

**BEYOND FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT**  
**A STUDY OF THE PRACTICES OF TWO PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
**TEACHERS**

A thesis presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

Newcastle University

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## **Abstract**

This study was carried out to seek to understand the formative assessment practices of two experienced teachers; to establish the impact of being immersed in a top-down model of education and the extent to which personal and professional biographies influence approaches to formative assessment.

Through adopting a case study approach that valued the voices of the children in the research process, this study elaborates some of the findings of earlier research and highlights important new findings. These include: the sophisticated relationship between a teacher's values and beliefs, the top-down demands of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and approaches to formative assessment; the key role played by specification of attainment in such a top-down model and the notion of three discernible feedback types defined as 'phatic', 'evaluative' and 'analytical'. In addition, a more comprehensive model of assessment is offered that demonstrates the above. This is conceived as 'Reflective Assessment'.

Although this study is small in scale, it is anticipated that the issues raised will be of interest to policy makers, researchers interested in the relationship between the NLS, formative assessment and teacher development, and to primary practitioners themselves.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The term 'Assessment' is used to denote a range of methods used for evaluating pupil performance and attainment (Gipps, 1994). It includes the processes of: "...gathering, interpreting, recording and use of information about pupils' responses to an educational task." (Harlen, 1994: 11) (see section 2.4.1)

Assessment has more recently taken on a high profile, being required to achieve a wide range of purposes; from, for example, supporting teaching and learning to providing information about pupils, teachers and schools (Gipps, 1994). Indeed, there are few areas of education which are more controversial than that of assessment and over the past decade, standards, assessment and accountability have been issues that have dominated discussions of education, fuelled largely by 'moral panic' over standards in early 1998 (Richards, 2000) and the 'performance model' of education that, Pollard (2000) claims, has defined educational discourse and focused professional attention in ways that articulate competitiveness. Recent government initiatives, Weeden et al (2002) conclude, including the National Curriculum (DES, 1988a), assessment procedures and literacy and numeracy hours, have served to endorse this framework with a focus on educational content and delivery as opposed to the consideration of more 'human' perspectives such as the individual and personal nature of teaching and learning. It is against this backdrop that this study is set.

This section presents the reader with a personal perspective of the origin and purpose of the study; how its concepts emerged and how the methodological approach of the study was designed to meet its needs.



## **1.1 The Context and Purpose of the Study**

As a committed primary practitioner I have always been passionate about seeking to improve my own practice and keen to work with others to develop my own understanding and interpretation of new initiatives. The introduction of the NLS in 1998, served as a catalyst for my development as a new researcher, eager to reflect on my practice within a broader theoretical framework. As a classroom based practitioner for four years and having had the opportunity to work alongside experienced colleagues to develop personalised schemes of work for the teaching of English, I was fascinated by the introduction of the NLS. As an enthusiastic and, on reflection, naive and novice practitioner, I was elated with the NLS framework. I saw its strengths in terms of parity of access to literacy across a two-form entry school and was delighted to be 'given' planning and resources. At the outset of its introduction, I followed the NLS framework for teaching wholeheartedly. However, as time progressed, I became increasingly uncomfortable with aspects of my own practice. I felt that I was being restricted by the hour-long teaching session and did not exercise the flexibility and flair that had been central to my pre-NLS teaching. In response to this, and in part fulfilment of the criteria for a Master of Education degree at Newcastle University, I conducted a small scale study, working alongside fellow teachers, to begin to tease out teacher and pupil perceptions of the introduction of the NLS. Though small in scale, the study highlighted that although there were aspects of the NLS that teachers and pupils involved in the study found to be positive, there were also some negative aspects, such as the length of time children were expected to engage in 'shared reading'. As a senior teacher at the primary school I began to work more closely with colleagues following the study to implement some changes in teachers' practice. This served to highlight to me the

importance of grounded research and its possibilities in terms of implementing focused and appropriate change.

As a senior teacher at the school, one of my responsibilities was that of managing assessment. The target driven culture of the school was inevitable, given the high stakes attached to published league tables and the introduction of more thorough 'teacher performance' practices that pervaded the school. As assessment leader my responsibilities included monitoring the measurable outcomes of Standardised Assessment Tests (SATs) and setting class and school targets based on these. This was initially an exciting role as I could see children making 'progress', however, as with the introduction of the NLS, I soon began to have concerns about preparing Year 2 children, whom I taught, for SAT tests and, following an introduction to the work of Black and Wiliam (1998a), began to see the potential of assessment to promote learning rather than to merely measure it. In light of this, and as a consequence of being appointed as a lecturer at Newcastle University, I felt passionate about exploring the possibilities of Assessment for Learning.

My role as lecturer served many purposes, and a key aspect was that of contributing to the 'Professional Studies' element of the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). I therefore sought the opportunity to work with trainee teachers and, based on my own experiences as a classroom teacher, introduced the trainees to the notion of 'formative assessment' and the work of Black and Wiliam (1998a). I delivered a range of lectures and workshops and espoused the potential of formative assessment for moving children forward in their learning and, using Clarke's (2001) work as a model, provided the trainees with a range of ideas and resources for 'effective formative assessment'. Indeed,

the diet of my lectures and workshops very much mirrored the training that I had received and I felt confident that trainee teachers were being equipped with contemporary research findings to enhance the quality of their teaching. At the outset I was delighted to note, when observing trainee teachers delivering lessons, that they were using a range of formative assessment strategies. However, as I observed more and more lessons, I began to have doubts about their formative 'behaviour'. I feared that I had equipped them with the tools for formative assessment and they were 'going through the motions' of behaving formatively. For example, virtually all trainees mechanically shared learning objectives with pupils, asked pupils to 'self evaluate' using the same 'traffic light' strategy but failed to move children forward as a consequence. These doubts were reaffirmed in trainees' lesson plans where under the heading 'What evidence do you have of pupil progress?' numerous trainees would simply write "formative assessment".

As a consequence I began to problematise formative assessment. The 'problem' seemed to be that formative assessment was perceived by the trainee teachers as an 'added extra' and not embedded in their practice, in spite of my best efforts to link theory and practice. I therefore decided to investigate the formative assessment practices of experienced teachers in efforts to gain a deeper understanding of this complex phenomenon and to investigate what aspects of their formative behaviour may usefully be encouraged in order to support the development of classroom practice.

## **1.2 The Conceptual Basis of the Study**

Having decided to investigate the notion of formative assessment on the basis of an identified 'problem', I set about conducting a study of the literature in order to have a

clearer understanding of how formative assessment is perceived by a range of researchers and practitioners. My starting point was Black and Wiliam (1998a) given that this had been my first real introduction to the notion of assessment for learning. Following this I conducted a thorough review of the literature associated with assessment, and with formative assessment in particular. In conducting this review, it became increasingly evident that formative assessment is far more complex than I had at first considered and this raised two key questions: Given the apparent complexities associated with formative assessment: What strategies do teachers use? And why?

Furthermore, as my review of the literature broadened, it became evident that those interested in formative assessment, such as Black and Wiliam (1998a), Clarke and McCallum (2001) and Tunstall and Gipps (1996), unite formative assessment and effective pedagogy, and present readers with a range of techniques for implementing formative assessment; however, notions associated with the individual and personal nature of teaching are not considered in detail. And, although the main focus of this study is 'formative assessment' it became clear that I needed a more secure understanding of the contextual basis for assessment. Formative assessment, I began to realise, is only one feature of teaching and learning and therefore cannot be examined in isolation. These issues made me consider the 'problem' further: Does the individual and personal nature of teaching have a relationship with formative assessment?

In order to address the above questions, I decided to focus on the formative assessment strategies employed during the teaching of English, that is, during the 'Literacy Hour'(DfEE, 1998). The rationale for this is that I felt that it would be useful to continue my 'research thread' from the small scale study that I had conducted as part of the MEd,

and I was interested to establish if there was a relationship between the top-down approach to the teaching of literacy and teachers' approaches to formative assessment. In addition, I also felt that by focussing on one particular subject I could manage the study more easily. For example, I could organise visits to schools, in liaison with class teachers, effectively as times for teaching English were 'set' and I could work with experienced teachers with similar interests, the intention being that we would all have a shared dialogue and this would aid the research process.

Therefore, the conceptual basis for the study is grounded in consideration of formative assessment during the literacy hour and the individual and personal nature of teaching.

The main research questions that the study is seeking to respond to therefore are:

1. What formative assessment strategies do teachers use?
2. What has been the impact of a top-down approach to the teaching of literacy on teachers' approaches to formative assessment?
3. Is there a relationship between teachers' personal and professional biographies and their approaches to formative assessment?

The review of the literature became focused on three themes: the context of teaching literacy in primary schools; the individual and personal nature of teaching, and assessment. The structure of the literature review is such that the reader has a clear understanding of the teaching of literacy in schools today and an understanding of the individual and personal nature of teaching before considering notions of assessment.

The rationale for this is that I wish to illustrate my conceptualisation, that formative assessment should not be perceived as an 'added extra', rather it should be embedded in practice and in one's values and beliefs as a practitioner.

### 1.3 The Approach of the Study

In order to respond to the research questions, it was imperative that I adopted an appropriate approach to the study. As is described in the Methodology Chapter, I adopted a case study approach. In order to illustrate this, the figure below (Figure 1.1) highlights how the three main components of the literature review have a relationship with the methodology.

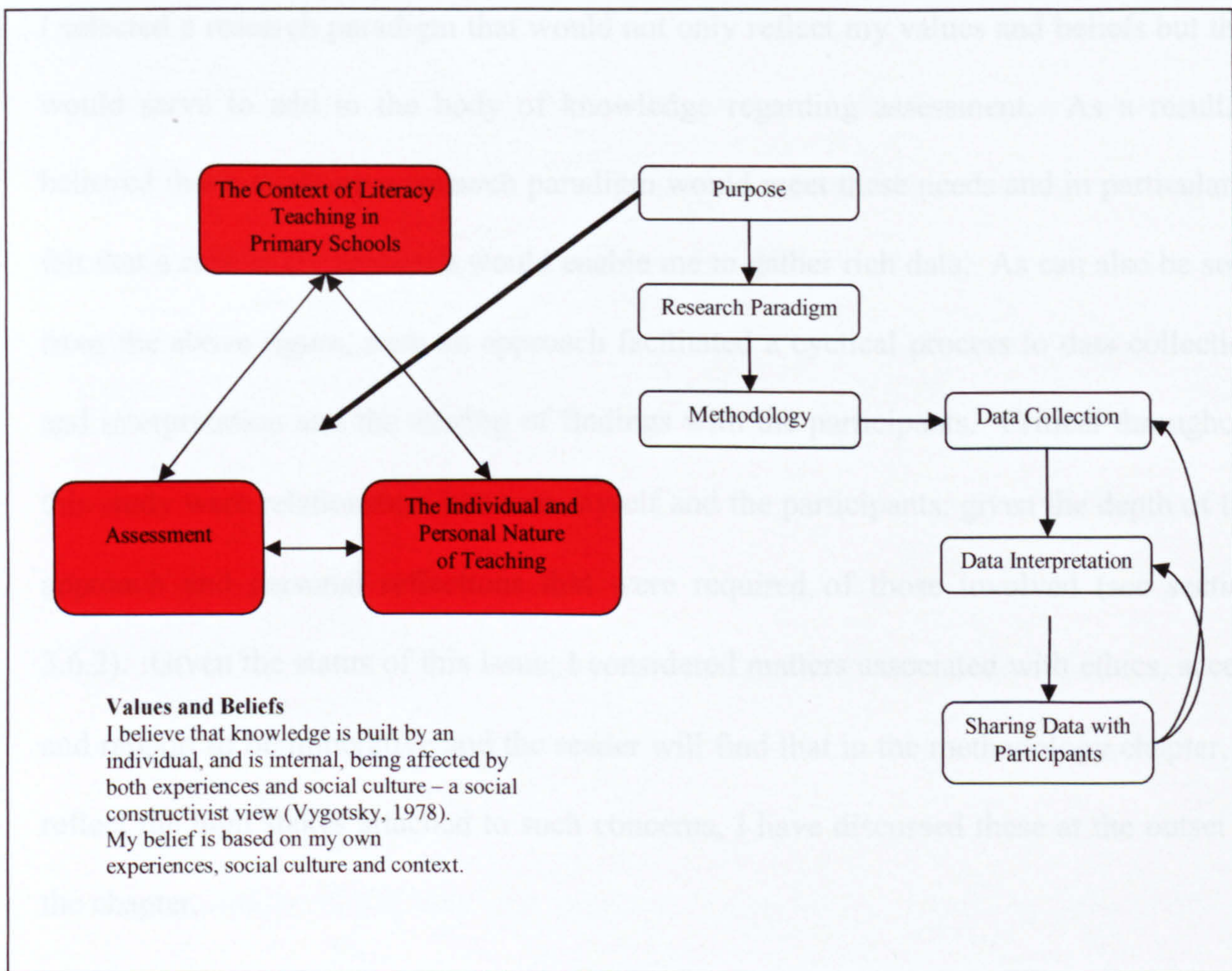


Figure 1.1 A Model to Illustrate the Relationship between the Theoretical Underpinnings of the Study and its Methodology

As can be seen, the study is designed to understand teachers' practice; to consider the context of literacy teaching, the individual and personal nature of teaching and the relationship between these and assessment. The figure highlights that the overall purpose of the study is to reach into the heart of these issues in order to assume a secure understanding of formative assessment, its purpose and factors that impact upon it. The figure also demonstrates that in order to be able to tackle this, I have considered my own values and beliefs and as a consequence this has had an influence on the research design. I selected a research paradigm that would not only reflect my values and beliefs but that would serve to add to the body of knowledge regarding assessment. As a result, I believed that a qualitative research paradigm would meet these needs and in particular, I felt that a case study approach would enable me to gather rich data. As can also be seen from the above figure, such an approach facilitated a cyclical process to data collection and interpretation and the sharing of findings with the participants. Critical throughout this study were relationships between myself and the participants, given the depth of the approach and personal reflections that were required of those involved (see section 3.6.2). Given the status of this issue, I considered matters associated with ethics, access and rapport to be imperative and the reader will find that in the methodology chapter, to reflect the high stakes attached to such concerns, I have discussed these at the outset of the chapter.

## **1.4 The Structure of the Study**

The structure of the study is organised to reflect its purpose and its conceptual framework and is organised into six chapters. Chapter one provides an introduction to the study and the following provides an overview of the contents of the remaining chapters.

## **Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature**

This chapter provides a review of the literature which is relevant to the study. The sections covered in the literature review fall into three main areas that form the study's theoretical basis as described earlier. The three aspects are: The Context of Literacy Teaching in Primary Schools, The Individual and Personal Nature of Teaching and Assessment.

*The Context of Literacy Teaching in Primary Schools* provides a contextual review of the literature regarding primary education, reflecting on recent changes and current teaching practices. This section considers, in particular, the teaching of English and the evolution of the NLS.

*The Individual and Personal Nature of Teaching* provides a discussion of the nature of primary teaching in English schools today, reflecting on the impact of educational changes on individual teachers. Literature regarding the personal nature of teaching is reviewed given that this provides the context within which teachers assess pupils.

*Assessment* considers the role and purpose of assessment, focussing particularly on formative assessment. The evolution of formative assessment is discussed together with its characteristics.

## **Chapter 3: The Methodology**

This chapter provides a description of the methodological approach of the study. It outlines my decision to adopt a case study approach and also describes the methods that



were used to gather and analyse the data, providing a discussion of the issues of access and rapport, ethical principles and validity in relation to the study.

#### **Chapter 4: The Main Findings**

This chapter presents the main findings of the study and is organised into several themes: factors that influence a teacher's values and beliefs, a 'top – down' approach to teaching literacy and its impact on assessment, 'phatic', 'evaluative' and 'analytical' feedback and why teachers use particular strategies: the individual and personal nature of teaching.

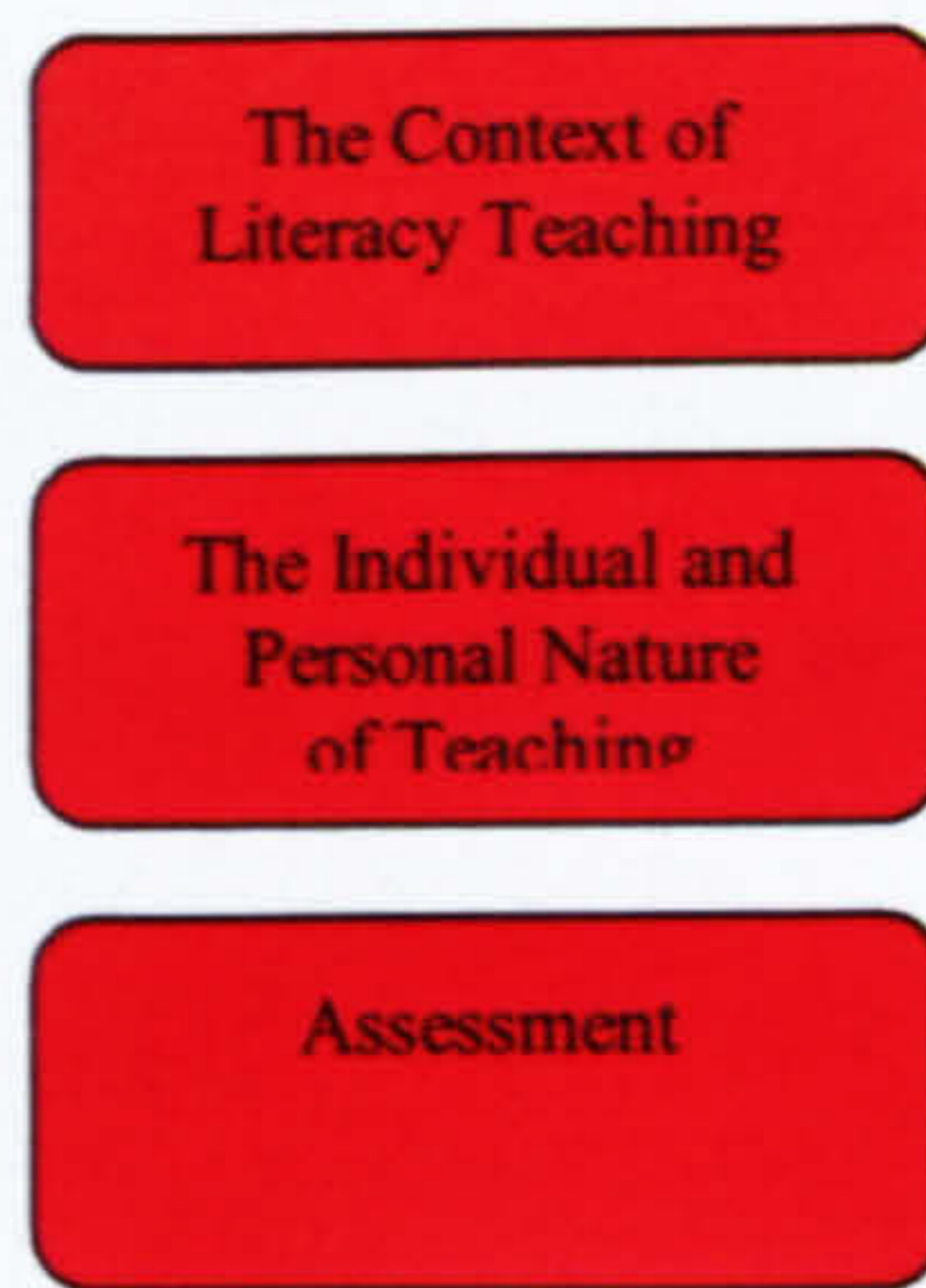
#### **Chapter 5: Discussion of the Findings**

This chapter discusses the main findings of the study and draws links with relevant literature. It is organised to respond to the research questions, with the final section of the chapter proposing a model for considering 'Reflective Assessment'.

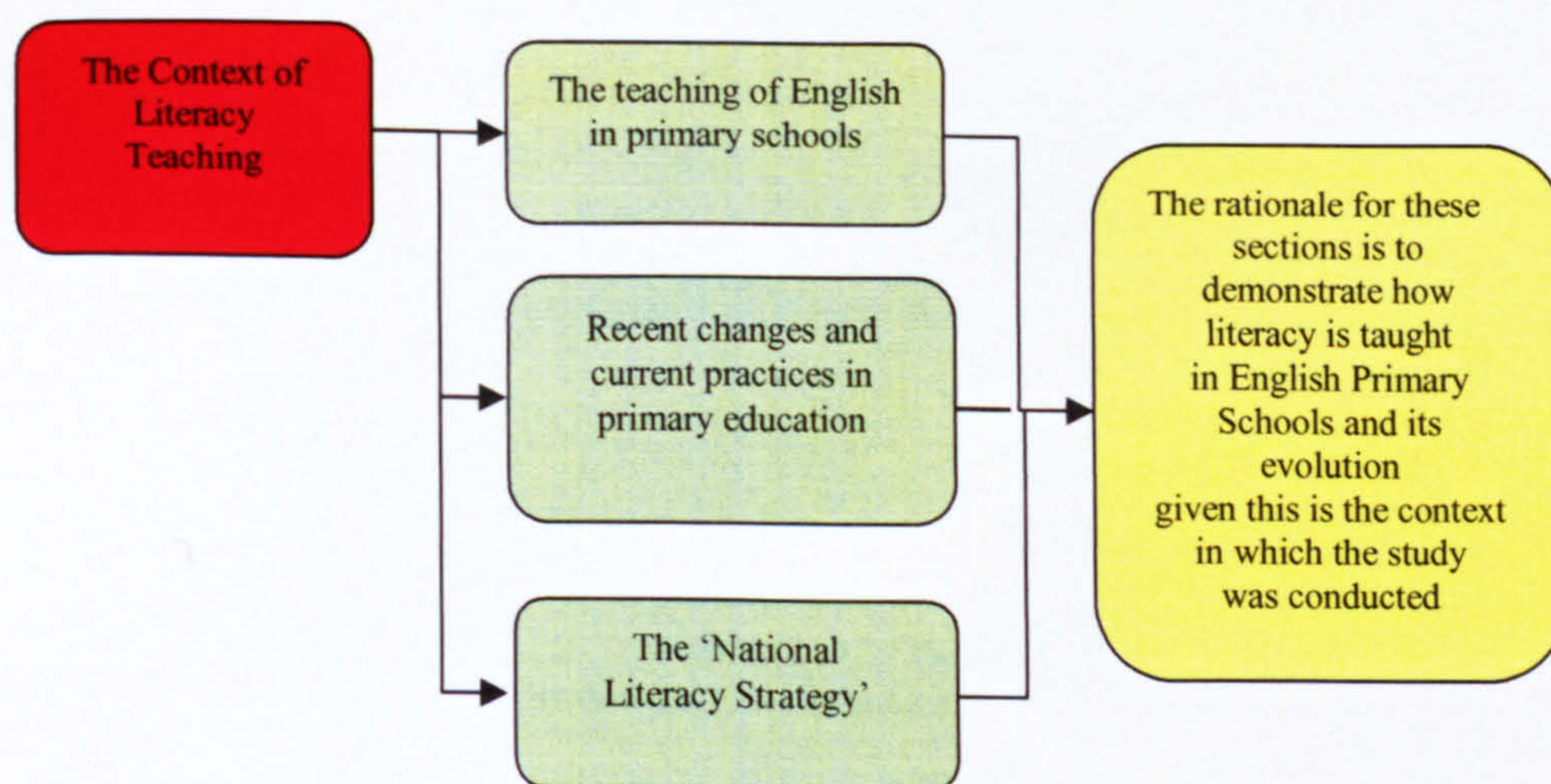
#### **Chapter 6: Conclusions**

This chapter considers a range of implications of the study, focussing on those that have the potential to impact upon practitioners, policy makers, teacher-training development and considers how the findings of the study may have implications for further research opportunities.

