative practice. The paper builds on our previous research in this area, (Baxer and Floyd, 2019), and on the work done by Casey and Goldman (Casey and Goldman, 2010) to respond to the research questions: a) What evidence is there that strategy is a learning activity b) What organizational implications are there for this ? c) What are the implications of this for Trustee and CEO development in this area? d) What theoretical contribution does this study make to what is known about strategy learning in multi-level organisations.

MATs : structure and circumstance

MATs can vary in size and geographical spread, but whatever their size and scope, they possess hierarchical structures of governance that imply substantial challenge, not only for the overarching board of trustees, but equally in relation to the governing boards that sit under them. As figure 1 indicates, the board of trustees is supplemented by several governing committees overseeing finance, standards and resources. In very large MATs that are geographically dispersed there are further levels of governance including Cluster Committees and a Cluster CEO (or head teacher). These committees are responsible for schools located in geographical proximity to one another (Baxer and Floyd, 2019).
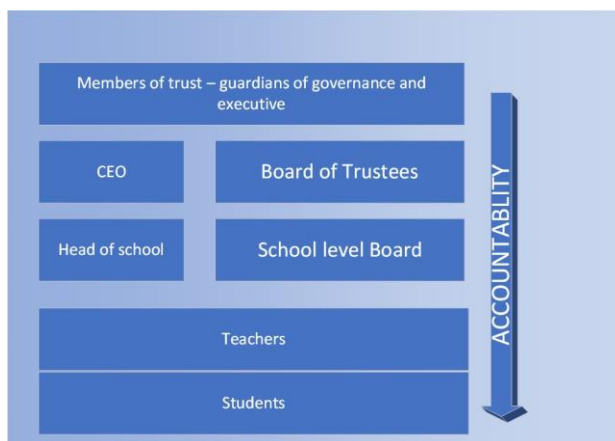

Figure 1 Multi- Academy trusts – structure and governance

When MATS take over new schools, either of their own volition or at the behest of the Regional Schools Commissioner or Department of Education, they delegate certain powers to academy boards. The extent of those powers very much appears to depend on whether schools are perceived as weak (in terms of their last inspection by the school standards regulator –Ofsted), or relatively strong. In the case of weak schools, Academy Boards have few decision-making powers and are often subject to strict monitoring by central trust boards. In the case of stronger schools, their

boards are most likely to have greater powers, delegated by the board of trustees, which will vary in their scope and range depending on the board. These arrangements are set out in a 'formal scheme of delegation which schools are mandated by the Department of Education to display on their website' (Baxter, 2019, p.4). MATs can include all phases of schooling (primary , secondary) , but some MATs focus purely on a single phase of education – for example all primaries, or secondaries.

Theoretical Framework : strategy as learning- strategic thinking in action

There is a strong literature that views strategy as a learning activity, a view of strategy that largely employs qualitative data to analyse the micro processes and activities of actors concerned with devising and implementing strategy (Casey and Goldman, 2010; Whittington, 2007; Hendry, 2000; Pälli et al., 2009). Chia and Holt argue that strategy is a practical coping mechanism (Chia and Holt, 2009), a sensemaking activity in which, 'events, entities and meaning help compose one another (Schatzki, 2005: :640), and in which individuals constantly modify their behaviour and actions in relation to shared practices and understandings. Due to the importance of strategic thinking in the long term success of both public and private enterprises (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015), and its conceptualisation as a 'long term systems orientated and opportunistic approach'(Casey and Goldman, 2010: :169); it is viewed as a key skill in organisational leadership and governance (Mackay and Burt, 2015; Johnson, 2000). Where an organisation is both multi-site and multi layered, the act and processes of strategy learning are hypercomplex, yet none the less vital to organizational resilience and success (Leavy, 1998), and key to identity formation (both personal and institutional) in organizational collaborations (Beech and Huxham, 2003).