As can be seen, the chapters are sub-divided and again there is a clear rationale for this in each instance. In order to present this clearly to the reader, each chapter and section to chapter is accompanied by a visual model of its structure, concepts and rationale for organisation. For example, the literature review is divided into three main chapters (red):



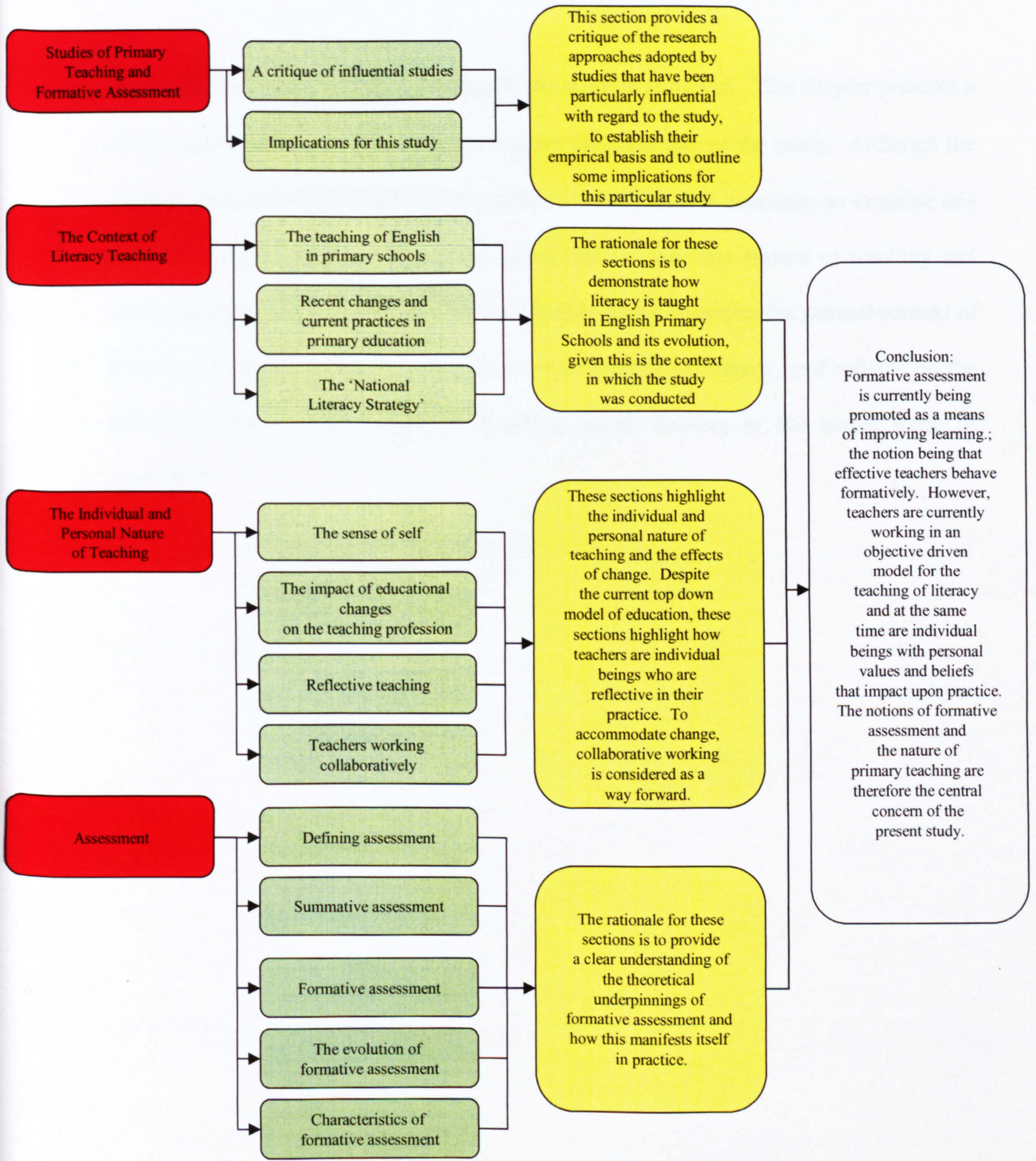
Each main chapter is then sub-divided into key themes (green) that are relevant to the theoretical underpinnings of the study and a rationale for these is also presented (yellow) for example:



The reader will note that each chapter is accompanied by a 'complete' overview at its outset and then by specifically highlighted views of the up-coming section. The intention of this is two-fold: to provide the reader with a visual cue as to the structure of the study and to provide a clear picture of the concepts and rationales behind each aspect of the study.

The above has provided the reader with an overview of the contexts and concepts that underpin the study. The following chapter therefore moves to provide the reader with a review of the literature that is pertinent to the study.

## A Review of the Literature

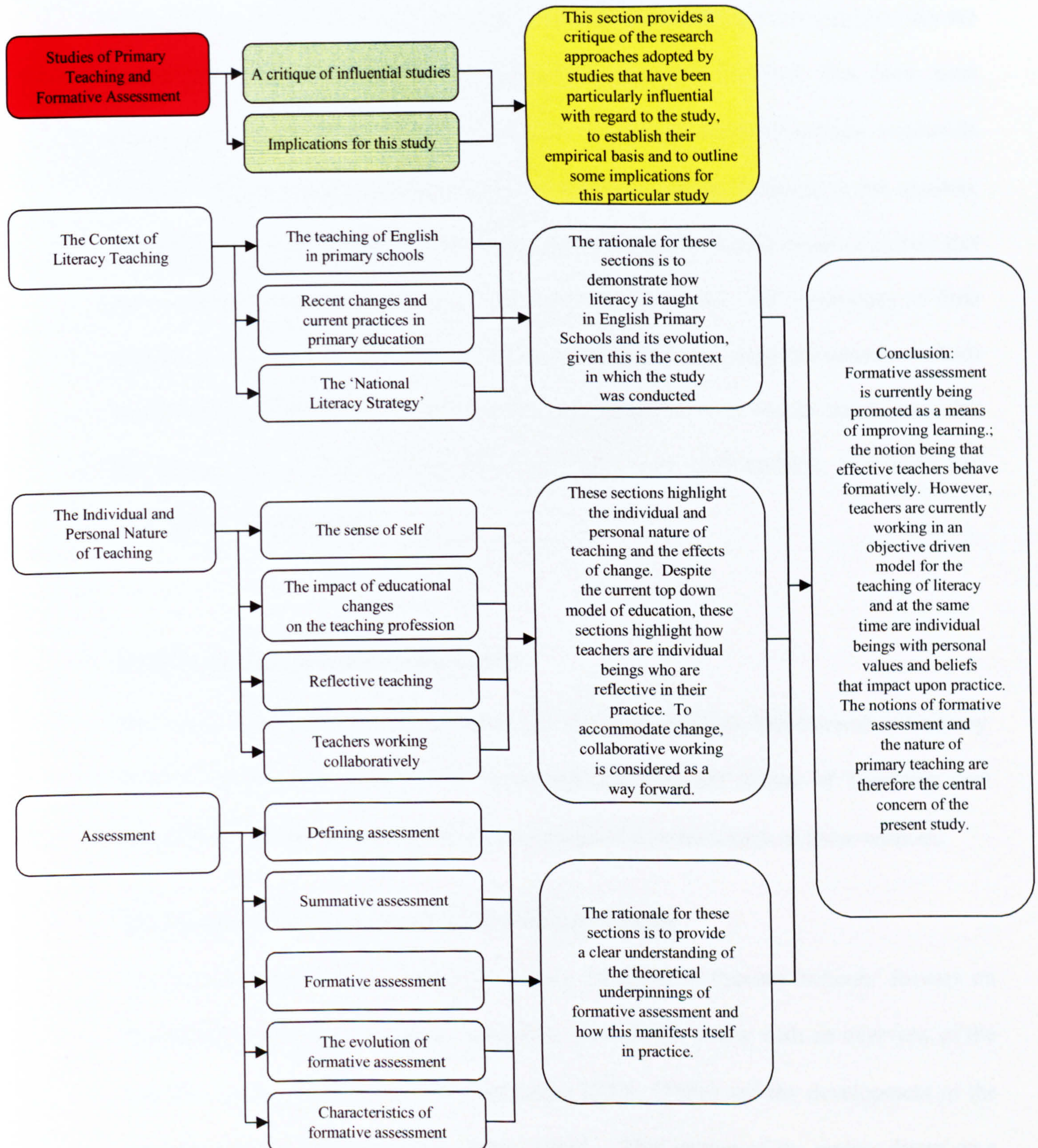


Legend: ■ Main Section    ■ Sub-Sections    ■ Rationale for Organisation

## **Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature**

In this chapter, literature that is relevant to the study is reviewed. This chapter presents a critical overview of three linked areas that are the main foci of the study. Although the study is essentially concerned with formative assessment, it is necessary to examine this aspect in further context. Formative assessment is only one feature of teaching and cannot be examined alone. Therefore this chapter firstly considers the general context of primary teaching focusing in particular on the teaching of literacy, and reflects on the individual and personal nature of teaching before moving to the actual topic of assessment.

## A Review of the Literature



Legend: ■ Main Section      ■ Sub-Sections      ■ Rationale for Organisation

## **2.1 Studies of Primary Teaching and Formative Assessment**

This chapter reviews the work of a number of researchers and the following provides the reader with a critique of the research methods adopted by those that have been particularly influential with regard to this study. Given the scope of the study, to provide detailed critiques of all work mentioned in the review of the literature is not feasible, nevertheless, I have included a table (Table 1) to illustrate a broader range of studies that have influenced this piece of work and to provide the reader with a summary of their approaches to research. The rationale for this is to present the range of research methods used in existing studies in order to establish their empirical basis and to demonstrate that the approaches of other studies have not only been contemplated, but have had implications for this study.

### **2.1.2 A critique of influential studies**

The review of the literature is organised into three key sections: The Context of Literacy Teaching in Primary Schools; The Individual and Personal Nature of Teaching; and Assessment, and the following critiques consider studies from each of those sections.

#### **The Context of Literacy Teaching in Primary Schools**

The section entitled ‘The Context of Literacy Teaching in Primary Schools’ focuses on the teaching of literacy in primary schools to provide the reader with an overview of the evolution of the English National Curriculum (DES, 1988a) and the development of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS, DfEE, 1998). This section of the review draws on a range of texts to demonstrate some of the fundamental changes that have arisen since 1870 with regard to the English National Curriculum, and focuses on the contemporary

studies conducted by Mroz et al (2000) and Hardman et al (2003) to highlight some of the criticisms associated with the NLS. The following provides a critique of the above studies, and Table 1 provides further detail on additional material used in this study.

Mroz et al's (2000) study analysed the discourse styles of 10 teachers to investigate teachers' practice with regard to interactive whole class teaching. They used an opportunity sample of 10 teachers identified as being 'effective teachers of the literacy hour' by the Local Education Authority (LEA) NLS co-ordinator. To capture data, lessons were videoed and transcribed using a coded framework adapted from Sinclair and Coulthard's (1992) system of discourse analysis (see section 2.2.3), whereby data were coded according to teaching exchange categories. In a brief section, it is not possible to present and demonstrate the actual techniques of linguistic discourse analysis (see for example, Brown and Yule (1983), Coulthard (1977), Coulthard and Montgomery (1981), and Edwards and Westgate (1994)) nevertheless, it is worth noting that a key advantage of such an approach is that it allows the researcher to investigate the structure of classroom interaction (McCarthy, 1991). Sinclair and Coulthard's work regarding discourse analysis introduces their concept of the I-R-E exchange. The I-R-E pattern, consists of three moves: an initiation, usually in the form of a teacher question; a response, in which a student attempts to answer the question and a follow-up move, often in the form of an evaluation, to the pupil's response. However, Sinclair and Coulthard's work is not without its critics and Lemke (1998), for example, points out that meaning is not made with language alone and that in speech it is accompanied by gestural, postural, proxemic, situational and paralinguistic information.



In addition, although Mroz et al claim that they based their study on the teaching of effective practitioners, this may be questionable. For example, they state that they were identified as 'effective' by an LEA co-ordinator, although they do not offer an interpretation of what 'effective' means or indeed looks like in practice. Furthermore, it is possible to suggest that not all interpretations of effective practice are the same and thus there is the potential that observers may have differing perceptions of what they believe to be effective practice or not. In addition, although 10 teachers were observed and this has the advantage of allowing for comparability (Bryman, 2004), only one lesson per teacher was recorded. It is possible to suggest firstly, that in capturing only one lesson, the data is only providing a 'snapshot' of a particular teacher's practice and one could question the extent to which this was a 'typical' lesson. Secondly, as described above, lessons were videoed. Although videoing lessons serves the advantage of capturing many non-verbal signs and offers a comprehensive and permanent record of events (Ribbins, 2007), there is the potential of intrusion and of disconcerting participants, thus one could question the extent to which the recorded lesson is representative of a teacher's normal practice, and therefore the claims made by Mroz et al regarding the discourse styles of teachers and their practice.

Hardman et al's (2003) study used two approaches to investigate the interaction and discourse styles of 70 'nationally representative' teachers. A computerised observation system was used to record lessons using a pre-coded scheme. The advantages of such an approach, Hardman et al assert, were that it enabled the researcher to observe a lesson in 'real time', allowing the researcher to focus on the three part I-R-E pattern, as revealed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1992) whilst gathering data on teachers' questions and pupil initiations. Furthermore, as Bryman (2004) points out, such an approach allows

behaviour to be observed directly, such that it is possible to aggregate the behaviour of all those involved in the sample. However, such a structured approach to lesson observation and recording has, Bryman (2004: 177) states, its issues. For example:

“...there is a risk of imposing a potentially inappropriate framework on the setting being observed...structured observation is rarely able to get at intentions behind behaviour...neglects the context in which behaviour takes place.”

To triangulate their results, Hardman et al analysed a sub-sample of ten lessons using Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) system of discourse analysis. Although such a technique has strengths in terms of categorising teacher exchanges (Hardman et al, 2003), it is reasonable to suggest that the disadvantages are similar to those described above, given that the ten videoed lessons were transcribed and again coded into ten categories.

It is also worth noting that the sample used in Hardman et al's (2003) study is described as 'nationally representative'. Hardman et al describe how the sample of 70 teachers were selected using Performance Indicators in Primary Schools, provided by the Evaluation and Management Centre at Durham University to ensure a sample of teachers were selected to represent a range of socio-economic and geographical settings from Reception to Year Six. As with Mroz's study, however, one could question the extent to which the sample was 'nationally representative', given that little information is provided for the reader to comprehend this.

Although Hardman et al's study provides the reader with valuable insights into teachers' practice during the literacy hour (NLS, DFEE, 1998), Hardman et al (2003: 214) acknowledge that:

“We also need more research to provide comprehensive evidence, for both teachers and policy-makers, that interactive styles of teaching encouraging more active pupil involvement can produce significant gains in learning.”

The two studies described above demonstrate some of the strengths and difficulties associated with research in the field of teaching. For example, both studies were designed to investigate and analyse teacher discourse styles. The first difficulty that arises, that has implications for this study, is that of selecting the cases. Mroz et al's study identified teachers who were described as 'effective' and Hardman et al's study identified those who were 'nationally representative', however, as described earlier, in each case, this is problematic, given that, in both cases, these 'characteristics' may be open to question. An implication for this study, therefore, is that in describing the cases, I must endeavour to present a clear presentation of each case such that the reader has a thorough understanding of those investigated.

Mroz et al's (2000) and Hardman et al's (2003) studies regarding the discourse styles of teachers both used video footages of a sample of teachers and transcribed these according to pre-coded categories. Although a strength of this is that events are captured and behaviour can be 'aggregated', the disadvantages of, for example, the potential of intrusion and the potential of capturing only 'snapshot' lessons have implications for this study. An aim of this study is to move beyond merely describing teacher's practice to understanding it. Therefore, as is explained in Chapter 3, the study aims to gather rich data from teachers in their 'natural settings' (Bassegy, 1999).

## **The Individual and Personal Nature of Teaching**

The second section of the literature review draws on the work of those interested in the individual and personal nature of teaching. This section of the literature review makes reference to a range of literature associated with the sense of self, reflective teaching and teacher collaboration and the following provides the reader with a critique of the approaches of these studies. It is worth noting, however, that, although Lortie (1975) claimed that empirical studies of schools are important, there is a relatively small amount of research literature that focuses on the nature of primary teaching. However, there are specific key texts which have, over time, helped to create a picture of primary teaching and this section focuses particularly on what Moss, White and Moore, (2004) describe as the 'major research' of Lortie (1975) and Nias (1989), and also on the more contemporary work of Beijaard et al (2000). The reader will find that further studies are referred to in Table 1.

Lortie's (1975) book is based on two of his earlier studies. Lortie's 'Five Towns' research (1963) was based on data generated by ninety-four intense interviews conducted with randomly selected teachers from five towns in the Boston Metropolitan area. The use of intense interviews, Lortie (1975: 107) claims, encouraged respondents to talk at length in terms of 'their conceptualization of the teacher's world'. The interviews included a range of structured questions, designed to elicit what seem to be 'facts' about the respondents, to more 'probing questions' (Lortie, 1975: 248). On analysis of the interview questions, it is possible to discern that they formed the basis of a semi-structured interview, given that, as Bryman (2004) states, the interviewer had a great deal of leeway in how to reply. However, Lortie acknowledges that although the approach facilitated the opportunity to interview respondents at length and in depth, the sample

was limited in terms of its representativeness, as it did not, for example, include teachers from rural settings or from the central city areas. Furthermore, such an approach is not without its disadvantages. Bryman (2004), for example, describes the notion of the 'reactive effects', the point being that, as in any human interaction, the data are affected by the personal identity of the researcher. The second study used to inform Lortie's 1975 work, was his 'Dade County' (1964, Florida) research which was based on a questionnaire survey. A clear advantage of the survey was its potential for gaining large amounts of data given that over five thousand teachers worked throughout the sub-communities of Dade County and:

“...this teaching staff probably has one of the most diverse regional origins among large school systems.” (Lortie, 1975: 247).

The fundamental advantages of such an approach are that it is economical, quick and easy to arrange, supplies standardised answers and pre-coded answers (Bryman, 2004). However, as Denscome (2003) points out, the disadvantages mirror the advantages. For example, pre-coded answers and questionnaires, by their very nature, he states, shape the nature of the responses in a fashion reflecting the researcher's thinking rather than the respondents'.

Nevertheless, despite the limitations of aspects of his work, and Lortie is explicit about this with particular regard to the context-bound elements of the 'Five Towns' study, his work is referred to extensively by authors interested in the notion of the 'self' of the teacher.

Nias' (1989) book is based on personal accounts of teachers who trained on a one-year Post Graduate Certificate (PGCE) course. She interviewed ninety-nine teachers with two

to nine years of experience between 1975 and 1977 and spent half a day with them in their classes making un-structured observations. The interviews, Nias explains, were lengthy and respondents were encouraged to give long and discursive answers. In addition, the respondents also maintained research diaries. Nias then followed this with a further fifty interviews in 1985. The study collected data over a period of 10 years and one of the main advantages that can be attributed to Nias' study is its length and scope for generating much data (Bryman, 2004). However, in many ways, these attributes are also potential disadvantages. For example, Nias (1989: 9) herself states that the analysis of such a broad range of data was problematic and, in presenting the evidence: "...I omitted much more data than I have included."

Beijaard et al's (2000) study was conducted to establish secondary school teachers' current and prior perceptions of their professional identity and factors that contribute to these perceptions. To conduct the study 80 'experienced' secondary school teachers participated in the research. Data were collected through the use of questionnaires organised into four parts. The first part of the questionnaire was designed to establish general facts, for example, sex, age and subjects taught. The second part of the questionnaire required teachers to represent their professional identity through the awarding of points to three aspects of identity; namely 'subject matter expert', 'didactical expert' and 'pedagogical expert' and teachers were asked to provide further clarification about their points awarded. The third parts of the questionnaire consisted of likert scale questions, with the fourth element designed to understand influencing factors. The advantages associated with such an approach to data collection are that, as described earlier, it is cost-effective, manageable, and supplies 'standardised' and pre-coded answers. However, by their very nature, questionnaires can be biased towards the

researcher's thinking rather than that of the respondents' and offer little opportunity for the researcher to: "...check for truthfulness...This is all the more true if questionnaires are anonymous." (Denscombe, 2003: 160) Furthermore, one could argue that because the questionnaire is often conducted at a distance, there is no opportunity to clarify meanings or rhetoric. For example, this questionnaire uses particular terminology such as 'subject expert', 'pedagogic expert' and 'didactic expert' and there is potential that these may be interpreted differently by different practitioners. In addition, questionnaires may be frustrating for respondents to respond to and, as Bryman (2004) points out, there is no opportunity to prompt respondents.

With specific regard to Beijaard et al's questionnaire, there is also the issue that this was given to secondary school teachers, and by its very nature, this implies that the data may not be generalisable given that it was context bound. In addition, and again with particular regard to their study, Beijaard et al claim that they issued the questionnaire to 'experienced' teachers, with 4+ years experience and that they were selected with the help of school administrators. However, little detail is given with regard to the characteristic 'experienced' and one could question the extent to which the term was understood and interpreted by all those involved in selecting the participants, and thus question the validity of their claims.

The above studies stimulated an interest in this study being concerned with the individual and personal nature of teaching, although it is important to note that each of the studies had strengths and limitations and therefore implications for the design of this study. Firstly, although all studies were concerned with the individual and personal nature of teaching, and Beijaard et al's study (2000) served to aid the analysis of the data (see

section 3.8) each approached the collection of data differently. In consideration of this study, the in-depth approach adopted by Nias (1989) was appealing in that rich, quality data could be gathered, however, Nias' study was longitudinal in design and, given the scope of this study such an approach was therefore not feasible. Nevertheless, the notion of lengthy and detailed interviews, adopted by both Lortie (1975) and Nias (1989: 1), designed to gain: "...an insider's account of teaching" was of interest to this study and therefore, the approaches of Lortie and Nias, with particular regard to interviewing, were considered of particular importance (see section 3.6.2). As described above, Beijaard et al's data were gathered through the use of questionnaires, and given that this study was concerned with teachers in their 'natural settings' (Bassegy, 1999), such an approach to data collection was not employed.

With regard to the selection of the cases for this study, the above studies indicate that, in seeking to investigate the individual and personal nature of teaching studies have focused on teachers in a range of contexts from randomly selected teachers, to those with a range of teaching experiences, including secondary education. Given that this study was designed at gaining rich data from teachers in their natural settings and was dependant upon one researcher, then a study of large numbers of teachers was not practicable. This study, as is described in Chapter 3, focuses on two key teachers, although it was deemed to be of importance that, like those in Beijaard's study, they were 'experienced' (see section 3.5.3).

### **Assessment.**

The final chapter of the literature review focuses on assessment. This section of the literature review focuses in particular on studies associated with formative assessment,



although reference is made to summative assessment and assessment in general (see sections 2.4.1, 2.4.2 and 2.4.3). The review draws on a range of research in the field, and although the following section focuses specifically on Black and Wiliam (1998a), Clarke (2001) and Tunstall and Gipps (1996), reference is also made to research regarding teacher planning. Furthermore, the reader will note that given the scope of the study this critique is not exhaustive, nevertheless, Table 1 makes reference to further studies discussed in the literature review.

Black and Wiliam's (1998a) publication sought to answer the following three fundamental questions: Is there evidence that improving formative assessment raises standards? Is there evidence that there is room for improvement? And is there evidence about how to improve formative assessment. Prior to discussing their study, however, it is worth noting that in the literature review reference is made to Wiliam (2003) where a distinction is drawn between formative assessment and assessment for learning, conceptualising assessment for learning as the 'purpose', and formative assessment as the 'process'. The rationale for this is clarified by Black et al (2003: 122) who state:

"The phrase 'assessment for learning' has become a common substitute for 'formative assessment', yet there is possible ambiguity in this label. Information about learning can be gained from any assessment designed to produce such information, but if it is used for recording purposes or for long-term curriculum improvement, it will not help the learning of the students currently involved. It might be formative for the teacher, but not for the students."