Our previous research into board strategizing in multi -academy trusts (Baxter, 2018; Baxer and Floyd, 2019) supported the idea of strategy as an emergent phenomenon, whilst also emphasizing the sense making, practical coping aspects that appear as a leitmotif in Chia and Holt's work (Chia and Holt, 2006). It challenged Bourgeois' distinction between *what strategy* (success and failure of various strategies) and *how* a particular strategy emerges (Bourgeois, 1980) arguing, that as a learning activity the two are inextricably interwoven. In this sense it supports the findings of (Näsi, 1991) in bringing together strategic thinking with strategy formulation and implementation : 'the formulation and execution of strategic strategies……[..] basically covers all attributes that can be labelled strategic.' (33). Minzberg argues that there is a distinct difference between strategic planning, which he sees as an analytical process aimed at programming already identified strategies , and strategic thinking which he argues, is a synthesizing process , utilizing intuition and creativity , the outcome of which is an integrated perspective of the enterprise. This view is partially reflected in the strategy as learning, emergent view of strategy as practice (Johnson, 2000; Leavy, 1998). Minzberg's opinion that formal planning and processes tend to drive out strategic thinking, constraining innovation, does not align with our previous research into strategy in MATS , which illustrated that planning processes can also encourage strategic thinking, operating as a helpful frameworks for progress, and that , in the process of setting up strategic plans, that strategic thinking can be encouraged , particularly as managers engage in scenario planning activities (Schoemaker, 1995). It also revealed that devising a framework for strategizing, was of help to trustees whose operational knowledge was necessarily limited by their distance from the organization (Baxter and C, 2018)

 Casey and Goldman (2010) looked to resolve what they viewed as the dichotomous nature of the ways in which strategy making and strategic planning is conceptualized, arguing that the term strategic thinking is often used interchangeably with strategy (p:168). They resolve this by conceptualizing strategic thinking, together with strategy formulation, as 'strategic thinking in action' (P:168), bringing together the three literatures of , strategy, learning and cognition in order

to propose a model that integrates these perspectives and is illustrated in Figure 2. Their model includes four key elements involved with strategic thinking, points which appear throughout the literature in this area : Scanning, questioning, testing and conceptualizing. In the model they conceptualize strategy as learning , highlighting the fact that there is little research into how individuals 'develop their ability to think strategically' (ibid:171). They argue that strategic thinking occurs on several levels : That is it conceptual- develops concepts that can then be applied to different situations; systems orientated- that it involves not just the organization but the system in which it is situated; directional – it aims for a desired future state; and finally , that it is opportunistic. (ibid;172). Their model also sees strategic thinking as a learning activity, and highlights Kolb's cycle of experiential learning (figure 3), as integrative of the differing elements in figure 2 . The five areas illustrated in figure 2 include : individual learning styles (Kolb and Kolb, 2005), work experiences, organizational influencers; knowledge creation and strategic thinking (which involves activities on conceptualizing and testing, scanning and questioning.

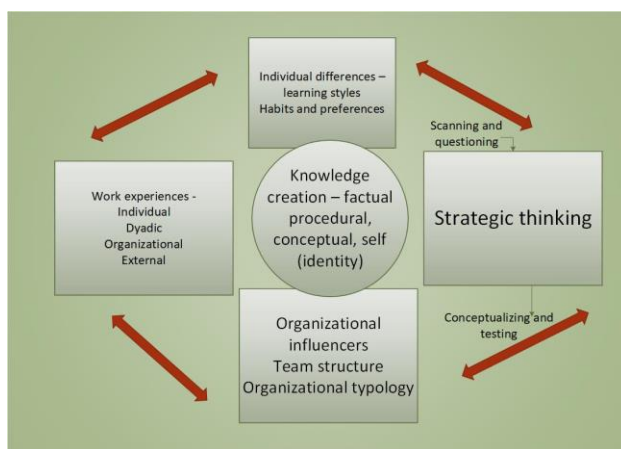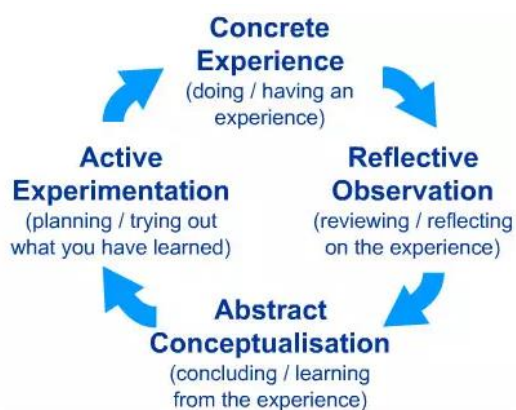*Figure 2 adapted from Casey and Goldman (2010) Page 170*

Figure 3 Kolb Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984)

Their model is in many senses similar to Kolb's experiential learning cycle (Figure 2) in which learning is a constant cycle of concrete experience, reflection on that experience , learning from the experience and applying what has been learned . They also support the idea that in time, patterns

of strategic thinking become strategies, a view also supported by Minzberg et al (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985), refuting Bourgeois' claim that what strategy can be separated from how a strategy emerges. At the same time they argue that neither informal learning theory (Marsick and Watkins, 2001) (learning carried out at work or outside of a formal learning environment) nor experiential learning theory (learning through experience) (Piaget, 1947), are, alone , sufficient to describe the type of strategic thinking that leads to strategy conceptualization.