However, it is worth noting Pollard's (1992, cited in Ecclestone and Pryor, 2003) observation that researchers have a tendency to create new categories and this may cause confusion. For example, much literature and indeed the current QCA documentation, uses the phrases 'assessment for learning' and 'formative assessment' interchangeably. Given that there is already confusion regarding assessment and in particular teachers'

understanding of formative assessment, (see for example, Neesom, 2000) one could suggest that by offering a different interpretation one is adding further confusion. Nevertheless, although I acknowledge Pollard's caution, throughout this study I have used the term 'formative assessment' with an understanding that it is a tool by which assessment for learning can take place, that it is a process in which, as Black et al (2003) state, learning is evoked and then used to modify teaching and learning.

With regard to Black and Wiliam's (1998a: 2) study they:

“...conducted an extensive survey of the research literature...checking through many books, through the issues of over 160 journals for the past nine years, and studying earlier reviews of research.”

This process yielded approximately 580 articles or chapters and following this, the analysis resulted in a review which used 250 of the above mentioned sources. One of the priorities in evaluating the research reports, Black and Wiliam explain, was to identify and summarise studies that produced quantitative evidence that innovations in formative assessment could lead to improvement in learning. Thus their review allowed the area of research to be viewed in comprehensive detail. However, although their report focused on formative assessment, Sebatane, (1998) highlights that despite high stakes assessment procedures impacting upon a range of aspects of teachers and student behaviour, these are not considered in Black and Wiliam's (1998) paper. In addition, whilst Sebatane (1998: 128 and 124) acknowledges that Black and Wiliam have: “...done a commendable job of identifying and reviewing relevant literature” he states that: “...it does not seem entirely satisfactory to have excluded from consideration...contextual factors in dealing with teachers' assessment.”

Clarke (2001) reports on the first term of a formative assessment project conducted with partnership schools in Gillingham. The project, as outlined in section 2.4.2, was divided into four terms, whereby the schools were involved in an action research project to implement a range of practical formative assessment strategies based on the findings of Black and Wiliam (1998a). Each of the first three terms commenced with in-service training for teachers, led by Clarke, where various formative assessment strategies were outlined, discussed and practised. Following the training, teachers then implemented the strategies within their classrooms and towards the end of each term observations of lessons took place, together with interviews with teachers and pupils involved in the study. In total, 173 teachers from 15 schools were involved and from each class, a maximum of three children of varying abilities were selected by the teachers to complete the research sample. Such an approach to research, Wellington (2000) states, merits the label of action research, because the research is conducted with a view to changing or improving a situation. The advantage of such an approach is that, for example: it addresses practical problems in a positive manner, through the feeding of the results of the research back into practice; it benefits the practitioner through involvement in 'professional development' and involves participation in the research by the participants, thus they have 'ownership' of the study (Denscombe, 2003). However, factors associated with the control of variables throughout the research can be problematic and, furthermore, the action researcher, Denscombe states, is unlikely to be detached and impartial.

Tunstall and Gipps' (1996) study was designed to investigate types of feedback given to Key Stage One pupils aged 6 and 7. The study was conducted in six schools in five Local Education Authorities. In total 8 teachers participated and 49 pupils. Data were

collected from each school through 15 classroom (tape) recordings and observations, interviews with teachers and children together with samples of children's written work and school policy documentation. Tunstall and Gipps explain their rationale for tape recording sessions, claiming that observations alone would have failed to collect the full range of descriptive feedback provided by teachers. Nevertheless, as Bryman (2004) states, there is a potential cost of recording and that is that the recorder may disconcert respondents, who become self-conscious. The implication then is that the tool for data gathering may inadvertently impact upon it, thus posing a threat to the data itself. However, it is worth noting that Tunstall and Gipps' research also involved 'note-taking' to supplement the recordings alongside 'pre-structured' but 'open-ended' observations (Tunstall and Gipps, 1996) to provide further contextual information and detail. Nevertheless, it is essential to point out that although such observations provided additional information, there are some fundamental disadvantages associated with pre-structured questions as discussed earlier with regard to Hardman et al's (2003) study.

The above studies, have, as has been identified, specific strengths and limitations and as a consequence have particular implications for this study. With regard to Black and Wiliam's (1998b) work, which focused on a review of the research literature regarding formative assessment, the main advantage of their approach, through reviewing the literature associated with formative assessment, was that it facilitated the opportunity to view formative assessment in comprehensive detail (Denscombe, 2003). However, pertinent to this study are the issues raised by Sebatane (1998) regarding 'high stakes' assessment and 'context'. The implication for this study is that, although formative assessment is the main interest of the study, that 'summative' assessment be explored together with further contextualisation. The reader will note, therefore, that this study

addresses summative assessment in section 2.4.2. The importance of context is also a key feature of this study in terms of its theoretical basis, with the review of the literature referring to this aspect specifically (see section 2.2), and is a focus of the inquiry of the study (see section 3.1).

Clarke's (2001) and Tunstall and Gipps' (1996) work also served to have implications for this study. In particular, both studies involved pupils in the research process and accessing the children's voices was deemed appropriate in this study, in order to gain a thorough understanding of the teachers' formative assessment practices.

The literature review makes reference to teacher planning and therefore the following provides the reader with a discussion of some of the research methods adopted by studies discussed in the review. This discussion is not exhaustive and, as with other aspects covered earlier, Table 1 provides further detail on additional material used in this study.

The first point of interest with regard to the research literature regarding teacher planning is that much has been drawn from studies conducted in the United States of America and it is important to therefore note that much relates to the American as opposed to the British Educational System (see for example Clark and Peterson, 1986).

The field of teacher planning involves eliciting information about the thought processes of a teacher, and Clark and Peterson (1986) describe five methods of inquiry which they consider to be the most commonly used in this area of research. These are identified as: thinking aloud, stimulated recall, policy capturing, journal keeping and the use of the repertory grid technique. The fundamental advantage of adopting such approaches is

that they allow the participant to discuss their practice, providing access, Lyle (2003) states, to introspective, higher order mental processes. However, the reliance on such self-reporting strategies can be problematic. For example, in stimulated recall a recording is made of a teacher performing an activity, this is then replayed and the participant is asked to report on thoughts and decisions made at the time. Capturing 'thoughts' however is inevitably difficult: some people may, for example, have difficulty in expressing thoughts and verbalising implicit knowledge or may 'sanitise' their accounts and say what researchers want to hear (Lyle, 2003).

Because of the reliance on self-reporting in the field of teacher planning, researchers often employ a range of methods of inquiry and Table 1 includes studies of teacher planning to highlight this (see for example, Morine – Dersheimer (1979) and Sardo-Brown (1988, 1990)).

This study sought to access the thinking of the teachers involved in the study, with regard to their formative assessment practice. Therefore the above studies served to influence the research design of the study. For example, as is described in section 3.5, the case study approach of the study facilitated the opportunity to use a multi-method approach. This was influenced by the fact that the study, to a degree, involved some element of 'self reporting', through the interviews and participatory activities that were designed to unravel the formative assessment practices of those involved in the study (see section 3.6.2).

The above has provided the reader with an overview of the research approaches of several key pieces of work that have informed this study. However, given the extent of

the study, to provide overviews of all work cited in the review of the literature is not practicable, therefore I have included a table (Table 1) below to provide the reader with a notion of the broader range of studies that have influenced this piece of work and provided a summary of their approaches to research. The reader will note that in order to provide a structure for the table, the studies are organised in to specific research design categories. The first five categories: Comparative Study, Experimental Design, Cross-Sectional Design, Case Study and Longitudinal Case Study, have been sourced from Bryman (2004). However, I have included the following additional categories in the table: Review of Research and Theory and Action Research. The rationale for this is that a large amount of literature was used in this study, much of which was theoretical in nature, drawing on reviews related to a particular field. It seemed appropriate, therefore, to present this in the distinct category 'review of research and theory'. Several studies were also explicitly action research studies.

Research Design	Researcher (s) and Research Method(s) Used	Summary of Advantages and Disadvantages Associated with Design and Methods
Comparative Study	Alexander (2000) - interviews, semi-systematic observations, (including video-tape and audio-tape), school and country documentation, photographs and daily journal entries.	Comparative studies provide a means of analysing and explaining a variety of processes, conditions and contexts. They help to reveal patterns of interaction and to interpret complex situations both in the classroom and in the larger community through the gathering of rich data. Analysis in cross-cultural studies can, however, be difficult because of the potential differences in the countries being compared and, for example, they can ignore the fact that the 'home' culture is not necessarily homogenous (Coolican, 1994)
Experimental Design	Ames and Archer (1988), Ames (1992) - experimental methods and measures of behavioural change.	Experimental methods are considered robust and trustworthy because of causal findings however, conducting a true experiment in social research can pose difficulties as some variables cannot be manipulated (Bryman, 2004).
Cross-Sectional Design	Beijaard et al (2000) - Questionnaires and Surveys sent to 140 (of which 80 were returned). Blote (1995) - Questionnaires to 529 students from 25 Dutch Elementary Schools and to their teachers. Calloway (1988) – 76 teachers planned a unit of work and listed chronologically the planning decisions they would make. Child and Merrill (2003) - Survey of 50 professional mentors. Duffield et al (2000) - Semi-structured interviews with groups of children (aged 13-14). Jaurez (1988, 1992) - Interviews with 42 class teachers Miller et al (1996) - Survey. Neesom (2000) - Questionnaires and meetings with teachers. Weeden et al (2002) - LEARN project, semi-structured group and individual interviews with 200 children aged 3 to 12.	Cross-sectional research designs facilitate the opportunity to gather data on more than one case at a particular time to generate data. The advantage of cross-sectional research designs is that questionnaires and surveys, for example, tend to be economical and supply 'standardised' answers. However, as Denscombe (2004: 160) points out, they can be disadvantageous for example, – pre-coded questions can bias the findings towards the researcher's rather than the respondents' way of seeing things and there is little opportunity to

Table 1: Overview of Research Methods Used in a Range of Studies



	<p><b>Weiss (1999) - Survey.</b>  <b>Yair (2000) - Experience sampling method (a questionnaire technique)</b>  <b>Zahorik (1975) - Questionnaire administered to 194 teachers and observation of structured task with 2 groups of teachers</b></p>	<p>'check the truthfulness of the answers'.  Cross sectional designs can take the form of interviews, including semi-structured interviews. The advantages associate with this, Bryman (2004) highlights, are that it serves the purpose of accessing many respondents and allows for much data to be gathered as questions are typically more general in form and the interviewer has more flexibility to ask further questions. Disadvantages associated with semi-structures interviews are for example, that interviewers' attributes and characteristics can impact upon respondents' answers or, for example, the tendency for respondents to acquiesce (Bryman, 2004).</p>
<p>Case Study</p>	<p><b>Biott and Easen (1994)</b> – book based on series of cases studies, including: Case studies drawn from investigations which teachers have carried out to both research and improve their own practice – field notes, observations, recorded discussions and lessons. Case studies of trainee teachers' experiences of being 'temporary staff members' – written activity and discussions. Case studies of newly qualified teachers – semi-structured interviews and group discussions.  <b>Clandinnin and Connolly (1986)</b> – Narrative Inquiry  <b>Clark and Elmore (1979)</b> - 5 elementary teachers – observations, interviews and journals.  <b>Day et al (1990)</b> - Book based on selection of small scale qualitative studies presented as case studies and vignettes. Data gathered through interviews, questionnaires, naturalistic observations, and descriptive, biographical and autobiographical accounts.  <b>English, E., Hargreaves, L. and Hislam, J. (2002)</b> -15 teachers took part in a 'video stimulated reflective dialogue'.  <b>Fisher and Lewis (1999)</b> – case studies from 20 classrooms with data gathered from interviews, observations, planning documents and standardised tests.  <b>Furlong et al (2000)</b> - MOTE studies. Questionnaires of all ITT providers, case studies of 50 individual teacher training courses – interviews and observation of school mentors and students.  <b>Ghaye and Ghaye (1998)</b> - The book is based on reflections on their work, their own practice and of many colleagues. Case studies of trainee teachers are used to illustrate their model. Audio taped conversations of trainees and tutors, observations of trainee teachers, reflective journals and profiles of trainee teachers.</p>	<p>The main benefit of case studies is that the researcher can focus on one or few instances and, unlike cross-sectional designs, for example, allows the researcher the opportunity to understand relationships and social processes. A key criticism of case studies is associated with generalisability (Bryamn, 2004).</p>

	<p><b>Goodson (1992)</b> - The book draws on Life Histories Autobiographies and Case Studies.</p> <p><b>Joyce and Showers (2002)</b> - 4 case studies.</p> <p><b>Klenowski (1996)</b> - Multiple data sources were used: interviews; direct observation; documents; records and physical artefacts with students and teachers.</p> <p><b>Morine – Dershimer (1979)</b> - Interviews, observations and stimulated recall.</p> <p><b>Sardo-Brown (1988, 1990)</b> - Multi-case study. Questionnaires, interviews and the ‘think aloud’ strategy.</p> <p><b>Torrance and Pryor (1998, 2001)</b> - Based on the Teacher Assessment at Key Stage 1: Accomplishing Assessment in the Classroom (TASK Project). Interviews with teachers and pupils, extensive classroom observation recorded on audio and video, moving to multi-site case study in 9 schools.</p>	
<p>Longitudinal Case Study</p>	<p><b>Galton et al (1999)</b> - Observation study – a study of 28 classrooms using the ORACLE data collection models.</p> <p><b>McCutcheon (1980)</b> - Ethnographic studies of 12 elementary school teachers – 4 researchers worked in classrooms to study the planning processes, the nature of the emerging curriculum and various conditions</p> <p><b>Pollard (1994)</b> - Longitudinal study, interviews, observations and questionnaires</p>	<p>Longitudinal case study, such as ethnographic studies and participant observation allow the researcher to immerse themselves in the culture of the setting and gather ‘rich’ or ‘thick’ data (Bryman, 2004). Ethnography can be a long process, requiring the ethnographer to spend much time with a group of people and entailing him/her to ‘live’ with the people being studied in order to establish something of importance about a whole human culture (Spradley, 1979). Although longitudinal studies allow the researcher to gather large amounts of detailed data directly, there are several disadvantages to such an approach. For example, generalisability can be difficult to claim as, like case studies described above, the focus tends to be on smaller groups.</p>

<p>Review of Research and Theory</p>	<p><b>Bandura (1992)</b> - Review of research and theory related to self-efficacy in cognitive development.</p> <p><b>Clark and Peterson (1986)</b> - Literature review on teacher thought processes.</p> <p><b>Eraut (1994)</b> - Review of research and theory related to professional knowledge, education and work.</p> <p><b>Guskey (2002)</b> - Review of research on effective schools</p> <p><b>Harlen (2004)</b> - A review of 30 studies related to summative assessment.</p> <p><b>James (2000)</b> - Review of literature related to assessment.</p> <p><b>John (1993)</b> - Review of research and theory related to planning.</p> <p><b>Riley (2001)</b> - Review of literature associated with the NLS, reading and writing.</p> <p><b>Slavin (1996)</b> - A review of Slavin's research in the field of education.</p> <p><b>Stobart and Gipps (1997)</b> - Review of research and theory related to assessment.</p>	<p>The advantage of such an approach is that the area of research is viewed in comprehensive detail and the social world is 'mapped out' (Denscombe, 2003). Although, as Bryman (2004: 391) points out, "...The social researcher is always providing his or her own 'spin' on the texts that are analysed...the conclusions are always going to be a reflection of...personal interpretation."</p>
<p>Action Research</p>	<p><b>Clarke (1998, 2001)</b> - Action research, observations, interviews with teachers and pupils.</p> <p><b>Holloway and Long (1998)</b> - 'Shared Practice Groups'.</p> <p><b>Perry (2000)</b> - Action research with 5 teachers involving 'free write', 'air time', 'focus group discussion' and planned changes to practice. Observation of practice and semi-structured interviews with students.</p> <p><b>Weber and Mitchell (1996)</b> 64 pre-service teachers' drew images of teachers, wrote about their images, maintained a 'reflective journal' to provide a forum for critical reflection</p>	<p>The main advantages associated with action research are that it involves the practitioner researching or intervening in his/her own practice to bring about critical awareness, improvement or change in the setting (Wellington, 1999). However, Denscombe (2003) points out that in being immersed in the research process, there is the potential difficulty in the researcher remaining detached or impartial.</p>

### **2.1.2 Implications for this study**

Prior to concluding this section, the following provides the reader with a summary of the implications of the afore-mentioned studies related to primary teaching and formative assessment. The rationale for this is to illustrate that the empirical basis of the studies considered has influenced the design of this study.

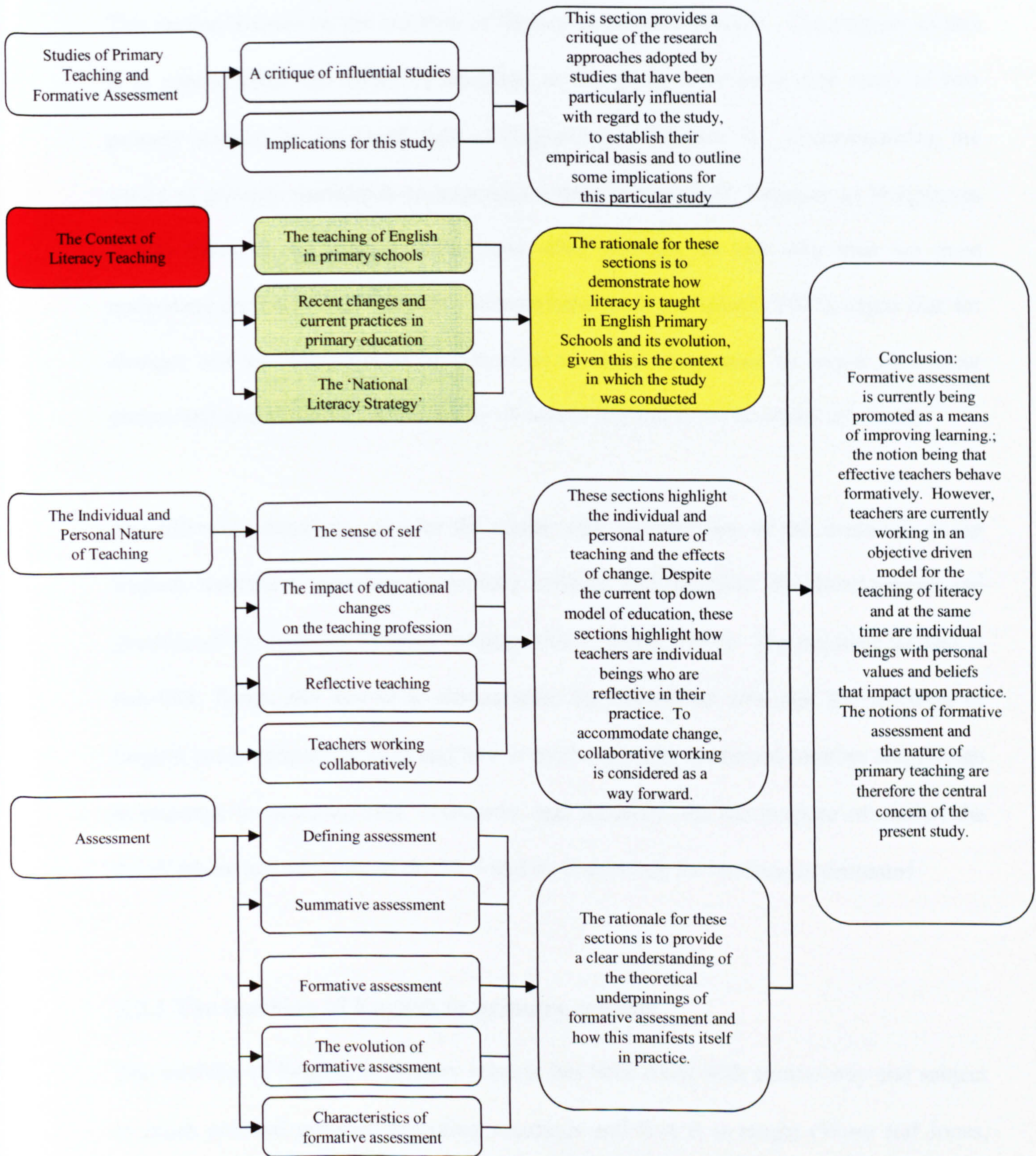
The reader will note that this study has adopted a case study approach that incorporates narrative inquiry elements (see sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2). In seeking to adopt an appropriate methodological approach to the study, reference to other studies in the field of primary teaching and formative assessment served as a starting point. Table 1 provides the reader with an overview of a diverse range of studies associated with primary teaching and formative assessment and case study is evidently the most common approach used in those studies that have been used to establish the theoretical basis of this study. Therefore, the approach of this study appears relevant. In addition, narrative inquiry has been incorporated into a number of studies as evidenced in the above discussion and in Table 1, thus the incorporation of narrative elements in this study also seems appropriate. Furthermore, it seems that, on balance, a multi-method approach to data collection has been adopted by the studies presented in the prior section, thus it appears appropriate that this study should also embrace such an approach to data collection.

In consideration of the studies discussed in the prior section, the main implications for this study are two-fold. Firstly with regard to the theoretical basis of this study, consideration is given to both formative and summative assessment and particular

attention is given to the context of teaching; including the individual and personal nature of teaching. Secondly, implications from the review of the literature have direct implications for the methodological approach of the study and data collection methods in that: a case study approach has been adopted that uses multiple sources of data; a narrative element is incorporated into the study to seek to understand the formative assessment practices of the two teachers involved in the study and interviews with both teachers and pupils are incorporated into the research design.

Having provided the reader with an overview of the studies that have served to form the theoretical basis of this study, the following moves to discuss the review of the literature in further detail.

## A Review of the Literature



Legend: ■ Main Section

■ Sub-Sections

■ Rationale for Organisation

## **2.2 The Context of Literacy Teaching in Primary Schools**

This section focuses on the teaching of literacy in primary schools. The purpose of this is to contextualise the nature of teaching, as the study involved a case study of two primary teachers in the North East of England (see Chapter 3). Contextualising the nature of primary teaching is an important aspect to this study, because, as Hargreaves (1994) states, if we want to understand what teachers do and why then we must understand their teaching contexts. Researchers, such as Pollard (1997), argue that for changes and the development of education to occur, they must be based on a clear picture and understanding of the reality of school life and those involved in schools.

The following therefore provides the reader with an overview of the evolution of the English National Curriculum in primary schools and describes the development and structure of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS, DfEE, 1998). The rationale for this is two-fold: firstly, the aim is to demonstrate the significant role that the teaching of English has in primary schools and how it has been under continued scrutiny and change in response to concerns over 'standards' and secondly, for the purpose of clarity, the development and structure of the NLS and its framework for teaching is presented.

### **2.2.1 The teaching of English in primary schools**

The teaching of English in primary schools has been riven with controversy and subject to much political pressure regarding standards and how it is taught (Wyse and Jones, 2001 and Richards, 2000). The establishment of state education, as we know it, dates back to the 1870 Elementary Education Act. Prior to this, the education of working class children was largely in the hands of the voluntary sector, but the act led to the

establishment of free education for all children aged 5 to 12 and, in fact, was compulsory for pupils up to the age of 10. The Elementary Schools, however, emerged at a time where there was a 'tight grip' on the curriculum, due, in large, to 'payment by results', whereby teachers' salaries were directly linked to pupil achievement in the 3Rs. This system, known as the 'Revised Code', curbed curriculum development because schools had to focus so much on the tests in order to, quite simply, get paid. Abolition of the system in 1895 allowed teachers to become more adventurous, although Inspector Edmond Holmes later observed:

“What happened in many schools was that the teaching remained as mechanical and routine-ridden as ever.” (Holmes, 1922: 727, cited in Gordon et al, 1991)

In 1904, elementary regulations were put in place. Pupils were to become acquainted with the facts and laws of nature; become familiar with British history and literature; introduced to hand and eye training and trained in appropriate physical exercises. However, such lack of detail and the expression of aims in merely 'general' terms contrasted greatly with the more prescriptive nature of the 1904, Secondary Regulations and these served as a catalyst for future curriculum change in primary education (Gordon et al, 1991).

The first of three Hadow Reports, published in 1926, focused on secondary education. The importance of this report lies in its recognition of the differing needs of children at primary and secondary stages, especially in terms of curriculum (Wyse and Jones, 2001). The subsequent 1931 and 1933 reports addressed the issue of primary and infant education and, in short:

“The Hadow Reports read as remarkably progressive documents for their time, and the principles of child-centred education that are explicit in many



of their recommendations continued to inform thinking in primary language teaching for the next 50 years.” (Wyse and Jones, 2001: 8)

The second Hadow Report legitimised primary education and stated that the term ‘elementary’ be replaced by ‘primary’ and that pupils above primary age, eleven-plus, transferred to a ‘secondary’ school (Wyse and Jones, 2001). On the basis of these recommendations, the Spens Report introduced the tripartite system at secondary level and the eleven-plus examination, to be taken in the final year of primary education as a determinant of secondary education for individual pupils. The ‘eleven-plus’ had a significant consequence for primary education. In order to meet the needs of the examination, primary education found itself to be increasingly narrow and focused upon key features of the test and furthermore, ‘scholarship classes’ were introduced for more able pupils (Gordon, et al, 1991).

The 1944 Education Act continued to emphasise pupils’ age, ability and aptitude as key factors in determining education. The eleven-plus was firmly entrenched in schooling and, although the 1944 Education Act established the universal right to personal development through education, it omitted any mention of what children were to be taught apart from religious education and the specification of daily communal worship (Gordon, et al, 1991). The common curriculum in primary schools was predominant with a heavy concentration on the teaching of mathematics, English and verbal reasoning, the main areas of the eleven-plus examination (Pollard, et al, 1994). The nature of the eleven-plus was driving the curriculum in schools and the development of the curriculum and appropriate teaching methods were regarded as largely the responsibilities of teachers in schools (Gipps, 1994).

The Plowden Report (1967), commissioned by the Minister of Education Edward Boyle, had great impacts on primary education. And, taking its cue from the Hadow Reports, argued that the most fundamental reality in primary education is the nature of the child:

“...especially in celebrating the child as a child rather than as an adult in the making, in commending learning by doing and an open and integrated curriculum in relation to which the teacher adopts a facilitating and heuristic role.” (Alexander, 1995: 274)

However, in the 1970s, the Plowden Report was the focus of much criticism because of its elements of pastoralism and utopianism (Pollard, 1994). Furthermore, there were concerns about ‘progressivism’ intermingled with concerns over teacher autonomy and:

“...lack of structure was a prominent slogan in the war-cries of Black Paper critics...This concern over possible fragmentation and trivialisation of the curriculum was echoed, in part at least, by HMI criticisms of the topic approach where they noted a danger of fragmentation and repetition unless teacher were very clear of the ideas, skills and techniques that children might learn as they progressed through the primary school (Thomas, 1990).” (Richards, 1982:13)

The 1970s and 1980s, therefore saw an HMI that were active in promoting discussion of the curriculum. The Bullock Report (DES, 1975), commissioned by the Conservative Party, strongly advocated a view of teaching that rested on the assumption that children become competent users of language as a consequence of using it in real contexts:

“Language should be learned in the course of using it and about the daily experiences of the classroom and home.” (DES, 1975: 520)

The Report highlighted the cross-curricular nature of English and the role of speaking and listening in language acquisition. Bullock raised concerns regarding the role of textbook exercises, suggesting that they give little insight into language and, instead, advocated a broader approach to the teaching of English, whereby investigative work was suggested, together with recommendations that books should be read because of

their worth, or enjoyment. Recommendations were also made in terms of writing and drama and:

“In short, a rich and living language was to be nurtured by encouraging children to take part in the real business of communication, at their own level and in connection with experience.” (Coulby and Ward, 1990: 32)

However, concerns were raised in response to the HMI document, *English from 5 to 16* (DES, 1984), that highlighted inconsistencies amongst schools. This document formed part of the series Curriculum Matters and suggested a need for a clear set of aims and objectives and in this respect ‘paved the way’ for a National Curriculum for English (Gordon, et al, 1991).

The 1988 Education Reform Act is cited as one of the most radical education acts of the twentieth century and:

“When future historians seek to identify the English educational landmarks of the twentieth century, there can be little doubt that they will readily agree on the 1988 Education Reform Act as one of the most significant.” (Pollard, 1994 :1)

For the first time teachers had clear-cut, prescribed attainment targets in nine subject areas to cover for each child in each academic year as a result of the introduction of the National Curriculum (DES, 1988a). The original English document was prepared by a committee chaired by Brian Cox, and it divided English into five Attainment Targets: speaking and listening, reading, writing, spelling and handwriting (Wyse and Jones, 2001).

The underlying principle of the National Curriculum and its curriculum documents was to raise standards, however, Phillips and Furlong (2001: 35) argue that it failed to achieve its key objective and:

“The attempt to raise standards in primary schools by statute was characterised by a profound misunderstanding of every practice in state primary schools, where curriculum largely modelled on conventional secondary school practice of separate subjects was unfamiliar...Teachers in the most disadvantaged areas, who wanted to concentrate almost exclusively on teaching literacy and numeracy, were required to implement a ten-subject curriculum, which forced them to reduce the time they had previously spent teaching children to read...and there was palpable ignorance about, or neglect of, research on time allocations for different areas of the curriculum.”

Indeed, Phillips and Furlong highlight the issue that comparatively less time was being spent on English, than other countries in the world spent on the teaching of their national language.

In response to concerns regarding the reformed primary curriculum, Dearing (1993) proposed a ‘slimming down’ of the statutory curriculum and recommended that some 20% of teaching time be used at the discretion of schools and teachers. Dearing reaffirmed the position of literacy and numeracy at the heart of the primary curriculum:

“English typically takes at least 30% of time at Key Stage 1 (some 25% at Key Stage 2). In addition, significant time must be found for mathematics, and, to a lesser extent, for science, information technology and religious education.” (Dearing, 1993: 32)

The newly ‘slimmed down’ Orders were implemented in schools in 1995 and shortly after their introduction, the Literacy Task Force was established.

### **2.2.2 Recent changes and current practices in primary education**

The period of education that we are currently experiencing commenced in 1997 with the election of New Labour, which set out its drive to raise educational standards and Richards (2000) states, conveyed its ‘zero tolerance of failure’. Richards describes the current educational model as one that is performance based:

“..treating it (national testing) as the measure by which primary schools are to be judged.” (2000:5)

In a concerted aim to raise standards in the public education system (Weeden et al, 2002), testing of pupils, league tables and school inspections under the Labour government have remained and have even been extended (Broadfoot and Pollard, 2000).

In addition, the incoming Labour government in May 1996 established the Literacy Task Force. David Blunkett, the Shadow Secretary for State at the time, was charged with developing a strategy for substantially raising standards of literacy in primary schools in England. The Task Force established that Britain was underachieving internationally and whilst societal factors may be responsible for some of the poor British performance some educational factors, it was claimed, were responsible namely: low expectations, inconsistency and disadvantage (Blunkett, 1997).

The role of the Task Force was to design a strategy to meet an ambitious target; that by the end of a second term in Labour government, all children at the end of Key Stage Two would have a reading age of at least eleven. The Task Force believed that, on the basis of national and international evidence, the target was achievable. In an attempt to address the key issues relating to low standards, it suggested the implementation of a number of strategies.

Based on OFSTED and international research evidence a national approach to reading was introduced that consisted of a strong element of phonics and direct teaching for a minimum of one hour per day. The profile of teacher development was raised with courses introduced to up-skill 190,000 teachers in how to teach reading. Short

inspections of the teaching of literacy were introduced in 10 per cent of primary schools with incentives awarded to schools demonstrating 'best practice'. The Reading Recovery programme was used to address specific reading difficulties and importantly, a revised, more focused National Curriculum recommended for introduction in September 1999 that was more tightly focused on the '3Rs'. Parental involvement was given a higher profile, with the recommendation of home-school agreements and national guidelines on homework, recommending 20 minutes per day. The last year of the Millennium was dedicated as the 'National Year of Reading', a campaign that sought support from every parent, every citizen and from high profile organisations, such as WH Smith, Macmillan, Colman Getty and the Library Association.

And, at the heart of the government's standards-raising drive was the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS). It was through the NLS that the Labour government believed it could achieve its target, that 80% of eleven year olds would attain level 4 or above in the Key Stage Two English tests in 2002. Given that 57% of pupils achieved level 4 in 1996, this was a challenging target.

### **2.2.3 The 'National Literacy Strategy'**

In September 1998 the National Literacy Strategy (NLS, DfEE, 1998) was introduced in to primary schools and although not statutory, was strongly recommended. This included the provision of a Framework for Teaching, to be used as a practical tool for teachers. The framework offered a reference point for day-to-day teaching for teachers and provided a basis from which head teachers and governors could plan and manage the improvement of literacy within their school.

As an ambitious initiative, the NLS had to look internationally for precedent and insight. Two other English-speaking countries, America and Australia, were therefore observed in terms of their approaches to literacy, as they too had considered it necessary to implement large scale interventions to improve levels of literacy. Slavin (1996) implemented the 'success for all' programme in America that promoted:

- A fast-paced curriculum
- Direct teaching and interactive teaching
- The systematic teaching of phonics
- The use of shared and paired reading and writing
- Early intervention programmes for those pupils who had not made expected progress after one year in school (Riley, 2001).

A similar strategy, designed to address the needs of disadvantaged pupils was implemented in Melbourne, Australia. Crevola and Hill (1998) led the Early Literacy Research Project (ELRP), drawing on evidence that schools only have a narrow 'window of opportunity' to make a difference in helping pupils with literacy difficulties. Crevola and Hill emphasise the importance of: high expectations; a belief in the ability of all students to make progress, given sufficient time and support; and a relentless determination to persist with those who are not experiencing success. The work of Crevola and Hill draws upon a range of evidence, including that of Slavin, which claims that dramatic improvements are achievable within the context of a fully implemented, comprehensive strategy that involves both system-wide and school-wide commitment and coordination.

The Success for All programme is a school-wide initiative for students in grades pre-Kindergarten to five, which is aimed at ensuring that virtually every student will reach the third grade on time and with adequate basic skills and has been hailed as: "...the most promising development in education reform in the 21st century." (Slavin and Madden, 2001: 38).

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the programme is not without its critics, and much of the scepticism regarding Success For All has to do with doubt that it is: "...possible to solve the many substantive problems facing schools in one fell, comprehensive swoop." (Pogrow, 2000: 3). Furthermore, Walberg and Greenberg (1999) question the validity of the programme's evaluation, and Pogrow (2000) also states that in Slavin and Madden's research, they do not do an adequate job of considering other causal variables, which may have affected the reading achievement scores which they report.

The NLS has many features in common with the USA and Australia, with the exception of provision for early intervention (although, more recently, provision has been put into place for children who make 'weak progress' (Riley, 2001)). However, critics of the NLS argue that it:

- Was implemented in a rush
- Was based on an unevaluated pilot project (National Literacy Project)
- Has an unclear rationale, and lacks a theoretical basis
- Is too tightly structured in terms of the teaching hour
- Takes away teacher autonomy
- Has unrealistic expectations of what pupils can achieve



- Makes no allowances for children’s cultural, economic and cognitive differences (Fisher and Lewis, 1999).

Furthermore, Riley (2001) argues that the model does not acknowledge the vital importance of ‘meaning’, which is at the heart of the process of reading. She also argues that the training received by teachers regarding the implementation of the NLS failed to provide sufficient information to enhance their understanding of psychological theory and served, instead, to focus upon the mechanics of mode of operation and implementation. She refers to earlier work (Riley 1999) that stated, contrary to the beliefs of Reynolds (1998a and b) for example, that teachers are professionals, not merely technicians and need to understand ‘why’ in addition to ‘what’ and ‘how’.

The Framework for Teaching sets out pre-prescribed teaching objectives for Reception to Year Six and provides guidance on the literacy hour in which it takes place. The underlying purpose of the Framework is that it is:

“...intended for day-to-day reference for classroom teachers to ensure that they have appropriately high expectations of their pupils, understand how their pupils will progress through the years at primary school and to help them offer a balance between reading and writing and different kinds of texts.” (DfEE, 1998:20)

The theoretical model that underpins the framework for teaching is the ‘searchlights’ model (Appendix A) and the structure of the Framework is such that it provides three ‘strands’ to the work (Figure 2.1):

- Word level.
- Sentence level.
- Text level.

Word level	Sentence level	Text level
<b>Reception year</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phonological awareness, phonics and spelling</li> <li>• Word recognition, graphic knowledge and spelling</li> <li>• Vocabulary extension</li> <li>• Handwriting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grammatical awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of print</li> <li>• Reading comprehension</li> <li>• Writing composition</li> </ul>
<b>Key Stage 1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phonological awareness, phonics and spelling</li> <li>• Word recognition, graphic knowledge and spelling</li> <li>• Vocabulary extension</li> <li>• Handwriting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grammatical awareness</li> <li>• Sentence construction and punctuation</li> </ul>	<i>Fiction and poetry</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading comprehension</li> <li>• Writing composition</li> </ul> <i>Non-fiction</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading comprehension</li> <li>• Writing composition</li> </ul>
<b>Key Stage 2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision and consolidation From key stage 1 (to the end of Y3)</li> <li>• Spelling strategies</li> <li>• Spelling conventions and rules</li> <li>• Vocabulary extension</li> <li>• Handwriting (to the end of Y4)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grammatical awareness</li> <li>• Sentence construction and punctuation</li> </ul>	<i>Fiction and poetry</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading comprehension</li> <li>• Writing composition</li> </ul> <i>Non-fiction</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading comprehension</li> <li>• Writing composition</li> </ul>

Figure 2.1 The National Literacy Strategy Framework for Teaching, (1997) Three 'Strands'

The various teaching approaches that the NLS recommends are not, Riley (2001) states, innovative; however the Literacy Hour is fundamentally new in its prescribed format. The teaching methods that are promoted are designed to make explicit use of 100% of the teacher's time, managed through a structured hour-long session; conceptualised as a 'clock' (Appendix B). The pedagogical approaches of the strategy are shared reading and writing, guided reading and writing and the plenary and a major feature of the strategy is the emphasis on direct, 'interactive whole class teaching', drawn largely from the school effectiveness and school improvement literature (see, for example, Reynolds 1998a and b; Reynolds and Farrell, 1996; Reynolds and Muijs, 1999). It is suggested that more interactive forms of whole class teaching will play a vital role in raising literacy standards, through the promotion of high quality dialogue and discussion and raising inclusion, understanding and learning performance (Hardman et. al, 2003). In the NLS Framework, successful teaching is described as 'discursive, characterised by high quality oral work' and 'interactive, encouraging, expecting and extending pupils'

contributions' (DfEE, 1998: 8). Such interactive whole class teaching is not seen to be a return to the traditional 'lecturing and drill' approach where pupils remain passive, but to be, instead, an 'active teaching' model, encouraging a two-way, process. Nevertheless, critics argue that there is no clear definition and little practical advice for teachers on what interactive whole class teaching is and how it should be used in the classroom. For example, Galton et al (1999) argue that there is little evidence to demonstrate that it differs, in reality, from the traditional model of whole class teaching as reported in earlier studies of the primary English classroom (see, for example, Mortimore et al, 1988; Pollard et al, 1994; Alexander et al, 1996). And English et al (2002) also highlight that not only was there little practical advice given on what interactive teaching is, but that the NLS offers contradictory pedagogical advice to teachers on the subject, and thus presents teachers with 'pedagogical dilemmas'. For example, English et al (2002: 21) point to the:

“...tension between teaching in which 'pupil responses are expected, encouraged and extended' and the demand that lessons should be 'well paced – with a sense of urgency' (DfEE, 1998a, p.8).”

The shared and guided reading and writing approaches that support the NLS, Corden (2000) argues, are dependent upon interactive discourse and he describes this as the 'power source' for constructivist learning which underpins these major features of the NLS. However, research has highlighted the prevalence of teacher dominated discourse and shown that a large proportion of teacher-pupil talk is devoted to telling pupils facts or giving them directions, and Corden states that if shared and guided reading and writing are to be effective, teachers need to find ways of moving beyond the I-R-E exchange. The I-R-E pattern, as revealed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1992), consists of three moves: an initiation, usually in the form of a teacher question; a response, in which

a student attempts to answer the question and a follow-up move, often in the form of an evaluation, to the pupil's response. Corden (2000: 134) suggests however, that:

“...teachers need to develop a repertoire of alternative strategies to complement a range of different types of question. Dynamic interactive discourse and effective teaching and learning will result from teachers making appropriate choices.”

However, Hardman et al (2003) conclude that teachers, in their study regarding interactive whole class teaching, had no clear concept of what such teaching is and they also suggest that teachers had been given little practical guidance on how to implement interactive whole class teaching in the classroom. Mroz et al (2000) go some way to draw attention to the fact that much of the emphasis of the NLS's training materials has been on developing subject knowledge and content rather than effective pedagogy, and in support of Corden, they also suggest that to improve the quality of interactions with their pupils teachers need to pay more attention to the way in which they evaluate pupils' responses. The findings of Hardman et al (2003) also endorse this, given that their conclusions suggest that traditional patterns of whole class interaction have not been dramatically transformed by the strategy. Their findings reveal that during whole class sections of literacy lessons, teachers spend a majority of their time either explaining or using highly structured question and answer sequences. Such discourse, they highlight, is far removed from that which promotes higher levels of interaction and cognitive engagement. This notion is also supported by the findings of OFSTED (2002), who claim that although the NLS has had a significant impact upon English standards it has not been sufficiently effective overall. Indeed it failed in its overall aim to meet its ambitious literacy target. The report draws attention to a range of factors that have influenced the implementation of the NLS. Of particular interest to this study, is the notion of assessment. The report concludes that the best performing schools

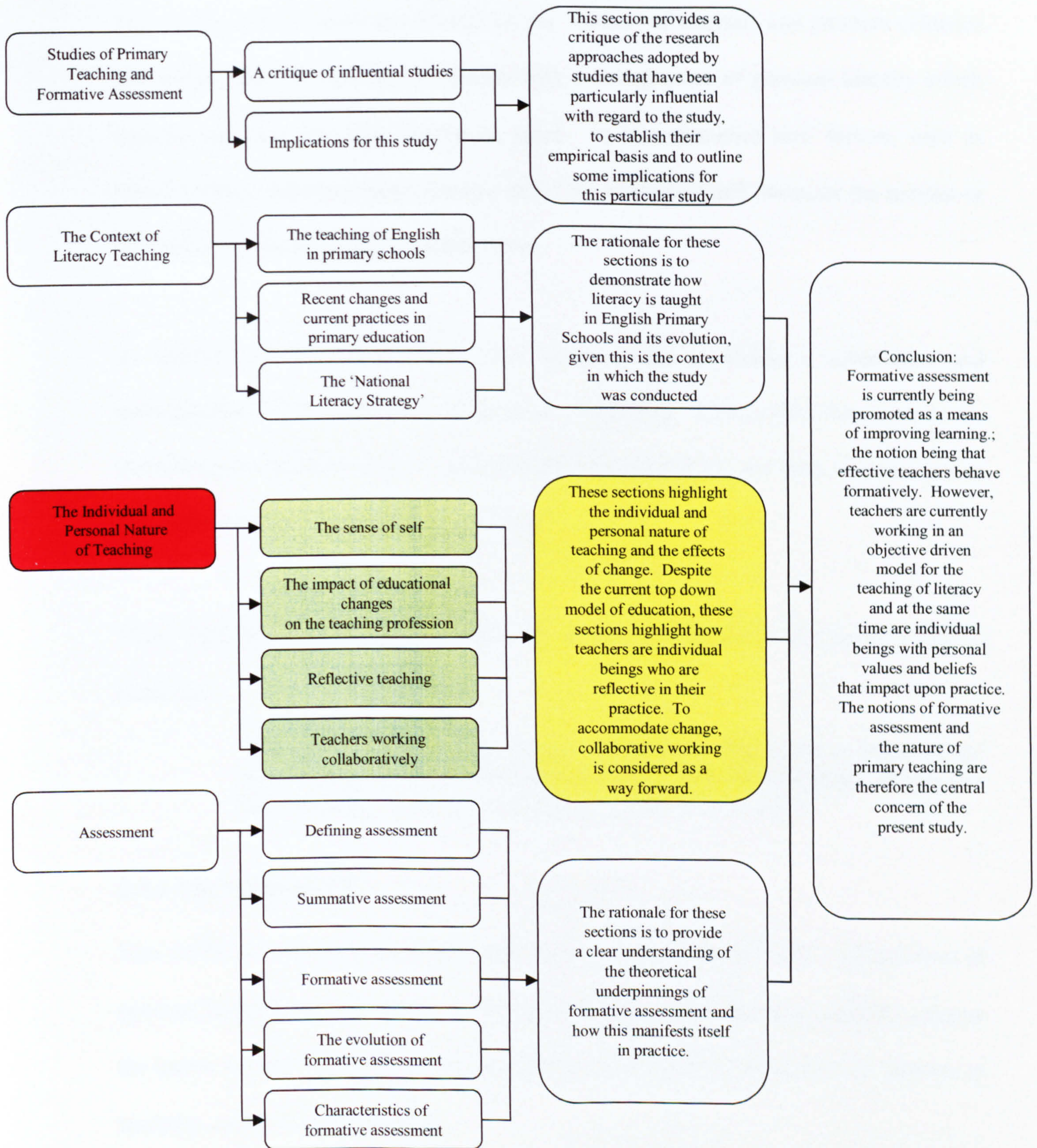
demonstrated strengths in their day-to-day assessment, whereas in schools where standards remained static, or fell, then day-to-day assessment was often poorly understood. OFSTED (2002) advises that to achieve improvements all schools should improve teachers' knowledge of day-to-day assessment strategies such that teaching is based on a clearer understanding of pupils' needs, reinforcing the notion of placing assessment at the heart of the teaching and learning processes. The report suggests that failure to understand the value of day-to-day assessment and techniques for mastering it could be attributed to the fact that it was not built into the strategy to enable teachers to adapt their teaching to changes in pupil progress and that too much, in terms of assessment, was dependant upon the use of the plenary.

Despite such criticisms, however, John Stannard, the director of the NLS team, and his colleagues have fiercely defended themselves on the basis of powerful teacher testimonies and the NLS became firmly entrenched in primary schools (Fisher and Lewis, 1999).

#### **2.2.4 Summary**

This section has provided an overview of the context of teaching in schools today, focusing in particular on the teaching of literacy and the introduction of the NLS. However, researchers who emphasise the 'self' in teaching (see, for example, Lortie, 1975 and Nias, 1989) would argue that this is insufficient, and that primary teaching is far more complex and personal. The following section, therefore discusses the individual and personal nature of primary teaching.

## A Review of the Literature



Legend: ■ Main Section

■ Sub-Sections

■ Rationale for Organisation

## **2.3 The Individual and Personal Nature of Teaching**

This section focuses more specifically on the 'nature' of teaching and presents evidence that people enter the teaching profession with a strong sense of personal identity which impacts upon the way that individuals teach. It also discusses how factors, such as school cultures and educational change, affect the individual and discusses the notions of reflective practice and teacher collaboration.

As teachers are individual beings, they bring to the profession a uniqueness and individualism that are very much at the heart of teaching. Lortie (1975:79) points to the unchallenged orthodoxy that: "...personal pre-dispositions are not only relevant, but in fact stand at the core of becoming a teacher."

These qualities in teaching are continually valued and Banner and Cannon (1997:4) claim that:

"The basic elements of teaching...are qualities that come to inhere in us, even if we do not recognise them as such or fully develop them. Rarely can they be taught. They are ingredients of our own humanity."

### **2.3.1 The sense of self**

Nias (1989:13) reported that people enter the teaching profession with a strong sense of personal identity and that the: "...self is a crucial element in the way teachers construe the nature of their job." In fact she reported that teachers see themselves as 'persons in teaching' rather than as 'teachers'.

Ball and Goodson (1985:18) suggest that:

“The ways in which teachers achieve, maintain and develop their sense of self, in and through a career, are of vital significance in understanding the actions and commitments of teachers in their work.”