 In our earlier research into governing boards in areas of high deprivation, (Baxter, 2016) we found Weik's sensemaking framework (Weik, 2001) to be helpful in understanding some of the challenges faced by boards who had moved from a single institutional setting (one academy) to a multi-academy set up. As frameworks, relationships and cues are key to understanding the leadership/management function within organizations, Weik's work has been used by a number of researchers , in relation to strategy and strategic thinking (see for example: Corley and Gioia, 2004), due to its capacity to provide a connection between cognition and actions (Narayanan et al., 2011) and its links to identity formation (Oliver, 2015). The process of sensemaking involves the integration of stimuli (information) into sensemaking frameworks or schema this then connects with constructivist and social theories of learning (Schwandt, 2005). Constructivism is based on the idea that knowledge and learning are socially constructed , and that learning depends on individual and collective agency to critically question environmental cues and reflect on these in relation to their own knowledge . In this sense the learning is transformative , as it changes the perspective of the learner in such a way that it also infuses and develops their identity (Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, 1998). Mezirow (1991:14), explains the integration of new learning as : "the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective; and of making decisions or otherwise acting upon these new understandings" (1990, P. 14). This in turn, creates feelings of agency and effectiveness in role ; a key element of professional identity formation and of organizational development (De Fina, 2006; Avis, 1999; Baxter, 2011b). This is important in relation to our own work , which sees identity formation in organizational collaborations, as a challenge for both leadership and organization, a view supported by the literature on collaborations (Vangen et al., 2015; Sørensen and Torfing, 2011). Metacognition is important within the Kolb model of the reflective practitioner, and the Casey and Goldman model in its ability to integrate experiences into personal schema in such a way as they are reflected upon and alter existing knowledge and concepts. For example , two trustees may have similar experiences but the trustee that acknowledges that the new information/experience is changing the way they approach a new problem, will be able to adapt to complexity and constant change – as is the case within MAT organizations, far more effectively than their colleague, whose thinking may be framed by experiences that are largely redundant in the new context. In the next section we examine what contribution a schematic approach may contribute to the strategy as learning literature.

Schema Based strategy as learning.

The term schema was first used by Bartlett in 1932 in relation to his work on perceptual experience (Taylor, 1981), since then it has been widely adopted by over 150 researchers in the field of social psychology (p:91). A schema is generally understood to be a way of information processing based on an existing framework or concept of the phenomenon under question. For example , an individual joining a school board, will have some sense of what a school board is and how it functions, this information would then be used to make sense of the functionality of such a board. They are key to sense making in so far as they 'lend structure to experience' (ibid:94). Taylor and Crocker (1981)

illustrate this by drawing on a categorisation task in which individuals were given a set of random paper figures and asked to arrange them into categories. In this instance the individuals used a variety of categories: some gender, some family groups, some age, depending upon their existing schema. Sense making frames or schema are dependent on the nature of the frameworks combined with the characteristics of the sense making process. One of the most powerful elements within sense making is its capacity to embrace the diversity of the situations in which the schema are employed: for example , an experienced Chair of Trustees may have formed many of their schema in their professional world, when they apply these to an educational/school setting , they may require radical alteration in order to fit the situation in which they now find themselves. In terms of strategy as learning the idea of self-efficacy is important. This was explored initially by Bandura in terms of social cognitive theory , the main premise of which, is that when individuals transform their knowledge and abilities into action , the transformation is mediated by their belief in their capacity to transform (Bandura, 2000). This idea has also been successfully applied to groups and group learning (Bandura and Locke, 2003). It is important in relation to strategy as learning , as it has been found to link with : 'persistence in the face of obstacles ; effective control of thoughts that focus on attention to self rather than task ; a perception of the environment as controllable; likelihood of setting higher goals and remaining committed to them for longer periods and the increased ability to visualize the future in terms of scenarios of success rather than failure.'(Bandura, 1977: :134).