‘Self’ is conceptualised in a number of ways. Nias (1989) portrays a self that is influenced by social interaction and self-reflection. She describes the ‘situational self’ as being influenced by interaction, whereby individuals become aware of the attitudes people have towards them and learn to see themselves from other peoples’ perspectives. Alongside the ‘situational self’ Nias describes the ‘substantial self’. The substantial self is based upon a set of self-defining beliefs, values and attitudes, and is unsusceptible to change. Nias argues that the ‘self’ consists of an interaction between the socially constructed ‘me’ and the autonomous ‘I’.

She describes ‘me’ as being developed from childhood and throughout life, whereby an individual responds to the actions of ‘significant’ and ‘generalised’ others. ‘Me’ is not necessarily static and can change according to different people and different contexts; thus individuals are seen as having multiple ‘situational’ selves. The social context in which individuals develop; their culture, interaction and experiences with others can be seen as being important in influencing views of self.

The autonomous ‘I’, in Nias’ terms, implies that the self is not solely the product of social conditioning. ‘I’ cannot be examined or reflected upon, rather it is sensed in moments when individuals break through social conditioning and act with non-conscious inner prompting. In this sense ‘I’ is the impulsive, creative self and Nias advises that if we are to accept the importance of the self of individuals, then we must take into account both the ‘I’ and the ‘me’. We must, Nias (1989:26) states:



“...acknowledge in teachers, as people, the urge, at times to be impulsive, angry, rebellious, creative...to be self-regarding, demanding of others and ready to see them as extensions of ourselves.”

Beijaard et al (2000:750) consider the notion of identity. This notion is similar to that of Nias’ ‘situational self’ whereby identity is defined as: “...who or what someone is, the various meanings people attach to themselves, or the meanings of others.”

Identity, in this context, can be seen as an ongoing process. This involves interpretation and re-interpretation of experiences. Through self-evaluation the identity of an individual is continually informed, formed and reformed.

Beijaard et al (2000) concentrated on teacher’s knowledge of their professional identity, looking at how they perceived themselves as teachers and factors that contributed to such perceptions. The study was carried out with experienced teachers in secondary schools and focused on the following questions:

- How do experienced teachers perceive their professional identity, now and at the beginning of their careers?
- What have been, in view of this identity, the most important learning experiences throughout their careers?
- Can factors be identified that influence these perceptions of personal identity?

On the basis of their study, Beijaard et al describe a typology of concepts for considering the ways in which teachers derive their professional identity. They consider the following to be the relevant categories:

- Teaching context
- Teaching experience

- Biography of a teacher.

### **Teaching context**

Teaching context consists of the ecology of the classroom and the culture of the school.

Pollard (1997:348) refers to the work of Nias (1989) when referring to school culture and states that:

“They (Nias, for example) see it as referring to subjective perceptions, understandings, conventions, habits and routines which are held collectively by school staff. Such a school culture can thus be seen as having been negotiated over time between all those who are, or have been involved in the school.”

In essence, the culture of a school encompasses conceptions, norms and values shared by those involved in the school, and this in turn leads to particular ways of working.

Beijaard et al, suggest that teaching cultures and school cultures determine, possibly to a large extent, the way in which teachers perceive their professional identity.

Hargreaves (1994:165) highlights the impact of school cultures on professional identity, stating:

“Cultures of teaching help give meaning, support and identity to teachers and their work. Physically, teachers are often alone in their own classrooms, with no other adults for company. Psychologically, they never are. What they do there in terms of classroom styles and strategies is powerfully affected by the outlooks and orientations of the colleagues with whom they work now and have worked in the past. In this respect, teacher cultures, the relationships between teachers and their colleagues, are among the most educationally significant aspects of teachers’ lives and work.”

Recent research involving pre-service teachers (Hawkey, 1996 and Weiss, 1999) highlights the importance of examining the ways in which pre-service teachers can be helped to explore and understand their professional identity and contextual factors that have potential impact upon it.

In response to the large numbers of teachers leaving the career in the early stages Weiss' study (1999) was designed to understand the factors that contribute to new teachers' commitment in the USA. Weiss highlights the notion that there is a correlation between school social organisation and commitment to retention. His study highlights the role of school leadership and culture on new teachers' self perceptions and this notion was previously explored by Hawkey (1996) who suggests that the culture of a school has a powerful influence on new teachers, so much so that:

“Teachers who hold a clear or strong image of self as teacher, can find their image compromised or destroyed by the norms of the particular institution in which they teach. By contrast, other pre-service and beginner teachers demonstrate great role ambiguity, being unaware of and often uncertain about their image of self as teacher...they tend to simply conform to the prevailing norms of the school in which they are placed.” (Hawkey, 1996:99)

### **Teaching experience**

Teaching experience leads teachers to have developed rich, well organised knowledge bases that enable them to draw readily on their past experiences (Beijaard et al, 2000).

Lortie (1975) describes how this 'experience' evolves from a teacher's early experiences. He describes how teachers are in an extremely unique position and uses the phrase 'apprenticeship-of-observation' to describe this phenomenon. Lortie's claim is that teachers learn from their own education, and Nias (1989) supports this view, concluding that some teachers draw on their recollections of teachers, whose pupils they have been.

Hawkey (1996:99) addressed the notion of teaching experience and its relationship with the perception of self, in the context of new and pre-service teachers. He states:

“How far the images teachers hold of themselves as teachers remain stable and continue to shape their practice over their career, or how far such images shift according to context and circumstance is an area of much debate... the experience of the first few years in teaching is considered by

some writers to be crucial in teachers' subsequent practice, even to the length of time they remain in the profession.”

Professionals continually learn on the job, largely because their work involves engagement in a range of activities and contexts which they have to learn about and

Eraut (1994:20) states that experience relates directly to professional knowledge:

“...professional knowledge is constructed through experience and its nature depends on the cumulative acquisition, selection and interpretation of that experience.”

It seems logical, therefore, to suggest that with greater working experience, professional knowledge will increase. However, Eraut claims that this type of learning will only contribute to professional knowledge if it is perceived as rather special, as opposed to routine to an individual, and time is set aside for deliberation about its significance. This implies, therefore that the professional knowledge bases of individuals may remain static, regardless of experience. Furthermore:

“...in many schools the conservers of the status quo are dominant for long periods of time, and the general attitude towards introducing new knowledge is strongly discouraging...The extent of the problem is perhaps best understood through socialisation theory. People adapt to organisational settings by being socialised into the prevalent norms, thus reducing the uncertainty of not knowing how to behave. The perpetual threat of instability at classroom level creates a strong need for maintaining stability at school level...the normal response to externally initiated change is to attempt to minimise its effect.” (Eraut, 1994:31)

### **The biography of the teacher**

Goodson (1992:234) states that:

“...in understanding something so intensely personal as teaching, it is critical we know about the person the teacher is.”

The underlying argument for this is because teaching is a composite of personal and professional knowledge and:

“...all the things one knows, has studied, and has done are in one way or another present in one’s thoughts.” (Clandinnin and Connelly, 1986:28)

The biography, or the background, of the teacher therefore, is recognised by many researchers as having crucial impact on the self identity of teachers (see, for example, Ball and Goodson, 1985, Nias, 1989, Pollard, 1985, Hawkey, 1996, Young, 1995, Beijaard et al, 2000). Researchers who emphasise the personal dimension in teaching are particularly interested in how teachers’ personal life experiences influence their professional lives. ‘Critical Events’ and ‘Relevant Others’ are, in this context, seen as important factors that impact upon individuals’ perception of their identity. These could include, for example, being tolerant towards pupils as a result of being raised in a particular way and key points in the individuals’ education or family life, such as seeing a previous teacher as a relevant model (Beijaard, 2000).

Weber and Mitchell (1996) carried out a study to understand how influences of childhood memories and ‘indelible social stereotypes’ colour the pre-service teachers’ image of teachers and consequently their professional identity. In an attempt to contextualise these images the research was based on drawings of teachers. Most of the student teachers in the study chose to draw themselves as a teacher; often in the form of an ideal projection. Those not drawing themselves often drew a teacher they remembered, or made a composite image of teachers they had known. In addition, they were asked to write about their drawings. A striking finding of the study was the presence of ‘classical’ and ‘traditional’ images of the teacher. Through reflecting and commenting on the pictures there was clear evidence to suggest that past experiences and stereotypical images impact upon the perceived professional image of teachers.

In summary, as Pollard (1997:66) states:

“In considering ourselves as teachers, the first step is to consider the person we are. We could do this in terms of social, cultural and educational background. Such factors make up our ‘personal biography’ and together they can be seen as contributing to the development, within each of us, of a unique sense of ‘self’: a conception of the person we are.”

The activity of teaching is highly personal and teachers’ values and beliefs are used to inform their sense of self and professional identity which are used for considering theories of learning and the practicalities of teaching. A range of factors can influence some aspects of ‘self’, whereas others are unsusceptible to change.

### **2.3.2 The impact of educational changes on the teaching profession**

The introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 and its subsequent modifications (see section 2.2) have had impacts on the teaching profession and teachers themselves in many ways. Pollard et al (1994) discuss the impact the 1988 Education Reform Act had on these and provide a ‘map’ (Figure 2.2) to illustrate these dimensions of change and the impact brought about by the Education Reform Act (1988). For example, they found that, with regard to school organisation and management most primary schools had adopted a collegial approach, but in the wake of the new requirements, there was a trend towards more directive and hierarchical management. They established that, even in the early stages of its implementation, many teachers felt that they had to change their teaching approach; classroom practice and perceptions of their roles. Pollard et al highlight that as a consequence of the Education Reform Act, teachers’ freedom of individual judgement regarding curriculum choice was significantly reduced, with pressure placed upon them with regard to classroom pedagogy.

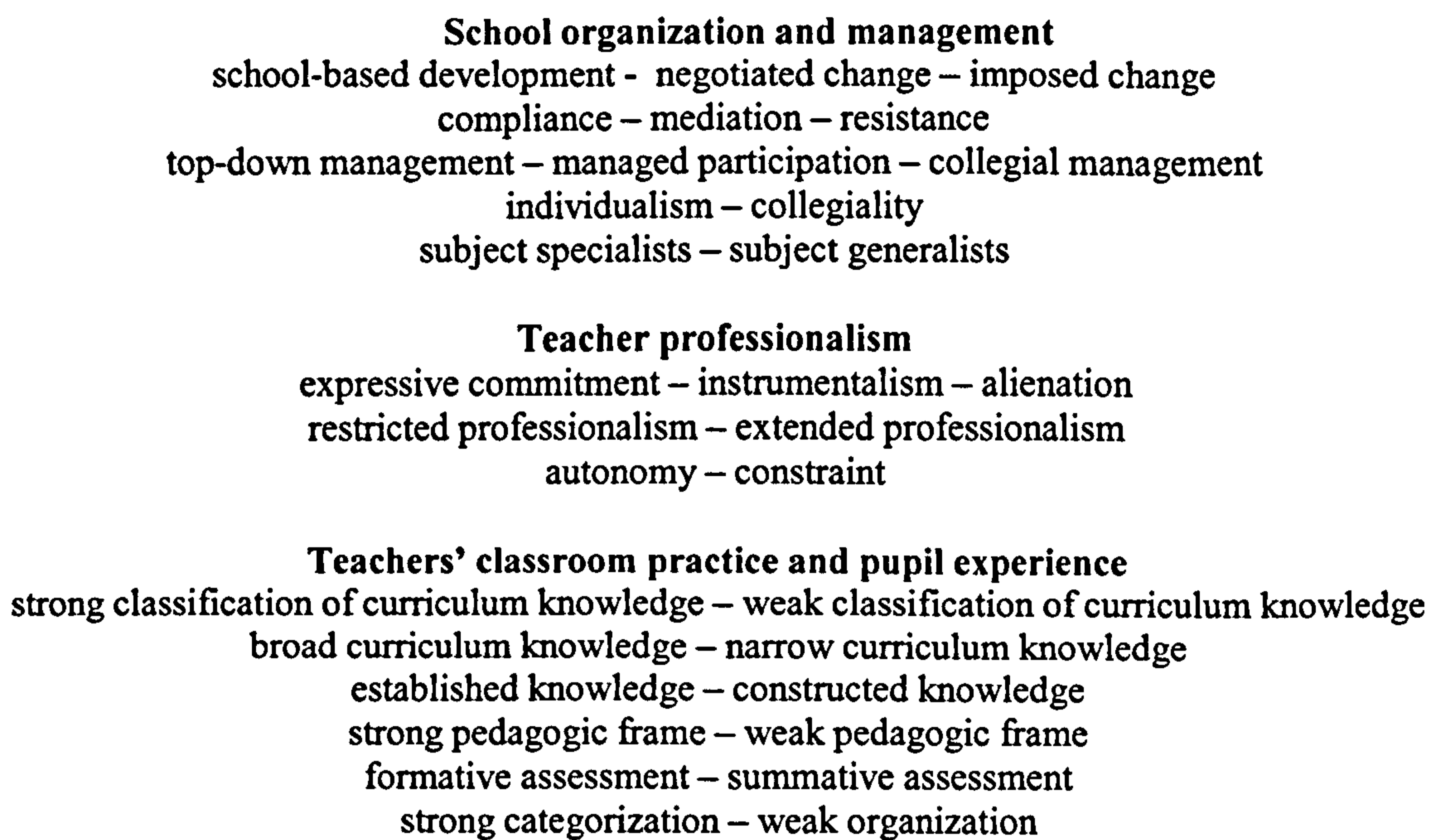


Figure 2.2 Pollard et al's (1994) Dimensions of Change

Arguably, it was the National Assessment requirements as opposed to the National Curriculum itself that caused the major controversy in the education system in primary schools (Pollard et al, 1994). Pollard et al reported that teachers found the workload an unacceptable burden in terms of its time commitment and were ideologically opposed to the prominence it gave to the categorising of pupils through the awarding of levels of attainment.

Pollard et al (1994:20) highlight how, in relation to educational changes and the impacts of the National Curriculum and National Assessment:

“...the gradually tightening specification of teacher roles and systems of accountability, many of which were deemed by teachers to be inappropriate and counter-productive, were a constant and undermining source of frustration, insult and, potentially, de-skilling...this tension was vividly illustrated during 1993, when teachers boycotted assessment procedures and prevented league tables being drawn up in any meaningful way.” (Pollard et al, 1994:20)

Broadfoot and Pollard (2000) discuss the Primary Assessment Curriculum and Experience (PACE) that formed the basis of Pollard et al's research (1994). Central to

the analysis of the PACE project is the argument that schools, teachers and pupils are embedded in a dynamic network of personal identity, values and understanding, and as described earlier, these are constantly developing in light of both internal and external pressures and constraints. Pollard and Broadfoot turn to the work of Bernstein (1996) to highlight the part that assessment plays in this and assert that its role is pivotal in controlling pedagogy and in relation to schools and teachers.

The introduction of the National Curriculum and National Assessment in 1988 imposed standardised testing and many teachers opposed this, not only due to increased pressures, but also due to their personal pre-dispositions and Pollard et al (1994:22) state that:

“The requirements of the 1988 Act implied a shift from a professionalism characterised by very personal, often intuitive and informal judgements on the part of individual teachers and schools concerning curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. The new condition of teachers’ work was to be characterised by the pursuit of more specific and externally imposed learning targets, in which the various elements of professional activity associated with achieving these targets, especially curriculum planning, assessment and reporting of achievement, were to be made increasingly explicit.”

The Education Reform Act (ERA, 1988) is characterised by lack of teacher autonomy and, Pollard et al (1994: 99) readily agree that as a direct consequence, teachers were feeling pressures from lack of time, a substantially intensified workload and loss of job satisfaction and the study concluded that:

“By 1992 there were increasing perceptions of a loss of autonomy and fulfilment in teaching.”

And there was a backlash against the National Curriculum and National Assessment in the early 1990s (Pollard et al, 1994).



Central to the notions of professionalism are the values that define and underpin them, including the self of the teacher, which was discussed earlier in the section (see section 2.3.1). Pollard et al claim that if the moral basis for teacher commitment is undermined and aims, structures or practices are imposed then teachers are likely to feel alienated from their work, and so are de-professionalised. The PACE study concluded that, in response to the ERA (1988) and the introduction of the National Curriculum and National Assessment, many teachers, although forced to adopt new practices, did not change their values. Pollard et al (1994:238) claim that the imposed changes saw teachers exploring their professional repertoire in order to find ways to mediate the new requirements or to incorporate them into their existing practices, they claim that:

“This would be the outcome of a professional response to the more barren, technicist requirements of the Act”

Following the introduction of the ERA, Dearing (1993) published a review of the National Curriculum and its Assessment, which proposed:

- Simplification and clarification of the programmes of study
- A reduction in the curriculum content
- Teachers were to exercise professional judgement.

However, despite claims that teachers were to exercise professional judgement, the high stakes attached to the end of Key Stage SATs not only continued but extended further with the introduction of the publishing of school league tables (Broadfoot and Pollard, 2000). Furthermore, despite assuring teachers that no major changes would occur before the year 2000, the National Curriculum Orders for Key Stages One and Two were changed in June 1998 to allow for the introduction of the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies (Richards, 2000).

The period of education we are currently experiencing began with the election of New Labour in 1997 and Richards (2000) fiercely criticises the government, stating it has intervened ever more directly in terms of prescribing the primary curriculum content, pedagogy and assessment. The interventions have served, Richards states, to produce detailed and prescriptive national strategies for literacy and numeracy, and schemes of work for other subjects, prescribed teaching methods in literacy and numeracy and Richards (2000:5) argues that the government considers testing to be the measure by which primary schools are valued and:

“...it has used that organisation (Ofsted) to reinforce the domination of the measurable and gradable as the expression of educational standards and quality.”

Richards continues his criticism of the labour government with regard to education, claiming that teachers are offered:

“...rhetorical autonomy; in principle they are free to opt out of national initiatives but at their peril given policing by OFSTED and LEA officials with a very anxious eye on both school and LEA targets.” (2000:6)

However, Broadfoot and Pollard (2000) highlight that while imposed assessment practices had once been perceived as an affront to professionalism and sense of self, they are now increasingly seen as integral to a teacher's role. They argue that in today's educational climate, the achievement of 'targets' is perceived as a new vehicle for self-satisfaction and personal fulfilment.

Furthermore, Woods (1995) concludes that, although teachers found it difficult to cope, at first, with the prescribed content and nature of the National Curriculum, they were finding ways of implementing the new policies in line with their own values, beliefs and preferred practices. In the context of the current changes in schools, and in particular

with regard to the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, Graham (1998: 121) describes her desire for teachers to respond in a similar way:

“We must hope that teachers continue to use their best instincts and professional judgement in these times of increased central control.”

This sentiment demonstrates the need for a reflective approach to practice, as Graham is suggesting that teachers depend upon their own intuition and considered opinions. The following, therefore, provides the reader with an overview of perspectives of such practice, whereby ‘reflective practice’ is conceived of in terms of both the ‘intuitive’ and ‘critical’. The following section discusses these notions, together with aspects of continuing professional development, given that, as Guskey (2002) states, professional development is a central component of almost every new educational initiative.

### **2.3.3 Reflective teaching**

There are many views on what reflective teaching is, how professional development of teachers is managed and how these can impact upon teaching and learning. Reflective practice and the term ‘reflective practitioner’ have both become prominent in education, particularly over the past decade. Indeed Furlong et al’s (2000) research into initial teacher training courses established that 72% of primary and secondary courses were based on the model of the ‘reflective practitioner’. However, although the term ‘reflective practitioner’ seems to be common in educational texts, and deemed to be a generic component of good teaching (see for example, Pollard, 2002), Korthagen (2001:51) asserts that: “...close analysis reveals...that the term has been conceptualised in different ways.”

In seeking to understand reflection, and to demonstrate it as being beyond mere 'thinking', Eraut (1994) describes how it can be regarded in two ways; as a form of deliberation, and as a form of metacognition. To gain an understanding of this, the following considers, in particular, the work of Dewey (1933) and Schon (1983) as when discussing the origins of reflection in teaching, their ideas are most frequently mentioned. Dewey and Schon have argued that a teacher's work is complex and requires deep and foundational reflective practices.

Dewey distinguished between 'routine action' and 'reflective action' whereby routine action is 'automatic' and guided by factors such as tradition, habit, authority and by institutional definitions and expectations. Routine action, Pollard (2002) notes, is, by implication, static and unresponsive to changing priorities or circumstances. Reflective action by contrast, is characterised by active and persistent careful consideration of ends and means and entails open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness (Day et.al. 1990), based on the need to solve a problem. For Dewey, it is in problem solving that one finds: "...the steadying and guiding factor in the entire process of reflection" and without which "...the course of suggestions flows at random." (Dewey, 1910: 11) Thus, the main features of Dewey's approach to reflection are, Moon (2005) states, the generation of the process through a 'perplexity', a sense of 'goal directedness' and the notion of testing or evaluation.

It is, however, worth noting that although Dewey's work is described by Moon (2005:11), for example, as a 'backbone philosophy' of reflection, that Dewey's work is not without its critics. For example, Furlong and Maynard (1995: 45) object to Dewey's picture of the 'unreflective teacher', arguing that teaching is:

“...multifaceted, unpredictable and complex; and it is never merely technical; it also involves educational and moral assumptions as well, whether or not the teacher is aware of them.”

Furthermore, Furlong and Maynard also argue against the prioritising of the moral dimensions of open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness, claiming that consideration of how children learn may be an equally important aspect to prioritise.

Nevertheless, Dewey’s notion of reflective action is derived from his notion that reflection serves to generate knowledge and, for Dewey, the process is perceived to be fundamental.

Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) focus on the process of reflection on practice and identify an ‘enabling model’ that consists of reflection on values, practice, improvement and context. They describe how important it is for practitioners to be able to reflect on the nature and importance of values because values are the things teachers care about, and they try to put these into practice. The notion of reflecting on values is, Ghaye and Ghaye (1998: 33) state, a good starting point in exploring the issues of being a professional because:

“In doing this we are often making the tacit explicit...If we reflect on these descriptions of practice, we give ourselves the chance to learn from experiences of teaching.”

Moving both thinking and practice forward is fundamentally about understanding the links between values and teaching. Reflection-on-practice, as identified as a component at the heart of the model, implies practitioners engaging in systematic and rigorous reflection on evidence from their practice (Ghaye and Ghaye, 1998). The notion of reflecting on evidence from practice and on improvement is also considered by Pollard

(1997) who suggests that reflective teaching requires competence in the gathering of information, analysis of data and evaluation. Reflective teaching, then, is considered to be evidence based. The final element in Ghaye and Ghaye's model relates to the notion of reflection-on-context. When reflecting on practice, practitioners must, Ghaye and Ghaye (1998:116) state, appreciate that there is a dynamic relationship between themselves and school culture:

“Critical reflection-on-practice needs to be seen as constructive action towards a better life. Teachers need to be open to what a better life looks like, and through debate and contestation be prepared to justify what they do... Critically reflective practitioners are risk-takers, able to deal with the uncertainty and ambiguity that comes from exploring new ways of doing things.”

The above has provided an insight into reflective practice as a form of deliberation, given that, as Ghaye and Ghaye (1998: 5) state: “Reflection-on-action is...a deliberate, conscious, and public activity, principally designed to improve future action.”

Schon (1983), however proposed two notions of reflection: reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action.

Schon's notion of reflection-on-action refers to the process of making sense of an action that has occurred, possibly learning from the experience and impacting upon an individual's knowledge base and in many ways can be conceived of as a form of deliberative reflection.

However, reflection-in-action:

“...involves a surprise, a response to surprise by thought turning back on itself, setting the problem of the situation anew, conducting an action experiment on the spot by which we seek to solve new problems we've set,

an experiment in which we test both our new way of seeing the situation, and also try to change that situation for the better.” (Schon, 1987:4)

It is important to note that Schon’s notion of reflection-in-action is rooted in his belief that in professions such as education, ‘espoused’ theory:

“...does not, and cannot, guide practice and that the epistemology of professional knowledge and practice is related to the manner in which professions have developed and their beliefs about their forms of practice...In the minor professions, many practitioners do cope well with uncertain situations apparently without the guidance of espoused theory...the professional rules are described by Schon as being the routine, the situations that are met in the day-to-day work of the professional.” (Moon, 2005: 41)

Thus, practitioners do not draw so much on espoused theory but on, Moon states, context-specific, idiosyncratically developed ‘theories in use.’

Such a stance is not without its critics, given that, as Lawes (2003: 22) states, reflective practice:

“...signals a shift in the way ‘theory’ is understood...While it is sometimes argued that reflective practice does not preclude knowledge of theoretical perspective, nevertheless, the underpinning ethos of reflective practice points to a re-definition of ‘theory’ in education – that *practice* has become the theory.”

Lawes argues that stressing the capacity of reflective practice to enable teachers to develop their personal theories redefines and reduces theory to merely the particular.

Furthermore, it is also important to note that critics of Schon’s work, such as Munby and Russell (1989) argue that that he fails to sufficiently clarify what is entailed in the reflective process itself.

However, although Schon's work has undergone much academic scrutiny, with criticisms associated with, for example, his argument about the role of theory and practice and critics claiming that his work is complicated and lacks clarity, Moon (2005: 51) points out that:

“Schon's work...covers what it covers and did not set out to describe reflection in detail, only to show that there were distinctive aspects of professional life that accord with some reflectivity in the processes of practice.”

The following therefore move to discuss Schon's notion of reflection-in-action.

Schon describes three salient features of reflection-in-action. Firstly, reflection is at least in some measure conscious, although need not occur in the medium of words. This can be considered as a rapid alert in which the cue to reflect pulls the practitioner out of 'automatic pilot' mode. Secondly, reflection-in-action has a critical function, questioning the assumption of knowing-in-action. Eraut (1994), in his discussion of this particular feature, highlights how in many ways this form of reflection is more 'deliberative', whereby there is likely to occur analytical analysis of a situation, as well as an intuitive dimension. The third feature, as identified by Schon, is that reflection gives rise to on-the-spot experiment. He claims that what distinguishes reflection-in-action from other kinds of reflection is its immediate significance for action (Eraut, 1994).

In considering Schon's notions of reflection-in-action, Eraut (1994) suggests that it provides an original and useful theory of metacognition during skilled behaviour, whereby skilled behaviour can be defined as a complex sequence of actions which has



become so routinised through practice and experience that it is performed virtually automatically.

Despite the complexities in interpreting Schon's work, and arguments from critics (see for example, Munby and Russell, 1989) that he fails to sufficiently clarify what is entailed in the reflective process itself, his work has:

“...highlighted the value of reflection in raising awareness of tacit knowledge and transforming knowing-in-action into knowledge-in-action.” (Eraut, 1994:15)

The above has provided an insight into reflective practice and highlights the very personal nature of reflection; what one practitioner considers reflection may differ from the next. Reflection, it seems, is bound by a number of variables, ranging from, for example, differing contexts to differing personal values. This, then, may go some way to explain why there are differing perspectives about what exactly reflective practice is.

Nevertheless, the process of reflective teaching, Pollard (1997) states, supports the development and maintenance of professional expertise and given the nature of teaching; professional development and learning should never stop:

“Indeed, the process of reflection feeds a constructive spiral of professional development and competence.” (Pollard, 1997: 4)

The following therefore considers the notion of continuing professional development (CPD) given that high quality professional development is a central facet in almost every new initiative for improving education (Guskey, 2002), and while many professional development programmes offered to teachers may vary, most share a common aim:

“In most cases, that end is the improvement of student learning. Professional development programs are systematic efforts to bring about

change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students.” (Guskey, 2002:381)

Guskey points out that what attracts teachers to CPD is their belief that it will expand their knowledge and skills and enhance their teaching effectiveness. Guskey proposes a model for teacher change, (Figure 2.3) whereby significant change in teacher attitudes and beliefs occurs after they gain evidence of improvements in student learning:

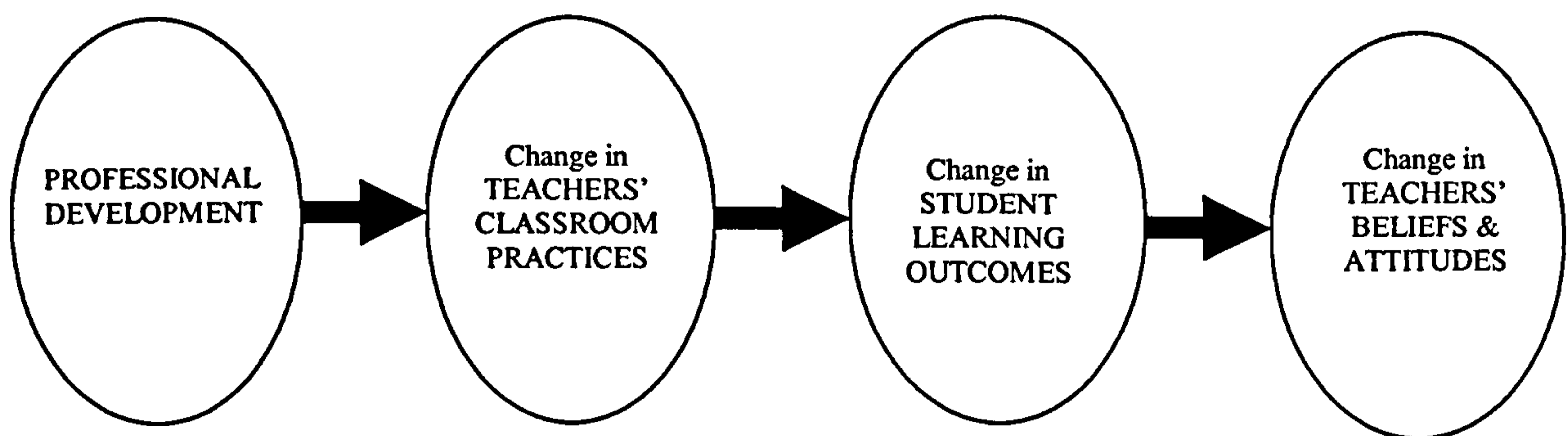


Figure 2.3 Guskey's (2002) Model for Teacher Change

In this model change is primarily conceived of as an experientially based learning process for teachers; teachers believe that new initiatives work because they have seen them work and that experience shapes their attitudes and beliefs.

There is much literature regarding CPD of teachers, however, for the purpose of this study, the aim of this section is to highlight the role that Initial Teacher Training (ITT) can and does play in CPD, as the study is set within schools that contribute to ITT (see section 4.1).

Child and Merrill (2003) conducted a study involving fifty-five professional mentors to highlight the significance of ITT in the development of effective CPD. Their findings highlight that through contributing to ITT, schools are 'advantaged' and their evidence

suggests that trainee teachers bring vitality to a school and influence teachers who could be described as 'professionally stagnant'. This occurs, they claim, for a number of reasons. Firstly, involvement in ITT means that mentors and classroom teachers become deeply connected to the standards for qualified teacher status (QTS) and assess the competences of trainee teachers against these standards. In doing so, the evidence from the study suggests that mentors and class teachers also use these standards as a means of assessing their own performance. Secondly, trainee teachers bring to their work the benefits of their reading and recent and relevant research into pedagogy. Furthermore, trainee teachers are able to cast a critical but accepting eye on school initiatives.

Child and Merrill (2003:5) have drawn out a number of links between involvement in ITT and CPD. Indeed, they concluded from their study, that:

“...ITT, as part of a school’s strategic plan for improvement, is fertile ground for continuing professional development.”

Pollard (1997) concurs with this view, stating that mentoring provides excellent opportunities for the development of both practical skills and reflective understanding and indeed, the mentor-student relationship is very similar to the social constructivist model of learning as the mentor aids performance and scaffolds learning.

Furthermore, Perry (2000) advocates mentoring as a means of developing and supporting professional development because the mentoring partnership encourages teamwork, a gradual development of reciprocal knowledge, a common language and confidence in and respect for each other.

The notion of mentoring as a means of enhancing professional development is not innovative and can be linked to the notion of teachers working collaboratively.

### **2.3.4 Teachers working collaboratively**

In 2003 the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information (EPPI) review of research about the impact of CPD on teaching and learning was published. One of the most important elements of effective CPD was found to be collaborative learning.

Collaboration usually occurs when groups of people come together to work towards a common goal or objective. On most occasions the intentions are that all of those involved stand to gain something from working in such a context and that there should be some added-value due to the sharing of ideas, expertise, knowledge and resources (Nias, 1989, Dalin, 1994). The process of collaboration should also be a valuable experience for the staff involved and, although linked to pupils and staff working together, the following message by Biott and Easen (1994: 203) highlights the potential of collaboration:

“Through working and learning together, both children and teachers develop a sense of who they are and what they can or cannot do. They learn about their own and each others’ strengths and weaknesses as they are revealed in particular circumstances and contexts.”

Since the introduction of the Education Reform Act (1988) there has been significant increase in teachers’ formal obligations to work together and since then, debates regarding collaborative models of learning have continued (Biott and Easen, 1994). Studies looking at achieving change in schools have considered how best to approach teachers and their practices and evidence suggests that teachers are more likely to take up new innovations if they do so as a member of a group. Furthermore:

“Regular, structured interaction between or among peers over substantive content is one of the hall marks of a profession and is viewed by other professionals as essential professional nourishment rather than a threat to autonomy.” (Joyce and Showers, 2002: 82)

In addition, Dalin (1994) identified team spirit, in situations where teachers help each other, as one of the main characteristics of successful implementation of new teaching practices. He found that encouraging motivation and commitment, and increased empowerment through delegation, combined with staff development and support produces higher commitment among teachers.

These studies imply, therefore, that successful implementation of new ideas and school improvements are associated with mutually supportive teams of teachers who have shared aims.

Collaborative learning it seems, can facilitate opportunities for teachers not only to work together; but also to learn, change and improve together and is perceived as an essential feature of classroom practice, particularly given that:

“...the education and up-bringing of children have become more complex and (there is) evidence that closer teamwork on day-to-day pedagogical challenges promotes the improvement of teaching and brings benefits to students.” (Donaldson and Sanderson, 1996:3)

Biott and Easen (1994) assert that, like the children they teach, teachers also have to juggle their separate and individual interests and responsibilities with the duties and demands of being a member of task groups and of whole staff teams and that learning to belong to and contribute to such contexts can be either a comfortable or a daunting experience. Like children, they claim that for trainee teachers, for example, learning to be a staff member is a fundamental feature of becoming a teacher and that they too need

to feel that they belong, can identify with peers, can build shared understandings and, can generally demonstrate 'social competence'. Donaldson and Sanderson (1996:9), in their discussion of collaboration, address the importance of this social competence, referring to the notion of 'relationships':

“When two or more people work together effectively, their professional relationship is a foundation for that work. That relationship is affected by each individuals' understanding of the other person or people, their motives for being there, their abilities, and their trustworthiness.”

Given that the notion of collaboration involves both a respectful relationship between collaborators and a productive process by which to carry out work, Biott and Easen (1994:70) highlight two means by which teachers can actually engage in collaborative learning; formally and informally:

“First, there is the expectation or obligation that they will contribute along with colleagues to various kinds of task groups...and second, there is the extent to which they experience mutual support which helps to spread and ease the stresses and strains of the job.”

Working collaboratively in a formal context has several implications and Biott and Easen claim that the nature of an individual's participation in such a context is dependent, to a certain extent, on whether or not they perceive the activities as a legitimate, practicable and meaningful way to spend their time. Furthermore, as Donaldson and Sanderson (1996:9) point out, in schools we often pay little attention to the notion and effect of relationships on the nature of collaborative work:

“...assigning people to work together without asking if their professional relationship is strong enough to make collaboration work.”

However, Biott and Easen point out that involvement in 'official' teamwork is only one means by which teachers engage in collaborative learning, and, referring to Nias (1989) highlight the notion that both formal and informal practices can coexist. Involvement in

informal collaboration is perceived as a fundamental aspect of school development and is embedded in 'normal' practice. As Nias (1989) states, working together and learning together can be difficult to separate and she demonstrates that even in schools where there are high levels of teacher autonomy and minimum interaction, teachers and their classrooms are affected by what other adults in school do and say (see section 2.3.1).

Links between professional development and school improvement have been emphasised by many authors (see for example, Pollard, 1997), although Barth (1990, cited in Holloway and Long, 1998:49) proposes a link between teacher and pupil development stating that:

“Teacher growth is closely related to pupil growth. Probably nothing within a school has more impact on students in terms of skills development, self-confidence, or classroom behaviour than the personal and professional growth of their teachers.”

Thus, the nature of teacher development is vital and Barth (1990) claims that effective teacher development involves encouraging teacher initiative and helping teachers to find their own solutions to their teaching problems. Stallings (1989, cited in Holloway and Long, 1998) makes similar points, and in particular raises the notion of collaboration.

He asserts that teachers should:

- Learn by doing: try, evaluate, modify, try again
- Link prior knowledge to new information
- Learn by reflecting and solving problems
- Learn in a supportive environment: share problems and success.

A key feature of research and commentary on teacher development, as outlined by Holloway and Long, is the notion of active involvement of teachers in the planning and

working through of the development activity; they state that it is crucial, therefore, that conscious involvement and collaborative learning on the part of all concerned should be considered and cite Dalin (1993:2) to illustrate this:

“Changes that have an impact on student’s lives involve an in-depth learning process that can only be mastered by teachers and heads who themselves are learning, in terms that can draw on the talents of all members.”

### **2.3.5 Summary**

The Education Reform Act (1988) wrought significant changes for teachers through the introduction of the National Curriculum (DES, 1988a) and National Assessment and more recently teachers have seen the introduction of a national strategy for the teaching of literacy. The driving force for the introduction of the national strategy has been guided by the government’s desire to raise standards of academic achievement. This section has illustrated the impacts that such government led initiatives have had on teachers and has reflected on the notion that teachers enter the profession with a strong sense of identity and that as individuals they bring to the profession diversity.

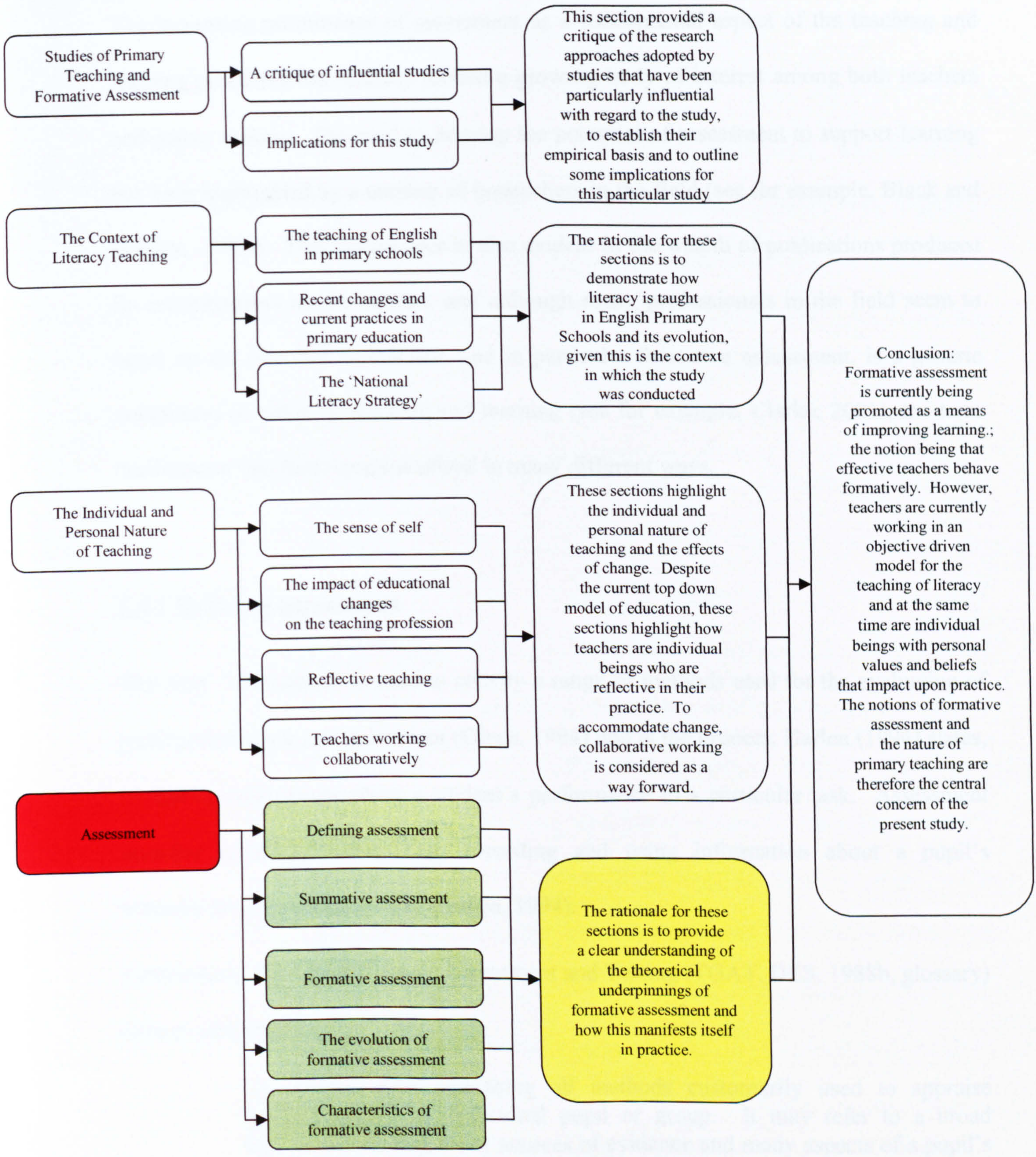
This section has also highlighted the importance of a teacher’s ‘self’ and the impact that factors such as context, experience and personal biography can have upon professional thinking.

This section has also explored aspects of reflective teaching and CPD and identified the role that involvement in ITT can play in each of these. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that, through collaborative learning, professional development is enhanced. Given that the prime rationale for formative assessment is the mutual enhancement of both teaching and learning (see section 2.4) if it is to exist in classrooms, based on daily



learning activities, it seems evident that there are links between formative assessment and reflective teaching as described above.

# A Review of the Literature



Legend:  Main Section     Sub-Sections     Rationale for Organisation

## **2.4 Assessment**

The increasing prominence of assessment as a fundamental aspect of the teaching and learning processes has recently fuelled a growing body of interest among both teachers and policy makers. The need to develop the potential of assessment to support learning has been highlighted by a number of researchers in the field (see for example, Black and Wiliam, 1998a). This prominence is also evident in the wealth of publications produced by commentators on the subject, and although many professionals in the field seem to agree on the fact that assessment, and in particular formative assessment, is a generic component of effective teaching and learning (see for example, Clarke, 2001), the term ‘assessment’ has been conceptualised in many different ways.

### **2.4.1 Defining assessment**

The term ‘Assessment’ is used to convey a range of methods used for the evaluation of pupil performance and attainment (Gipps, 1994) and is the process, Harlen (1994) states, of making judgements about a student’s performance in a particular task. Assessment includes gathering, interpreting, recording and using information about a pupil’s response to an educational task (Harlen, 1994).

Furthermore, the Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT, DES, 1988b, glossary) defines assessment as:

“A general term embracing all methods customarily used to appraise performance of an individual pupil or group. It may refer to a broad appraisal including many sources of evidence and many aspects of a pupil’s knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes; or to a particular occasion or instrument. An assessment instrument may be any method or procedure, formal or informal, for producing information about pupils: for example, a written test paper, an interview schedule, a measurement task using equipment, a class quiz.”

In addition to the more formal 'instruments' as described above, Harlen (1994) identifies that assessments can also take the form of observing actions, listening, reading written work and studying products such as drawings and artefacts.

Classroom assessment, Earl (2003) states, has a multitude of purposes, many of which are contradictory. For example, 'traditional' classroom assessments and reporting processes facilitate comparison amongst pupils, fulfil accountability demands but, paradoxically, do not provide any specific information about what the pupil has achieved. And Gipps (1994: 3) supports Earl's view, stating that:

"For example assessment to support learning, offering detailed feedback to the teacher and pupil, is necessarily different from assessment for monitoring or accountability purposes."

Gipps (1994) takes the view that the prime purpose of assessment is 'professional', that is, it is to support the teaching and learning process, although acknowledges that external bodies such as the government and parents want to know how the education system is performing and therefore require access to information. Although Gipps' point is based on Glaser's (1990) case for assessment being used for more than an indication of current or past achievement, one could question the use of the term 'professional' as it implies that assessments used for monitoring and evaluating are less so. Nevertheless, the principle is that the two contrasting perspectives of assessment - as a means of impacting upon teaching and learning processes and a means of providing information for third parties - present, Gipps identifies, a dilemma. There are demands for, for example, testing at national level to afford comparability, and at the same time a need for assessments to: "...map more directly on to the processes we wish to develop." (Gipps, 1994: 12)

This starting point for considering the term 'assessment' highlights its very complex nature.

Torrance and Pryor (1998) highlight how this complexity manifests itself in teachers' perceptions of assessment. They sought to investigate what teachers understood about assessment and concluded that it was viewed as a distinct activity from actual teaching. The teachers saw assessment as a means of gathering data for 'third parties' rather than for the benefit of either themselves or their pupils. They recognised assessment procedures; including questioning and observing, as having potentially negative impacts upon pupil motivation and learning. Moreover, teachers in the study perceived formative assessment as involving teacher judgements about achievement feeding forward into the teaching process, rather than having a direct impact upon the pupils to promote learning (see section 2.4.3).

A more recent study, however, conducted by Neesom (2000) on behalf of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), concluded that teachers perceived a range of benefits, although there were still a number of confusions and dilemmas regarding assessment. The study was carried out by the use of questionnaires (Appendix C):

“designed to:

- establish what teachers rate as valuable
  - establish how much formative assessment happens in the classroom
  - establish how far school managers encourage and support formative assessment
  - establish perceptions and factors that hinder school and class based developments
  - collect and record good practice
  - explore how to best define teacher assessment principles and practice in order to encourage a better understanding for future developments.”
- (Neesom, 2000: 3)

Teachers, Neesom reported, acknowledged the importance of a whole school commitment to formative assessment and valued the support that it gives to learners. They felt reassured that formative assessment practices place the learner as central and inform planning, teaching methods and support the evaluation of teaching. The teachers also perceived formative assessment as a useful means of improving pupil self-esteem and motivation and, more significantly, the development of metacognitive strategies.

However, the report also concludes that there remains some confusion about the differences between summative and formative assessment and that:

“The pace of implementing the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has sent an unintended message that their (teachers’) planning cannot be adjusted in response to formative assessment.” (Neesom, 2000:4)

In addition, some teachers perceived formative assessment as being ‘something extra’, highlighting a concern about what exactly formative assessment is and what it is for.

Given the on-going debate about the relative role and merit of assessment, the following sections consider each of the two most commonly discussed assessment types in turn, namely: summative and formative assessment. The reader will note that, given the constraints of the study, more attention is paid to formative assessment than summative assessment. This is not to imply a lack of concern with regard to summative assessment, as this is not a desirable impression to create, rather it results from a pragmatic perspective that to discuss summative assessment in significant detail here is not practicable, and given that the prime focus of the study is formative assessment, it is imperative to focus on this aspect more specifically. Nevertheless, the reader will note that the section regarding summative assessment concludes with a table of studies (Table

2). This table provides an overview of contemporary studies related to assessment, and to summative assessment in particular. The purpose of this is to highlight a range of studies conducted with regard to this aspect of the field.

#### **2.4.2 Summative assessment**

Summative assessment is used to record the overall achievement of a pupil. Clarke (1998) describes summative assessment as 'snapshot testing', which establishes what a child can and cannot do at a given time. Stake (cited by Richardson 2002), explains summative assessment via analogy, stating: "When the cook tastes the soup, that's formative assessment; when the customer tastes the soup, that's summative assessment."