A number of learning theorists and researchers in the field of professional identity formation (Alsup, 2006) and the changes or formation of new identities (Avis, 1999), identify the point at which an individual (or group), buy into or reject a new identity , highlighting this as axiomatic in an individual's ability to integrate new knowledge into existing schema in order to develop in role (Dobrow and Higgins, 2005; Baxter, 2011a; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Lave describes this in terms of learning , as the move from legitimate yet peripheral participation in a community of learning , to full participation and membership of that community. She also describes it in the journey from novice to expert in any given field. Heron (Heron, 1999) describes this as a point of confrontation , in his six category intervention analysis: The point at which an individual's assumptions /existing schema are confronted with new knowledge and accommodate, assimilate and in time, adapt their existing schema to embrace the new knowledge. This is not to be confused with the 'disorientating dilemma Meizirow (Mezirow, 1990) Thus effecting a vital perceptual shift. This is described by cognitive learning theorists as 'flashes of insight'(Merriam et al., 2006: in Schwantdt,2005:179) and aligns with the scanning, questioning , testing and conceptualizing elements pointed out in the work of Minzberg (1985) and Casey and Goldman (2010)

Schwantdt's (2005) comparison of sensemaking with learning theory points out that although sensemaking subscribes to the social construction of reality, it stops short of the constructionists requirement for the reflection and critical inquiry necessary for transformational change (Schwandt, 2005: :185). Schein (Schein, 2010). Integrating this perspective with the work of Minzberg (1985) Kolb (2005) and Casey and Goldman (2010) , offers a way a means by which to evaluate to what extent strategy is a learning activity and, to what extent individuals are aware of it as such.

On this basis we argue that the four activities of strategy as learning : Scanning , testing, questioning and conceptualizing are based on existing schema and that in order to adapt these schema to the new and challenging context of multi-organizational work, it is important that those responsible for strategy making , understand the metacognitive elements of their work. This effectively means that in order to think strategically in a manner that is: 'conceptual, systems orientated , direction and opportunistic,' (Casey and Goldman, 2010: :169), they need to acknowledge that their work is in effect, a learning activity.

In order to respond to the research questions a) Do trustees and CEOs think of strategy in learning terms b) If so how? c) What are the implications of this for Trustee and CEO development in this area? d) what theoretical contribution does this study make to what is known about strategy learning in multi-level organisations, we examine how the three elements :factual knowledge-on the whole organizations as well as its parts, (Mintzberg (1987:4), procedural and conceptual knowledge and metacognitive knowledge, work together to effect strategy as learning in a multi-academy trust organization.

Method and approach

To address our research questions, and in line with the theoretical framework, the study was embedded within a social constructivist approach (Vaara, Kleymann, & Seristö, 2004)

The research was based on 42 semi structured interviews with Trustees and CEOs working in 8 MATs. Trustees - those at the apex of the organisation were chosen, as they possess the decision making power for the whole trust. The sample can be found in Appendix 01. The CEO is the operational lead of the MAT and sits on the MAT board. Trustees were chosen due to previous research identifying that trusts are strategically driven by strategic planning at trust level (Baxter, 2016; Baxer and Floyd, 2019) The MATS are situated in the North (6) and South of England (3). They are not able to be identified due to confidentiality issues. The interviews were carried out within the period December 2017 to June 2019. They lasted between 45 minutes to one hour each. They were carried out via skype, in person and by phone.

The research gained approval from the ethics committees of the university. Informed consent protocols were drawn up and approved by respondents before interviews commenced. Due to the sensitive nature of this research, this included anonymity of trusts as well as individuals.

The interviews were coded using NVivo software and analysed using the framework in figure two. Data analysis considered key themes emerging from both documentary analysis and interview data. Having successfully adopted the narrative approach in other research which investigates strategic discourse in MATs, and sense making on governing boards (Baxter forthcoming, 2016a, Baxter 2017,), we use it draw together 'the apparently independent and disconnected elements of existence into related parts of a whole' (Polkinghorne, 1988, p:36 in Baxter and Floyd, 2019). Using this approach in the analysis , allowed for the storifying elements of strategy making ,inherent within the schematic approach, whilst also allowing for some insights into how individuals view their strategic thinking in action Casey and Goldman (2010).   Transcripts were then compared and contrasted across the data sets and to the study's conceptual framework. Studying the narratives of the participants in this way allowed examination of elements that, 'recurrently, routinely and persistently animate the actors.' (Cooren et al, 2015, p.368 in Baxter and Floyd, 2019). This method has been used in explorations of strategy as communication when exploring the extent to which actors defend certain strategic positions, account for or dis-align from an action (page, 369); as such it offers insight into the drive behind adherence to a certain course of action. The webpages of the MATs were included in the documentary analysis, again these were scrutinized for their strategic goals, missions, values and stated aims.