Gipps and Murphy (1994) define summative assessment as that which is used for 'managerial' purposes; to select and certificate students and as an accountability tool, to provide information about teachers, schools or age groups at a national level, whereby the assessment tends to be a single event, taken at the end of a course or period of schooling and involves collating and reporting of results. In using the term 'managerial' Gipps and Murphy are seeking to differentiate these purposes from those of the ascribed 'professional' purposes (Gipps, 1994). As with the use of the term 'professional', one could question the use of the term 'managerial' as this seems to imply that the purpose of such tests is for administrative purposes only, yet, reflecting back to section 2.3.2, for example, Broadfoot and Pollard (2000) indicate that national testing is increasingly seen as integral to a teacher's role, with the achievement of 'targets' being perceived as a new vehicle for self-satisfaction and personal fulfilment. Nevertheless, the fundamental point being addressed by Gipps and Murphy (1994) is that summative assessment is, on the whole, used to provide evaluative information and for summative assessment,

consistency across tasks and markers is important such that the information can be used, with confidence, to make comparisons.

The use of summative assessments for such purposes dates as far back as the early nineteenth century, when the medical profession first instituted qualifying examinations in 1815 to determine competence and therefore limit entry to the profession. This initiative was swiftly followed by examination requirements for solicitors and accountants. The rationale for this was to facilitate the checking of standards as, prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, entry to the professions was determined by family history rather than ability or achievement. Stobart and Gipps (1997) also suggest that such exams were introduced in response to changing needs and the structure of society. As a result of industrialisation, the need for professionals was greater and there was increasing demand for middle class, trained workers. In order to control entry to the professions, it became necessary to select by means of examination.

Following this, universities introduced selection criteria, as demand for entry into higher education began to increase within the middle classes. Although it was still possible to 'purchase' a university place, Oxford, Cambridge, London and Durham introduced their own examining boards (Stobart and Gipps, 1997). As the number of secondary school leavers was increasing, the School Certificate was introduced in 1917. The certificate was based on formal written examinations, following the style of the professional examinations, and this subsequently became the model for school and university examinations (Stobart and Gipps 1997).



The 1926 Hadow Report concluded that, as the number of children eligible for secondary education was increasing, there was a need for differentiation. In response to this the 1938 Spens Report proposed a three-tier education system, comprising grammar, modern and technical schools. Selection for the schools was determined by the eleven-plus examination, placing intelligence testing (IQ testing) at the forefront of the selection process. IQ tests were developed in 1905 by Alfred Binet, for identifying children with special educational needs. The tests gave a measure of attainment on programmes of learning, with the underlying principle being that human beings had innate intelligence which was measurable. However, critics such as Ryan (1972: 42), argue that:

“...the notion of potential ability both as something abstracted from all interactions with the environment and at the same time measurable in a person’s behaviour simply does not make sense.”

And, Gipps and Murphy (1994) point out that there is evidence that IQ is not constant, as was assumed, questioning, therefore the validity of such testing.

From around 1950 there was a reduction in the status of intelligence testing and this was reflected, Stobart and Gipps (1997) state, in a growing scepticism about the shortcomings of IQ scores and realisation that coaching and test-practicing effected pupils’ performances in the eleven-plus examination. Furthermore, the need for IQ testing for selection purposes gradually declined, with the introduction of the comprehensive system.

Although the use of the eleven-plus declined, the climate for assessment was continually changing during the 1980s and since the 1988 Education Reform Act the significance of assessment in primary education has grown considerably, with summative assessments

taking place at the end of Key Stages One and Two in the form of 'National Tests' with aggregated results published to inform parental choice.

In 1991, aged seven, at the end of Key Stage One, the first cohort of pupils to have followed the National Curriculum experienced the first Standardised Assessment Tasks and Tests (SATs) in English, mathematics and science. These included a reading test, whereby level of attainment was determined by the number of errors made in a 100-word passage, a maths activity based on a game and a 'floating and sinking' science activity, which James (2000: 344) describes as 'notorious' as it:

“...puzzled many 7 year olds, especially those who had the beginnings of an intuitive understanding of density of mass as different from weight.”

The SATs were administered and marked by teachers. Teacher Assessments were also carried out using the Statements of Attainment and teachers recorded attainment against the criteria for the attainment targets, for each pupil. These same children then took the externally marked SAT tests in 1995, at the end of Key Stage Two and on reaching the end of Year 9 at Key Stage Three, took further SATs tests in core subjects. James (2000:351) claims that England has now achieved the dubious distinction of subjecting its school students to more external tests than any other country world wide, and notes that:

“There is little evidence that other countries are rushing to follow our lead; indeed countries like Japan are earnestly trying to extract themselves from their 'examination hell'.”

There remains much argument surrounding the use of Standardised Testing and 'Teacher Assessment' as a means of raising standards. This is largely driven by the view that assessment has become increasingly formal and:

“...the very high stakes attached to test results, especially at Key Stage 2, are now encouraging teachers to focus on practising test-taking rather than on using assessment to support learning. Pupils are increasingly seeing assessment as something which labels them and is a source of anxiety.” (Assessment Reform Group, 1999:5)

The above discussion of summative assessment has focussed, in the main, on large-scale summative assessment. However, as described earlier, summative assessment can be understood as snapshot testing, which establishes what a child can and cannot do at a given time (Clarke, 1998) and, as Earl (2003: 22) points out, it is the predominant kind of assessment in schools:

“This is the kind of assessment that still dominates most classroom assessment activities...with teachers firmly in charge of both creating and marking tests...A strong emphasis is placed on comparing students and feedback to students comes in the form of grades, with little direction or advice for improvement.”

As will emerge in subsequent sections of this literature review, there is currently a wave of support for formative assessment, with the phrase ‘assessment *for* learning’ being adopted to highlight the role of assessment in the teaching and learning processes. However, it is imperative to note that although the current assessment for learning agenda is being driven ever-forward, with educational researchers and critics being critical of traditional assessment and grading practices (see for example, Earl, 2003, Black et al, 2003), there are, and always will be milestones where summative assessment is required (Harlen, 2004, on behalf of the Assessment and Learning Research Synthesis Group). Summative assessment, Harlen states, serves important purposes in providing information to summarise students’ achievement and progress for their teachers, parents, the students themselves and others who need this information. She suggests that in order to serve these purposes effectively:

“... summative assessment should interfere as little as possible with teaching methods and the curriculum and, importantly, should reflect the full range of

learning outcomes, particularly those needed for continued learning and for learning how to learn. Assessment by teachers has the potential for providing summative information about students' achievement since teachers can build up a picture of students' attainments across the full range of activities and goals." (Harlen, 2004: 1)

Assessment conducted by teachers is variously called ongoing, continuous, school-based or, 'Teacher Assessment'. Teacher Assessment can serve both formative and summative purposes, the difference lying not in how the information is gathered but in how it is used. Teacher Assessment, Harlen states, takes a range of forms:

"...such as using prescribed tasks which are administered and marked by teachers, teacher-made tests, or the use of a set of criteria in relation to regular class work and observation of learning processes." (Harlen, 2004: 10)

In all cases of the summative use of assessment one of the main issues, Harlen asserts, is that of reliability, to ensure that teachers are using a mark scheme or criteria comparably.

Reliability and validity in assessments are discussed by many authors, however, Harlen (1994: 12) summarises how:

"The concept of reliability of the result of an assessment refers to the extent to which a similar result would be obtained if the assessment were to be repeated and (validity)...refers to how well the result really reflects the skill, knowledge, attitude or other quality it was intended to assess."

Yet Harlen notes that reliability and validity can never both be 100 per cent, therefore, by implication, assessment is never accurate. This means that the interpretation of assessment results should be an indication of what pupils can do, but, Harlen states, cannot be an exact specification. Reliability and validity need to be considered, Harlen (1994: 13) states, in relation to both context and purpose, and that:

"...quality in assessment is the provision of information of the highest validity and optimum reliability suited to a particular purpose and context."

Given the role that testing plays in summative assessments, the following provides a discussion of the two commonly acknowledged approaches to testing; (Satterly, 1989, Black, 1998, Gipps, 1994) namely 'norm' and 'criterion' referenced.

### **Norm-referenced Tests**

The literature acknowledges that there are two approaches to testing; namely 'norm' and 'criterion' referenced (see, for example; Satterly, 1989, Gipps, 1994 and Black, 1998). The differences between norm and criterion referenced tests lie in their respective purposes.

A test, which expresses results in terms of distribution amongst a group, is described as norm-referenced. Norm-referenced tests are, in Satterly's (1989) terms:

- Carried out for the purposes of comparison
- Aimed at high variability among scores
- Interpreted in relation to other individuals in the group
- Indispensable where fixed quota decisions need to be made, for example, selecting children from a large group in competition for places.

Satterly (1989:39) argues that: "The basic purpose of norm-referenced testing...is to discriminate among individuals."

Many critics have argued against the use of norm-referenced testing. For example; Berlack et al (1992, cited in Gipps, 1994) and Goldstein (1992, 1993, cited in Gipps, 1994) argue against such testing because of two key problems. The first identified problem is that of 'assumption of universality'. Norm-referencing assumes that a test

score has essentially the same meaning for all individuals, and therefore is universally accepted and understood. Gipps (1994:6) exemplifies this:

“In the case of reading a detailed definition of the construct of ‘reading’ would include accuracy and fluency in reading, both aloud and silently, comprehension of material, interest in reading etc. Thus a test which had a high construct validity (i.e. which assesses reading adequately) should address each of these aspects of the skill. In fact, standardised tests of reading tend to assess only one aspect of the skill, for example, comprehension of simple sentences. This means that such a standardised score does not represent the individual’s ability to read in the widest sense, and therefore that the meaning of the score is not universally understood.”

The second identified problem is that of ‘unidimensionality’. This refers to the assumption that items in a test should be measuring a single underlying attribute. Goldstein (1993) argues that since many attributes or skills that are being measured are multidimensional, then such tests lack validity. In addition to these ‘problems’ critics argue that the use of norm-referenced testing has further implications. Norm-referenced tests can de-motivate pupils, through ‘labelling’ and comparison and can, in particular, have detrimental effects on ‘less able students’ (Gipps, 1994).

The use of criterion referenced tests developed in response to the limitations of norm-referencing. Gipps (1994) terms criterion-referenced testing as ‘educational measurement’, the aim of which is to measure how well a student performs against an objective or criterion rather than another student. The appeal of criterion-referenced assessment is that, through provision of pre-specified objectives, teachers and pupils have a clear idea of what is required and can relate to these rather than to comparing performance with that of other individuals.

The shift in emphasis, from comparison with peers to specific learning objectives was revolutionary: criterion-referenced testing was seen as ‘good’ and norm-referenced as

'bad' (Gipps and Stobart, 1993). Nevertheless, critics argue that while criterion-referencing may be suitable for simply defined competencies, it is less suitable when the task becomes more complex. Either the task criteria must become more general or the assessment increasingly complex (Gipps, 1994). The greatest criticism associated with criterion-referenced testing has been against its reliance on such tightly defined objectives, indeed:

“Popham, one of the strongest supporters of criterion-referenced assessment in the USA, has retracted his former enthusiasm for detailed objectives, and now argues in favour of stating only a few broad objectives (Popham, 1987b and 1993a).” (Gipps, 1994:93)

Even so, the TGAT (DES, 1988b) endorsed the view that criterion-referenced assessment should be at the forefront of National Assessment. In light of their recommendations, what followed was the identification of ten levels of attainment for every curriculum subject, each of which was specified with Attainment Targets and Statements of Attainment.

There is little argument about what summative assessment is, but there is much controversy over the role it plays in raising standards, and in the evolution of the standards, assessment and accountability movement, assessment for learning has been largely ignored:

“The crucial distinction is between assessment to determine the status of learning and assessment to promote greater learning.” (Stiggins, 2002:5)

The following section therefore moves to discuss formative assessment and its role in raising standards of achievement, although the reader will note that prior to this Table 2 presents an overview of a range of contemporary studies related to summative assessment as outlined at the outset of this section.

Author, Date and Title of Publication	Aims	Method and Data Collection Sources	Findings
Brookhart, S. M. (2001) Successful Students' Formative and Summative Uses of Assessment Information <u>Assessment in Education: Principles and Practice, Vol. 8, No.1, 2001</u>	The purpose of the study was to document successful students' perceptions about the formative and summative aspects of classroom assessment.	Interviews with 50 students in high school English and Anatomy classes regarding specific classroom assessment events took place, designed to document students' views of the purpose, usefulness, relevance, and importance of specific classroom assessments and their performance on those assessments.	The study concludes that students make good use of assessment information. The students engaged in self-assessment as a regular and on-going process. They did not make neat distinctions between formative and summative assessment.
Davies, J. and Brember, I. (1998) National Curriculum Testing and Self-Esteem in Year 2 – the first five years: A cross-sectional study <u>Educational Psychology Vol. 18, No. 4 (1998)</u>	The aim of the study was to report changes in equivalent Year 2 cohorts (pupils aged 6-7) during the time of the introduction of the National Curriculum and National Tests.	The administration of the Primary Reading Test, NFER Mathematics tests and self-esteem measures with five cohorts of year 2 children (1058 pupils) took place.	The study concludes that for Year 2 pupils, self-esteem dropped every year since the introduction of the National Curriculum, with the greatest drop coinciding with the introduction of the National Tests.
Evans, E and Engelberg, R. (1988) Students' Perceptions of School Grading <u>Research and Development in Education, Vo. 21, No. 2, 1988</u>	The aim of the study was to test several hypotheses regarding children's reactions to and understanding of grades	An 88-item questionnaire was administered across classrooms in grades 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 11 to understand how the understanding of grades, attitudes to grades and attribution vary with age, achievement and gender.	The study concludes that younger students felt that teachers graded fairly and the students attached less importance to the grades they received. The report also concludes that higher achievers tended to perceive grades as 'fair' and liked to be graded – as opposed to those achieving less well. In addition, older achievers had a clearer understanding about grades and higher achievers about grading systems. Lower achievers believed that grades were influenced by external factors.
Firestone, W. A., Winter, J. and Fitz, J. (2000) Different Assessments, Common Practice? Mathematics testing and teaching in the USA and England and Wales <u>Assessment in Education: Principles and Practice, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2000</u>	The aim of the study was to ascertain the extent to which assessments influence practice.	Case Studies were undertaken. Data were collected via observations of middle-grade teachers in England and Wales with their 'highly aligned curriculum and assessment system' and two USA states with 'Performance-based assessment systems'.	The study concludes that testing policies can influence the content taught and promote 'teaching to the test', but also that that some basic instructional practices are more difficult to influence, such as, for example the manner in which teachers provide explanations to students.

Table 2: Overview of Studies Pertaining to Summative Assessment



<p>Gordon, S. and Reese, M. (1997)  <u>High Stakes Testing: Worth the price?</u>  <u>Journal of School Leadership Vol. 7</u></p>	<p>The aim of the study was to gain an understanding of teachers' perceptions in Texas Public Schools, of the effects of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills.</p>	<p>100 teachers responded to four open-ended questions designed to elicit their views and experiences of the Texas Assessment and Skills process. 20 teachers were then interviewed – 10 from 'high achieving' schools and 10 from 'low achieving' schools</p>	<p>The study concludes that testing results in 'teaching to the test' and the neglect of many other areas of the curriculum. Teachers may also adopt practices that may lower motivation, curiosity and cognitive growth of students and teachers alike.</p>
<p>Harlen, W. and Crick, R. D. (2003)  <u>Testing and Motivation for Learning Assessment in Education: Principles and Practice, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2003</u></p>	<p>The purpose of the review was to provide evidence in relation to claims that not only does testing raise standards, but also that, particularly high stakes testing, has a negative impact on motivation for learning. The review sought to respond to the question: "What is the evidence of the impact of summative assessment and testing on students' motivation and learning?"</p>	<p>A systematic review of research on the impact of testing on students' motivation for learning.</p>	<p>The study concludes by highlighting that there are few studies found to offer dependable evidence to respond to the question, highlighting the need for further research. From the review, many of the findings indicated clear messages to minimise the negative impact of tests on motivation (including the suggestion that drill and practice testing be avoided). In addition, the review indicated: the need for professional development that emphasises learning goals; use of learning goals with students (as opposed to performance goals) and students' understanding of these and success criteria; whole school policy and shared understanding of purpose of assessment; the development of range of self-regulated learning activities; reduction in peer comparison and finally the realistic presentation of assessment where results are regarded as 'tentative' as opposed to 'definitive'</p>
<p>Harlen, W (2005)  <u>Teachers' Summative Practices and Assessment for Learning – Tensions and Synergies</u>  <u>The Curriculum Journal Vol. 16, No. 2, 2005</u></p>	<p>The purpose of the paper was to make a case for greater use of teachers' judgements in summative assessment.</p>	<p>A review of research on the impact of testing on students' motivation for learning</p>	<p>Harlen concludes that there seems to be value in maintaining the distinction between the purposes of formative and summative assessment, while seeking synergy in relation to the processes. Harlen suggests making use of the same evidence for both purposes (for example</p>

<p>Kyriakides, L. (2002) A research based model for development of policy on baseline assessment, <u>British Educational Research Journal</u>, Vol. 28, No. 6, 2002</p>	<p>The aim of the study was to determine whether baseline assessment can be used both for formative purposes and for value-added analysis. The study assessed primary mathematics knowledge over 2 years.</p>	<p>All grade 1 students in 58 Cypriot schools were involved in the study. Teachers completed a checklist on pupils, including assessments about social and emotional development. Performance test results were used, student interviews and achievement test data.</p>	<p>the use of portfolios). In addition, he recommends that 'synergy' involves having the same person responsible for using the evidence. Harlen also concludes that the procedures that will most help both the effectiveness of formative assessment and the reliability of summative assessment will be those that involve teachers in planning assessment and developing criteria. The study concludes that pupils' responses to baseline assessments revealed that some school entrants had already exceeded some or most of the aims in mathematics and some had achieved none. Kyriakides concludes therefore that the use of baseline assessment for formative purposes is valuable. Kyriakides also concludes that the model of baseline assessment in mathematics should be a continuous communication between teachers and pupils, its primary role being diagnostic and at the same time providing evaluative information.</p>
<p>Kyriakides, L. (2004) Investigating Validity from Teachers' Perspectives through their Engagement in Large scale Assessment: The Emergent Literacy Baseline Assessment Project <u>Assessment in Education: Principles and Practice</u>, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2004</p>	<p>The aim of the study was to investigate the meanings constructed by teachers from the performance test known as the 'Emergent Literacy Baseline Assessment' to clarify the importance of investigating inferential validity for the processes of evaluating and developing tests.</p>	<p>An investigation was conducted into the meanings constructed by teachers of a literacy test. Following the administration of the test to primary school children, 132 teachers were asked to complete a self-assessment questionnaire, focussing on teacher attitudes about the appropriateness of the test and the quality of the data collected through the test and the teacher uses of the test.</p>	<p>The study presents arguments based on the findings, that in investigating the validity of large-scale tests, one should take into account teacher perspectives.</p>

<p>Little, A. (1994) Types of Assessment and Interest in Learning in the South of England in the 1980s <u>Assessment in Education: Principles and Practice, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1994</u></p>	<p>The aim of the study was to examine school based assessment innovations prior to the introduction of National Assessments and their relationships with motivation and learning</p>	<p>Case studies of three schools were undertaken. The study focused on mathematics. Questionnaires were administered.</p>	<p>Little concludes that different assessment types stimulate different levels of interest. Little claims that the teachers were enthusiastic about their assessment procedures. Little also concludes that ownership and control of assessment may be as essential for a teacher's sense of control of teaching as it is for the student's control of their learning.</p>
<p>Lokan, J. Adams, R. and Doig, B. (1999) Broadening Assessment, Improving Fairness? Some examples from school science <u>Assessment in Education: Principles and Practice, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1999</u></p>	<p>The aim of the paper was to explore some of the issues associate with 'test fairness' when assessments are broadened to include a variety of items from including tasks requiring students to construct their answers to carrying out investigations.</p>	<p>Two assessment programmes in school science are discussed. Both programmes are described and results cited for several groups of children in middle primary (aged 9 – 10) or lower secondary (aged 13 or 14).</p>	<p>Lokan et al conclude that by broadening assessment programmes to include a wider variety of tasks, disadvantage for disadvantaged groups is not exacerbated, hands-on tasks may improve equity. They conclude that broader assessments are probably no less fair than more narrowly focussed tasks, although for motivational reasons, and because a wider range of skills can be assessed, efforts to broaden assessments are worthwhile.</p>
<p>Paris, S. G., Lawton, T. A., Turner, J. C., Roth, J. L. (1991) A Developmental Perspective on Standardised Achievement Testing <u>Educational Researcher Vol. 20, No. 5</u></p>	<p>The aim of the study was designed to analyse a student perspective on SATs and to determine the extent of and the developmental trajectory of student frustration over SAT testing.</p>	<p>Data were collected by 3 surveys. Survey 1 was a 40-item likert scale questionnaire. Survey 2 was a 20 item questionnaire about test taking. Both were administered to around 1000 students in grades 2 – 11. Survey 3 was administered to 250 students in grades 4, 7 and 10 after they had taken the 'Michigan tests'.</p>	<p>Paris et al conclude that with increasing age, students feel more resentment, anxiety, cynicism and mistrust for SATs- they are more likely to minimise effort and respond randomly to tests than younger children. Results of tests, Paris et al conclude, become increasingly less valid for low achievers.</p>
<p>Reay, D. and William, D. (1999) 'I'll be Nothing': Structure, agency and the construction of identity through assessment <u>British Educational Research Journal, Vol. 25, No. 3, 1999</u></p>	<p>The aim of the study was to explore the extent to which year 6 (pupils aged 10-11) pupils perceive the extent to which National Assessment Tests contribute to their understanding of themselves as learners</p>	<p>Data were gathered via a small scale study in one classroom in a London primary school. Data were gathered through observations and interviews with pupils in focus groups.</p>	<p>Reay and William conclude that: as tests became nearer, teaching changed; students were aware of the effects of the NC assessments; teachers were under pressure to increase scores; assessment focus narrowed and said very little about pupils' actual learning.</p>

<p>Williams, J. and Ryan, J. (2000)  National Testing and the Improvement of  Classroom teaching: can they co-exist?  <u>British Educational Research Journal</u>,  Vol. 26, No. 1, 2000</p>	<p>The aim of the study was to provide a  description of what children believe and  know, to raise teachers' awareness of  their children's thinking as it relates to  their test performance.</p>	<p>The study is an analysis of children's  performance in the 1997 UK  mathematics tests for both 7 and 14 year  olds. Children's responses and errors  were scaled against their ability using  Rasch methodology.</p>	<p>Williams and Reese conclude that, for 7  year olds, written testing produces  disappointing results in terms of  diagnostic assessment and many reasons  to feel concerned about the levels of  success of the children involved. They  conclude that, through discussions with  teachers, the tests do not enhance their  knowledge and understanding of the  children in their classes.  The study has allowed Williams and  Reese to inform teachers about specific  errors and 'hint' at the diagnostic  teaching that may improve their practice.</p>
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### **2.4.3 Formative assessment**

In much literature, assessment for learning is perceived as synonymous with formative assessment (see for example, Weeden et al, 2002). However, before continuing to discuss formative assessment in further detail, it is important to highlight Wiliam's (2003) conceptualisation that assessment for learning is the purpose, and formative assessment is the function. Throughout this study, I have therefore used the term 'formative assessment' with an understanding that it is a tool by which assessment for learning can take place (see section 2.1).

Just as seeking a definition for the term 'assessment' proves rather complex, so too is the task of defining 'formative assessment'. At its most simplistic level, it should support the teaching and learning process (Gipps and Murphy, 1994); however despite this apparently clear definition, there are a number of quandaries associated with formative assessment. Firstly, Black and Wiliam (1998a) argue that much of what is described by teachers as formative assessment, is in fact 'periodic summative', whereby assessment occurs continually, but results are used, in the main, to calculate and record 'scores' or 'marks'. In this context, there may be feedback given to the learners; however it is used largely to present them with information about their success as opposed to impacting directly upon teaching and learning. Secondly, much of the information on the subject of formative assessment assumes that the focus of control lies with the teacher. For example Tunstall and Gipps' (1996) definition of formative assessment prioritises the teacher's role in making judgements about pupils' learning that feed back into the teaching and learning process and similarly, the TGAT report (1988b) promoted a national system for assessment where results were used to provide a basis for teachers to make decisions about pupils' needs. In such a context, pupils seem to be portrayed as

passive, learning only as a consequence of the decisions made by the teacher (Dann, 2002).