In line with the narrative approach , we set out our findings in relation to the discussion, in order to create clarity and coherence for the reader (Young, 1989; Patterson, 2002). This approach is also employed throughout the sense making and strategy as narrative literature (Patriotta, 2003).

Analytical framework

In order to examine the three areas of knowledge identified by Minzberg (1987) and supported by Casey and Goldman (2010), we argue that factual knowledge- knowledge on the whole organizations as well as its parts (Mintzberg (1987:4), is a key element in procedural and conceptual knowledge, due to the selective processing work of a schema-based approach. We therefore include factual knowledge as an element of all four schemata. The four schemas investigate the ways in which different elements come together to form the procedural and conceptual knowledge of strategy. The first : *Person Schemas*, involves the individual's impressions of particular groups and their function in strategizing. This also includes beliefs about individual's responsibilities in terms of this activity. The second category is important in that it reflects beliefs about the culture of the organization. As the literature on organizational culture reflects , this is particularly pertinent when thinking about new collaborations between organizations, when the assumption of equality (as in the case of multiple schools coming together) , reinforces existing identities , adding complexity to stakeholder contributions to strategizing (Zaheer et al., 2003). *Object /concept schemas* relate to material objects or texts that inform beliefs about organizational values and purpose: In this case they may be strategy documents and plans, websites, news articles about the trust , mission statements and so forth. The final schema category is that of *events*: This relates to particular events in which schema are created and challenged , such as meetings, formal development opportunities or strategy days. The category , *metacognitive knowledge (Pintrich, 2002)* is investigated as a separate category within the research. As reflective observation in action and critical reflection on action are key elements of the learning cycle (see Kolb earlier in the paper, figure 1), the extent to which individuals recognise strategy as a learning activity and are able to engage the three variables, is key to development of our understanding of strategy as learning. The structure of our analytical framework for this category is illustrated in Figure 3.
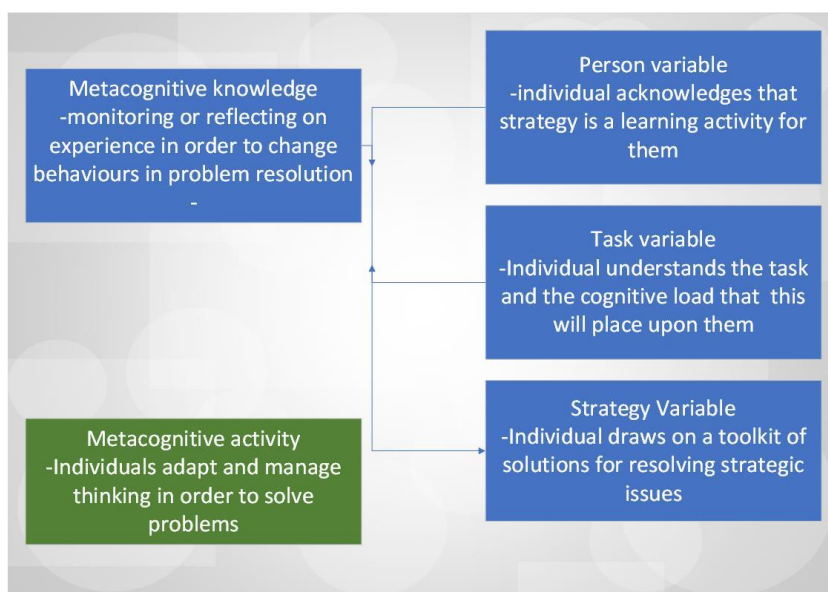

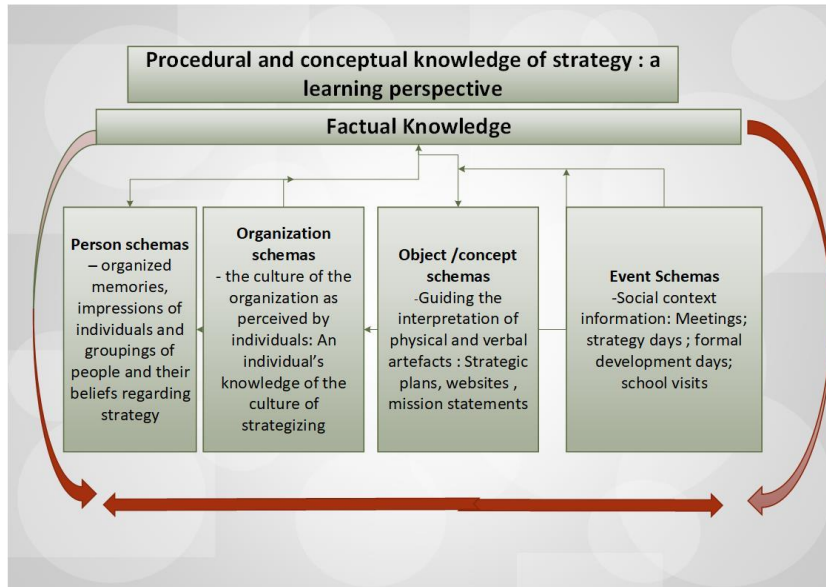*Figure 4 Metacognition adapted from Pintrich, 2002*

Figure 5 Taken from information in (Harris, 1994:312-313)

Findings and discussion

What evidence is there that strategy is a learning activity

Procedural and conceptual knowledge

Person Schemas

The data illustrates that when it comes to person schemas, they have very firm ideas about who in the organization is responsible for strategizing and strategic thinking. Although this is listed in the governor guide to the law as being the responsibility of trustees and CEO , a number of trustees, including Chairs, saw this as a CEO responsibility , or at the very least, led by the CEO. Their premise for this thinking appeared to be that the CEO had a far greater knowledge of the school and its aspirations than they possess.

CEOs too, with 2 exceptions, appeared to think that they were responsible for setting out the direction of the organisation- to the extent that in one case , it appeared that the trustees were little other than a rubberstamping committee , as this CEO reports :

So I write my Headteacher's report and that goes to Governors and they say how's it going, and I say really well thanks and they say, great, keep up the good work and then we all go home (CEO, MAT 3)

Organization schemas

Object Concept schemas

Event schemas

Metacognition

Metacognitive knowledge

b) What organizational implications are there for this ? c) What are the implications of this for Trustee and CEO development in this area? d) What theoretical contribution does this study make to what is known about strategy learning in multi-level organisations.

Conclusions and implications for practice.

c) What are the implications of this for Trustee and CEO development in this area? d) What theoretical contribution does this study make to what is known about strategy learning in multi-level organisations.

References

Alsup J. (2006) *Teacher Identity Discourses Negotiating personal and professional spaces,* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Ltd.

Avis J. (1999) Shifting identity: new conditions and the transformation of practice–teaching within post-compulsory education. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training* 51: 245-264.

Bandura A. (1977) *Social learning theory,* New York: Prentice Hall.

Bandura A. (2000) Exercise of human agency through collective efficacy. *Current directions in psychological science* 9: 75-78.

Bandura A and Locke EA. (2003) Negative self-efficacy and goal effects revisited. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 88: 87.

Baxer J and Floyd A. (2019) Strategic narrative in Multi Academy trusts in England: Principal drivers for expansion. *British Educational Research Journal*.

Baxter J. (2011a) An investigation into the role of professional learning on the online teaching identities of Higher Education Lecturers *CREet : The Faculty of Education and Language Studies.* Milton Keynes The Open University UK.

Baxter J. (2011b) Public Centre Professional Identities: A Review of the Literature Milton Keynes The Open University UK

Baxter J. (2016) *School governing : politics, policy and practices,* Bristol: Policy Press.

Baxter J. (2018) New modes of collaborative governance: Governing collaborations in a new school landscape, power, control and communication. In: Allan J, Harwood V and Jorgensen C (eds) *School Governance: Closing the Gap in Education' :World Yearbook of Education.* London: Routledge

Baxter J and C C. (2018) Schemes of delegation as governance tools : the case of multi academy trusts in education *under reveiw.*

Beech N and Huxham C. (2003) 'Cycles of Idneity formation in interorganizational collaborations'. *International Studies of Management and Organisation* 33: 28-52.

Bourgeois LJ. (1980) Strategy and environment: A conceptual integration. *Academy of Management Review* 5: 25-39.

Casey AJ and Goldman EF. (2010) Enhancing the ability to think strategically: A learning model. *Management learning* 41: 167-185.

Chia R and Holt R. (2006) Strategy as Practical Coping: A Heideggerian Perspective. *Organization Studies* 27: 635-655.

Chia RC and Holt R. (2009) *Strategy without design: The silent efficacy of indirect action*: Cambridge University Press.

Corley KG and Gioia DA. (2004) Identity ambiguity and change in the wake of a corporate spin-off. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 49: 173-208.

De Fina A, Schiffrin, D. and Bamberg, M. (2006) *Discourse and identity,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dobrow SR and Higgins MC. (2005) Developmental networks and professional identity: A longitudinal study. *Career Development International* 10: 567-583.

Ferlie E and Ongaro E. (2015) *Strategic Management in Public Services Organizations: Concepts, schools and contemporary issues. ,* Routledge: London.

Hendry J. (2000) Strategic decision mking, discourse, and strategy as social practice. *Journal of Management Studies* 37: 955-978.

Heron J. (1999) *The Complete Facilitator's Handbook,* London: Kogan Page.

Johnson G. (2000) Strategy through a Cultural Lens:Learning from Managers' Experience. *Management learning* 31: 403-426.

Kolb AY and Kolb DA. (2005) Learning styles and learning spaces: Enhancing experiential learning in higher education. *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 4: 193-212.

Kolb DA. (1984) *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*: Prentice-Hall Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Lave J and Wenger E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*: Cambridge university press.

Leavy B. (1998) The Concept of Learning in the Strategy Field:Review and Outlook. *Management learning* 29: 447-466.

Mackay D and Burt G. (2015) Strategic learning, foresight and hyperopia. *Management learning* 46: 546-564.

Marsick VJ and Watkins KE. (2001) Informal and incidental learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 2001: 25-34.

Merriam SB, Caffarella RS and Baumgartner LM. (2006) *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide*: John Wiley & Sons.

Mezirow J. (1990) How critical reflection triggers transformative learning. *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood*: 1-20.

Mezirow J. (1991) *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*: ERIC.

Mezirow J. (1998) On critical reflection. *Adult Education Quarterly* 48: 185-198.

Mintzberg H and Waters JA. (1985) Of strategies, deliberate, and emergent.

Narayanan VK, Zane LJ and Kemmerer B. (2011) The cognitive perspective in strategy: An integrative review. *Journal of Management* 37: 305-351.

Näsi J. (1991) *Arenas of strategic thinking*: Foundation of Economic Education.

NGA. (2019) Moving MATs forward : the power of governance Birmingham National Governance Association

Oliver D. (2015) Identity work as a strategic practice. *Cambridge Handbook of Strategy as Practice; Golsorkhi, D., Rouleau, L., Seidl, D., Vaara, E., Eds*: 331-344.

Pälli P, Vaara E and Sorsa V. (2009) Strategy as text and discursive practice: a genre-based approach to strategizing in city administration. *Discourse & Communication* 3: 303-318.

Patriotta G. (2003) Sensemaking on the Shop Floor: Narratives of Knowledge in Organizations*. *Journal of Management Studies* 40: 349-375.

Patterson W. (2002) *Strategic Narrative. New perspectives in the Power of Personal and Cultural Stories,* Oxford: Lexington.

Piaget J. (1947) *The Psychology of Intelligence,* London Routledge.

Pintrich PR. (2002) The role of metacognitive knowledge in learning, teaching, and assessing. *Theory into practice* 41: 219-225.

Schatzki TR. (2005) Peripheral vision: The sites of organizations. *Organization Studies* 26: 465-484.

Schein EH. (2010) *Organizational culture and leadership*: John Wiley & Sons.

Schoemaker PJ. (1995) Scenario planning: a tool for strategic thinking. *Sloan management review* 36: 25-50.

Schwandt DR. (2005) When managers become philosophers: Integrating learning with sensemaking. *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 4: 176-192.

Sørensen E and Torfing J. (2011) Enhancing collaborative innovation in the public sector. *Administration & Society* 43: 842-868.

Taylor SE. (1981) Schematic bases of social information processing. *Social Cognition*: 89-134.

Vangen S, Hayes JP and Cornforth C. (2015) Governing cross-sector, inter-organizational collaborations. *Public Management Review* 17: 1237-1260.

Weik K. (2001) *Making Sense of the Organization,* London: Blackwell.

Whittington R. (2007) Strategy Practice and Strategy Process: Family Differences and the Sociological Eye. *Organization Studies* 28: 1575-1586.

Young K. (1989) Narrative embodiments:enclaves of the self in the realm of medicine. In: Shotter J and Gergen K, J. (eds) *Texts of Identity* Newbury Park CA: Sage.

Zaheer S, Schomaker M and Genc M. (2003) Identity versus culture in mergers of equals. *European Management Journal* 21: 185-191.

Appendix 01

Sample

	Number of schools	Area spread	Profile
MAT 01-**South** Interview with: -MAT CEO (1). -Chair of trustees (1) -trustee (1)	4	Confined to one town	Urban Socio economically deprived areas (SED). (based on free school meals indicator). All Primary
MAT 02-**South** Interview with: -Chair of trustees (1) -Trustees (4)	5	Confined to one town	Urban , above average free school meals. Primary and secondary.
MAT 03-**North** Interview with: --Chair of trustees (1) -Trustees (4)	7	Confined to one town with 2 schools in rural areas.	Mixed social economic background (3 in SED areas), 4 in economically buoyant areas) . Primary and secondary
MAT 04-**North**	6	Spread over 3 towns in one county.	Special schools

	Number of schools	Area spread	Profile
Interview with: -Trust CEO (1) -Chair of Trust (1). -Trustee (6)			
MAT 05 **North** Interview with: Chair (TB) (1) Trustees (2)	5	Confined to one town	All primary (high SED).
MAT 06 **North** Interview with: Chair of Trustees (TB) (1) CEO (1) -Trustee (4) -Chair of Trustee Board (1) -Trustees (also parents at one of the schools) (2)	8	Town and outlying rural areas	Mixed all through (primary secondary), some SED, one special school.
MAT 07 South Trustee (4) -Chair of Trustee Board (1) -Trustees (also parents at one of the schools) (2)	8	Town and outlying rural areas	Mixed all through , predominantly primary.
MAT 08 North. Trustees (2).	2	Town	All through

Appendix 02

Size of Multi Academy Trusts and their categorization (NGA, 2019)

Descriptor	Size of MAT	Number of students approx.
Small	1-5	1200
Medium	6-15	5000

Large	16-30	12000
Very large	30+	12000+

Appendix 03

Questions

1. What is your role in the MAT
2. Do you have any relationship with Ofsted and regional Commissioners, if so what?
3. Do you have plans to expand? If so what is driving these plans? How do you get the relevant information to drive these plans?
4. Do you have a strategic development plan (if so can we see it – this is potentially a good source of additional data)?
5. Do you consult with other schools when thinking of expanding? If so how?
6. What are the major strategic challenges facing your MAT at present and in the future, in your opinion?
7. What kind of formal communication methods are have you developed within the MAT a) for staff b) for trustees and academy governors?
8. How are these working in practice?
9. What role have trustees and academy governors in developing strategic plans for the whole MAT.
10. What are the key drivers for MAT strategy as you see them?
11. What are the nature of the relationships between levels of governance in MATs
12. Who appoints the heads of each school?
13. What areas do you see to be weakest in terms of strategy formation?
14. How do boards communicate with parents and other stakeholders within the individual school communities?
15. How do you relay this communication /information between schools and up to board of trustees?
16. And/or how is the responsibility for strategy-making shared with schools?

17. Who is the MAT accountable to?

18. What prompts and drives strategy making in your MAT?

19. How do you approach strategy making in the MAT? Tell me about a strategy for the MAT you are currently implementing.

20. Who do you see as the MAT's main stakeholders? How do they influence strategy? How does the MAT take account of the different circumstances and challenges that schools have?

21. To what extent are schools able to develop their own strategies to meet the part particular challenges they face?

22. What other sources/information do you draw on to inform your strategies?

23. How do you obtain this information?

24. What are the respective roles of the chair, CEO and full board in strategy making?

25. What have you learnt about MAT strategy making since you joined the board?

26. What are/have been your most successful strategies – and why?

27. What are the particular challenges for your MAT? If/why do these need a strategic approach?

28. What have been the biggest barriers to strategy making?