Torrance and Pryor (1998:8) highlight the potential of the role of both teachers and pupils in formative assessment, whereby:

“The process of formative assessment could be largely teacher controlled, with teachers providing feedback to pupils on how well they have achieved particular objectives at a particular point in time, and what else they might need to do in order to improve. On the other hand, it can be argued that formative assessment should be essentially focused on the pupil experience; that it must inevitably involve pupils reflecting on what they have achieved and how they have achieved it.”

Torrance and Pryor’s consideration endorses the work of Sadler (1989) who conceptualises formative assessment as being concerned with how judgements about the quality of students’ responses can be used to shape and improve their competence because assessments are made during the course of work. Sadler (1989:120) connects formative assessment with feedback and states:

“Teachers use feedback to make programmatic decisions with respect to readiness, diagnosis and remediation. Students use it to monitor the strengths and weaknesses of their performances, so that aspects associated with success or high quality can be recognised and reinforced, and unsatisfactory aspects modified or improved.”

Sadler concludes, however, that even when teachers give students valid and reliable feedback about their work, improvement does not necessarily follow. He claims that in order for students to improve, they require a notion of the required goal, need to be able to make comparisons with their actual performance and able to engage in appropriate action to ‘bridge the gap’. This sentiment is echoed by the Assessment Reform Group (1999:2) which, citing the research carried out by Black and Wiliam (1998a), claims that:

“...successful learning occurs when learners have ownership of their learning; when they understand the goals they are aiming for; when, critically, they are motivated and have the skills to achieve success.”

In terms of providing a working definition for formative assessment, Black and Wiliam (1998a:7) conclude that formative assessment can be described as:

“All those activities undertaken by teachers and/or students, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged”

Formative assessment involves teacher-learner interaction, shifting the emphasis to actively engage pupils in their learning such that:

“Teacher-learner interaction goes beyond the communication of test results, teacher judgements of progress and the provision of additional instruction, to include a role for the teacher in assisting the pupil to comprehend and engage with new ideas and problems. The process of assessment itself is seen as having an impact on the pupil as well as the product, the result.” (Torrance and Pryor, 1998:15)

This notion places the learner at the heart of the teaching and learning process, and shifts them from a passive role to a more interactive role. This concurs with the social constructivist views of Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1985) who claim that it is important to identify not just what pupils know, but what they might achieve through adult or peer support and collaboration.

The above has provided an overall description of formative assessment, however, given that this implies a paradigm shift (Gipps, 1994) in the thinking of how teachers assess and evaluate pupil achievement, moving from the measurement of learning to focusing on the learning itself, the following provides an overview of the evolution of formative assessment. The purpose of this is to demonstrate how its role is perceived as increasingly valuable in the raising of academic standards.

#### **2.4.4 The evolution of formative assessment**

Debates regarding the potential of formative assessment came to the fore in the UK during the 1980s.

In Autumn 1986 the education minister, Kenneth Baker, announced the decision to impose a National Curriculum in January 1987, together with accompanying National Assessment in April. Consequently, *The National Curriculum 5-16: A Consultation Document* was published. The document claimed that:

- “8. A national curriculum backed by clear assessment arrangements will help raise standards of attainment by
- (i) ensuring that all pupils study a broad and balanced range of subjects...
  - (ii) setting clear objectives for what children over the full range of ability should be able to achieve...
  - (iii) checking on progress towards those objectives and performance achieved at various stages, so that pupils can be stretched further when they are doing well and given more help when they are not...
23. Attainment targets will be set for all three core subjects of mathematics, English and science. This is a proven and essential way towards raising standards of achievement. Targets must be sufficiently specific for pupils, teachers, parents and others to have a clear idea of what is expected, and to provide a sound basis for assessment.” (DES 1987, 3-4, 9.10)

The programme, as outlined in the Report of the TGAT (DES, 1988b) and the statutory orders, required that pupils be assessed on a ten-level scale against the attainment targets. Such assessments involved teachers using external tests, Statutory Assessment Tests and Tasks (SATs), with pupils at the end of Key Stages (children aged 7, 11, 14 and 16). Following its introduction, there was much controversy, resulting in teacher boycott of the tests due to the time commitments involved and further controversy lay in the tensions between the demands of the government, which sought a national assessment system in order to compare school performance, and teachers who wanted a national system of assessment that supported teaching and learning (Pollard et. al, 1994).



However, the TGAT report (DES, 1988b) also made an explicit link between assessment and learning, stating that assessment lies at the heart of the learning process, and should be an integral part of the educational process. The report argued that assessment would provide information on the strengths and weaknesses of individual children and thus inform planning. However, James (2000) argues that the TGAT suffered from 'being ahead of its time' and claims that few lay-people fully understood what was meant by formative assessment, or how important this was for raising standards. Black (2000) also claims that, although the TGAT argued that formative assessment was the principal key to raising standards, it failed to make an adequately strong argument about both the benefits and radical changes required for the role of formative assessment.

Black and Wiliam (1998a) were commissioned by the Assessment Reform Group, with funds from the Nuffield Foundation, to establish whether or not formative assessment could be shown to raise levels of attainment. Their study involved a review of all of the studies pertaining to formative assessment since 1988 and they identified weaknesses in classroom assessment practice. Common features of the findings were that:

- Assessments encouraged rote and superficial learning.
- In the questions that the teachers used, they were not critical about what was being assessed.
- The grading function of assessments was over emphasised, with the learning function being under emphasised (Black, 2000).

However, their research:

“...reported conclusively that formative assessment does improve learning. The gains in achievement appear to be quite considerable... among the largest ever reported for educational interventions.” (Black and Wiliam, 1998a: 61)

And they called for further research that supports teachers in “trying to establish new practices in formative assessment.” (ibid.)

Based on the findings of Black and Wiliam, Clarke (2001:4) initiated ‘The Gillingham Partnership Formative Assessment Project’ designed to evaluate formative assessment strategies in Gillingham Partnership schools. The project involved 173 teachers from 15 schools and was organised into four main sections:

Autumn Term 2000	Share learning intentions and success criteria and begin pupil self-evaluati
Spring Term 2001	Focus oral and written feedback around learning intentions
Summer Term 2001	Introduce writing/social targets with optimum pupil involvement
Autumn Term 2001	Analysis and final report writing by Institute of Education staff Ways forward for Gillingham

Figure 2.4 Clarke’s (2001) Gillingham Partnership Project Outline

Each of the first three terms began with training for each school, led by Clarke, and the various strategies suggested by Black and Wiliam (1998a, see section 2.4.3) were outlined, discussed and practised. Data were gathered each term from observations of lessons and interviews with both children and teachers from Reception to Year Six and Clarke (2001:55) concludes, from phase one of the project, that:

“Overall, teachers feel that their teaching has been positively affected by the strategies and their children are more focused, more confident and more self-evaluative, with, in many cases, noticeable improvement in their progress attributed directly to this project.”

In addition to the work conducted by Black and Wiliam (1998a) and Clarke (2001), the assessment for learning agenda has moved ever forward. The DfES, National Strategies, OFSTED and QCA have adopted the Assessment Reform Group’s interpretation of

assessment for learning and formative assessment as is evidenced in the documents available from the QCA website. Given its significant profile, the following moves to discuss how the literature conceives of formative assessment.

#### **2.4.5 Characteristics of formative assessment**

Black and Wiliam (1998a) concluded that there were strong links between formative assessment and effective pedagogy and their research concurs with that of many proponents of formative assessment and constructivist views of learning. Sadler (1989), for example, concludes that for pupils to improve, they need to have a notion of the desired goal, be able to compare actual performance with the desired performance and engage in action that will close the gap between the two. In short, supporting the child in moving through the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

The ZPD, Vygotsky's (1978) most famous contribution to psychological theory, refers to the gap between the actual developmental level as shown by a child's unaided performance, and the potential level as shown by their performance under adult guidance or in collaboration with a peer. This interaction is termed 'scaffolding' and Corden (2000: 10) describes how in this context:

“The child is seen as an apprentice learner, initially requiring a great deal of support (scaffolding) as a novice but gradually becoming more proficient and finally being able to operate independently.”

Gipps (1994) extends the notion of scaffolding to assessment, whereby there is interaction within the assessment processes. If improvement in work is to take place, the learner must therefore know clearly the purpose of the task; how far this has been achieved and supported in 'closing the gap'.

In order to close the gap and improve learning through assessment, Black and Wiliam (1998a) established that teachers need to:

- Share learning intentions with children
- Involve pupils in self-evaluation
- Provide feedback which leads pupils to recognise the next steps, and how to take them
- Be confident that every pupil can improve and consider pupil self-esteem.

The following sub-sections consider each of these requirements in turn, highlighting the principles of adopting such practices.

### **Sharing learning intentions with children**

Proponents of formative assessment perceive the sharing of learning intentions with children to be imperative yet, prior to discussing this, it is important to reflect on the notion of teacher planning as this is the stage where learning intentions are established. However, it is not the intention of the study to delve deeply into research regarding teacher planning, rather, it is to highlight the notion of objective driven planning as the study was carried out in the context of an objective driven model, the National Literacy Strategy (NLS, DFES, 1998).

Tyler (1950) was the first proponent of what is often termed, the ‘objectives-first’ model.

This model is seen as linear and consisting of four key steps, whereby teachers:

- Specify objectives
- Select appropriate learning activities
- Organise activities into a sensible order

- Specify evaluation procedures (John, 1993).

Clark and Peterson (1986) refer to this model as being most widely advocated in both teacher training and in-service education and indeed the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) is based on such an objective driven model. However, this model has received much criticism, (see for example, Richards, 2000) and John (1993) suggests that it assumes that teaching contexts are static and controllable, rather than dynamic. Egan (1988) also suggests that such a model leaves out that which is most valuable about education, asserting that spontaneity and the creative imagination, though at the heart of education, are abandoned through 'dominance of the cognitive'.

It has been suggested, however, that teachers do not actually follow this model rather they take into account many other considerations when planning (Zahorik, 1975, McCutcheon, 1980, Sardo-Brown, 1988). Zahorik, for example, asked 194 teachers to identify the decisions they made prior to teaching, classifying the decisions into:

- Objectives
- Content
- Pupil activities
- Materials
- Diagnosis
- Evaluation
- Instruction
- Organisation.

Zahorik concluded that 81% of the teachers made decisions regarding pupil activities first, prior to teaching and that, in this respect, teachers first concerned themselves with content and then learning objectives. He found that the question that most teachers asked themselves first, the most frequently, concerned the range and particulars of the subject matter of the lesson to be taught. Zahorik intimates that the results of his study suggest that the 'breadth and depth' of the content for teaching-learning is a major concern for teachers and that, in this respect, the place of content in planning models should be more defined.

McCutcheon (1980) also suggests that teachers do not follow an objective driven notion when planning, but that instead they proceed to make decisions about the type of learning activity. This can be termed the 'activities-first' model. McCutcheon (1980) looked at the planning processes in twelve elementary schools. The teaching plans were, McCutcheon described, 'like shopping lists' in that they served as a reminder of activities planned in advance. Additionally, McCutcheon found that objectives were only noted if this was an expectation as laid down by the school principal. This was largely due to the nature of the resources the teachers were using; they felt it was unnecessary to specify objectives because they were:

- (a) already written in the manuals that the teachers were using
- (b) implicit in the activities

McCutcheon continues, proposing that teachers should not try to identify specific learning objectives prior to teaching, but plan activities from which pupils can choose their own learning experiences and choose their own objectives.

Similarly, Calloway (1988) studied the planning of seventy-six teachers who were asked to assume that they were planning a unit of work for their class. They were asked to list, chronologically, the planning decisions they would make prior to teaching the unit. The major concern highlighted by 80% of the teachers, concerned content, specifically, how the content would fit in with the curriculum and subject area they were teaching. 75% of the teachers also referred to the issue of resources. 10% of the teachers discussed issues relating to 'student readiness' and prior learning.

The underlying argument behind the two models seems to lie with assessment. Juarez (1992) suggests that advocates of the objective-first model of teacher planning believe that a specific learning objective is essential such that learning can be measured, whereas supporters of the activities-based model argue that such constraining learning objectives, in relation to measurability, will reduce the curriculum to include only measurable objectives.

Juarez (1988, cited in Juarez, 1992) interviewed forty-two classroom teachers and in her study asked them to voice their perceptions of teacher planning. They were asked if their planning was objective or activity driven. She invariably found that teachers said that they identified key learning objectives prior to teaching, and intentionally articulated them in such a way as they were measurable. However, the teachers also stated that not all educational objectives are specifically measurable, and that they attempted to meet these objectives through pupil engagement in activities that would promote the less tangible and more subtle learning goals. Juarez, (1992: 65) concluded that:

“The teachers in this particular study, veteran teachers and master planners, had evolved an approach to planning that was something of a ‘work-a-day’ composite of the two models of teacher planning most often recommended by teacher planning theorists.”

John (1993: 14) asserts that it would seem that some direction in the form of goals and experiences are needed if a lesson is to be effective, and suggests that objectives need to be more closely linked to context-bound considerations:

“Seeing the potential in a situation may lead to more achievable goals, and embedding goals more deeply in the teacher’s personal-professional knowledge may have a more beneficial effect...Too often, goals or objectives are seen and used as remote, cold, technical instruments which have to be laid out in a specific way often to satisfy external agencies. It is this artificial use of objectives that is potentially damaging.”

Additionally, research highlights that teachers’ plans are rarely fully reflected in their written plans (Morine-Dersheimer, 1979). Indeed, Morine-Dersheimer concluded that the ‘mental plans’ that teachers have are much more detailed and span more aspects of the lesson. This concept suggests that teachers’ plans are ‘nested’ within a larger structure.

This notion of ‘nesting’ is supported by Clark and Elmore (1979) who concluded that:

“Establishing the basic classroom organisation, rules, procedures, and routines constitutes the business of the first few weeks of September and forms a framework within which the work for the remainder of the school year is planned, organised, experienced and evaluated.” (Clark and Elmore, 1979:15)

Sardo-Brown (1988, 1990) also refers to the nesting process of planning. In her study of twelve middle-school teachers’ planning, she found that:

“...these teachers planned in a nested hierarchical fashion, developing plans for the upcoming year in distinctive planning episodes that became progressively more detailed at the unit, weekly and daily levels.” (Sardo-Brown, 1988: 84)

Many researchers agree that some form of planning is essential, the difference, however, seems to lie in the approach, be it objective or activity driven. However, despite its critics, an objective-driven approach to the teaching of literacy now exists in the form of



the National Literacy Strategy (see section 2.2.3) and John (1993:31) goes some way to provide a rationale for its purpose, given that:

“...the concept rests on the notion, that if you do not know where you are going from the outset, then not only are you likely to get lost on the way, but you may not even know when you have arrived.”

John also makes an interesting point in relation to planning within the framework of the National Curriculum. Planning now involves, he states, not only the mapping out of the essential knowledge and skills of particular subjects, but also the specification of learning objectives. John suggests that teachers need to consider the National Curriculum as a framework within which lesson plans will be ‘crafted’. Furthermore he suggests a more flexible approach to planning, whereby goals for a lesson are set, although may be ‘approximations’ and it is better to “...recycle these as your notion of how the lesson may run becomes clear.” (John, 1993:28)

The introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies and the QCA schemes of work have seen a shift in the way that teachers plan in schools today. Clarke (2001) suggests that whereas there used to be a clear difference between teachers’ medium term plans and schemes of work, the two have merged considerably. Many schools use the QCA schemes of work themselves as medium term plans and Clarke (2001:10) makes a very interesting point related to this that echoes the sentiments of John (1993) with regard to flexibility, highlighting the specific role of assessment:

“There is a serious point to be made about a teaching situation where the activities are ‘set in stone’ through printed material. The implication is that this plan should not really change, except for minor modification. Yet whether activities are appropriate or fulfil learning intentions should be in question... Deciding to change activities as a result of how things are going in the classroom is, as OFSTED puts it, ‘using assessment to inform planning.’”

The links between planning and formative assessment are explicit, particularly given the notion that formative assessment implies the setting of clear learning objectives. However, Black and Wiliam (1998a) argue that, in order to behave formatively, there are further steps that teachers need to take, highlighting the importance of sharing learning intentions with children. This view is also endorsed by Torrance and Pryor (2001) who carried out an action research based project involving two university-based researchers and a team of teacher-researchers to investigate and develop formative classroom assessment in primary schools. The study concludes that teachers need to clarify learning goals and task criteria; and crucially need to share them with children. Researchers such as Black and Wiliam (1998a) claim that through sharing learning intentions pupils can engage in self-evaluation; feedback can be more tightly focused and pupils are more motivated when they have a notion of the expectations of lessons. These notions are considered more fully in the following sub-sections.

### **Pupil self-evaluation**

The notion of pupil self-evaluation is perceived as a crucial feature of formative assessment (see for example, Black and Wiliam, 1998a, Clarke, 2001). What is interesting is that the term 'evaluation' is used as opposed to 'assessment'. Self-evaluation, as described by the Association for Achievement and Improvement through Assessment (AAIA, North East Region), is about pupils learning how they learn. Too often self-assessment, they claim, is seen as the pupils reflecting on what has been covered. They are encouraged to identify the activities in which they have recently taken part and in many cases the AAIA state, they are simply repeating the learning objectives. Self-evaluation is more than this. Self-evaluation involves an analysis of how they have learned and involves skills that need to be planned and developed over time.

The Assessment Reform Group (1999) highlights the importance of pupil self-evaluation. The group acknowledge that assessment for learning must involve the pupils and whilst most information regarding their learning will come in terms of feedback from the teacher, some will be through the direct involvement of pupils in assessing and evaluating their own work.

The structure of the National Literacy Hour includes provision of time for a plenary (see section 2.2.3). The purpose of the plenary is to encourage pupils to see themselves as successful learners and to engage in self-evaluation; however HMI reports suggest that there are many missed opportunities in plenaries, and all too frequently they focus on pupils sharing their work, rather than focusing on self-evaluative critical thinking and:

“...the plenary continues to be the weakest part of the literacy hour. The quality of teaching is good in only two in five lessons and is weak in over one in five...Unsatisfactory plenaries are frequently little more than ‘show and tell’ sessions.” (OFSTED, 2000)

The results of involving pupils in self-evaluation are, as identified by Black and Wiliam (1998a), that pupils’ progress, persistence and self-esteem improve. And Sadler (1989) states that it is part of a teacher’s responsibility to download evaluative knowledge such that students eventually become independent learners.

Klenowski (1996) conducted a study to analyse the processes of student self-evaluation and portfolio assessment, and their impact in learning. Although the context was Further Education, Klenowski concludes that the impact of self-evaluation on learning is profound. The study involved observation, examination of documentation and interviews. The findings of the study conclude that when learners are involved in evaluating their own work, they not only think about what they have learned, but also

about how they learn. Klenowski argues that self-evaluation is a formative process that leads to self-development. Harris and Bell (1994:89) suggest that self evaluation is a skill that is paramount in today's climate. The aim of self-evaluation is, they claim, not only to encourage pupils to become independent learners, but also to develop their metacognitive strategies. The argument for self-evaluation is that teachers are not only providing pupils with skills to improve their own learning, but that they are providing them with vital life-long skills and:

“Each of us needs to take more and more responsibility for our own learning in a world where the knowledge base is increasing at a phenomenal rate, let alone the technological developments which give us all more access to information and more difficulty in discriminating that which is relevant and useful and that which is garbage!”

However, Clarke (2001) suggests that children need training to be self-evaluative and this view is supported by Stobart and Gipps (1997) who propose that it is possible to teach even young children (as well as further education students, such as those involved in Klenowski's work), to monitor and manage their own learning. Furthermore, evidence from the Gillingham Partnership Project (Clarke, 2001) highlights a general perception of teachers; that pupil self-evaluation is a more complex formative assessment technique and takes longer for children to be fully involved.

Gipps (1994) reflects on the work carried out by Broadfoot et al (1988) in their evaluation of Records of Achievement and highlights that secondary pupils found self-evaluation difficult, partly because they were unused to it, and partly because the criteria caused problems. To this end, it is clear that teachers and pupils alike require guidance and training on self-evaluation skills and Clarke (2001) suggests that children need:

- To be trained to see how to answer a self-evaluative question

- To be trained how to think and get into the habit of linking questions with the learning intention.

At the heart of Clarke's suggestions are:

- Teachers sharing learning intentions with pupils and re-iterating them
- Teachers modelling responses
- Teachers allowing 'thinking time'.

Clarke also illustrates how pupil self-evaluation impacts upon teachers. She describes how teachers gain a greater insight into children's learning needs and make links with feedback and planning, thus highlighting how valuable self-evaluation can be as an assessment tool, with information being very clearly used to impact on future planning.

The notion of pupil self-evaluation as discussed above has not made explicit the role of peers, yet, Black and Wiliam (1998a) make it clear that self-evaluation can be an independent activity or involve peers. With regard to this notion, Alexander (2000: 374) states that:

“If assessment is made public rather than private, then it allows others than the teacher to do the assessing. Teachers may continue to be the main agents of assessment, but oral pedagogy, by making the learning process visible and audible to all, turns pupils into assessors too, whether they like it or not. They listen, they look, and being human they judge. Teachers can choose whether to exploit this opportunity.”

Alexander highlights a range of positive outcomes as a consequence of such practice, although also points out that public assessment can be detrimental if used to humiliate and tyrannise rather than to teach, echoing Pollard's (1997) concerns that children often feel vulnerable in the classroom as a result of their teacher's power to control.

The notion of peers working collaboratively is not revolutionary and there is a significant body of knowledge regarding the topics of collaborative learning and group work (see for example, Barnes and Todd, (1977), Johnson and Johnson, (1990) and Biott and Easen, (1994)). It is not the intention of this section to present the research regarding these topics, rather it is to highlight some main concerns with regard to group and collaborative learning given this is the context in which peer-evaluation occurs. Corden (2000), for example, draws on a range of studies to highlight the potential for cognitive and social development through peer collaboration (for example Slavin, 1983, Sharan, 1980). However, what is of interest, and pertinent to this study, is that in organising and managing collaborative learning, there is research to demonstrate that it will not simply happen merely because a teacher has sat children together and given them an instruction. Corden (2000:88) discusses the importance of managing and organising collaborative work carefully, stating:

“Successful group interaction depends on the cooperation of the children and their willingness to make it work. Children, like adults, are more likely to cooperate if they know why they are doing something and appreciate the benefits of what they are doing.”

The implication therefore is that for peer evaluation to be successful, pupils need to understand why they are being asked to work collaboratively to evaluate and see the relevance of and recognise what it means to be working in such a manner.

## **Feedback**

Feedback can be described as any information that is provided to a learner about their learning and Black and Wiliam (1998a) identify that formative assessment lies in the sequence of two actions:

- The perception of the learner of a gap between a desired goal and the learner's current state, by way of a teacher's assessment and feedback
- and
- Action taken by the learner to close that gap.

In short, feedback contributes to learning if pupils are helped to act upon it. Feedback has long been recognised as a crucial element of the teaching and learning processes. Gipps (1994) describes how in teaching terms this means teachers using their judgements of children's knowledge and understanding of skills, concepts or facts to feed back into their teaching. Pollard (1997) suggests that in a social constructivist model of teaching and learning teachers act as 'reflective agents', whereby they make accurate judgements, provide appropriate teaching input and scaffold children's understanding.

In terms of formative assessment, the role of feedback is vital. To gain deeper understanding of different types of feedback Tunstall and Gipps (1996) carried out a study to answer the following questions:

- What sort of feedback do teachers give children?
- How do children interpret, understand and act on this feedback?

The study was carried out in six schools in five local education authorities in London. Eight teachers of Year One and Year Two children participated, with a total of 49 children. Classroom recordings and observations were carried out, together with interviews with teachers and children. From the study a typology was developed (Figure 2.5).

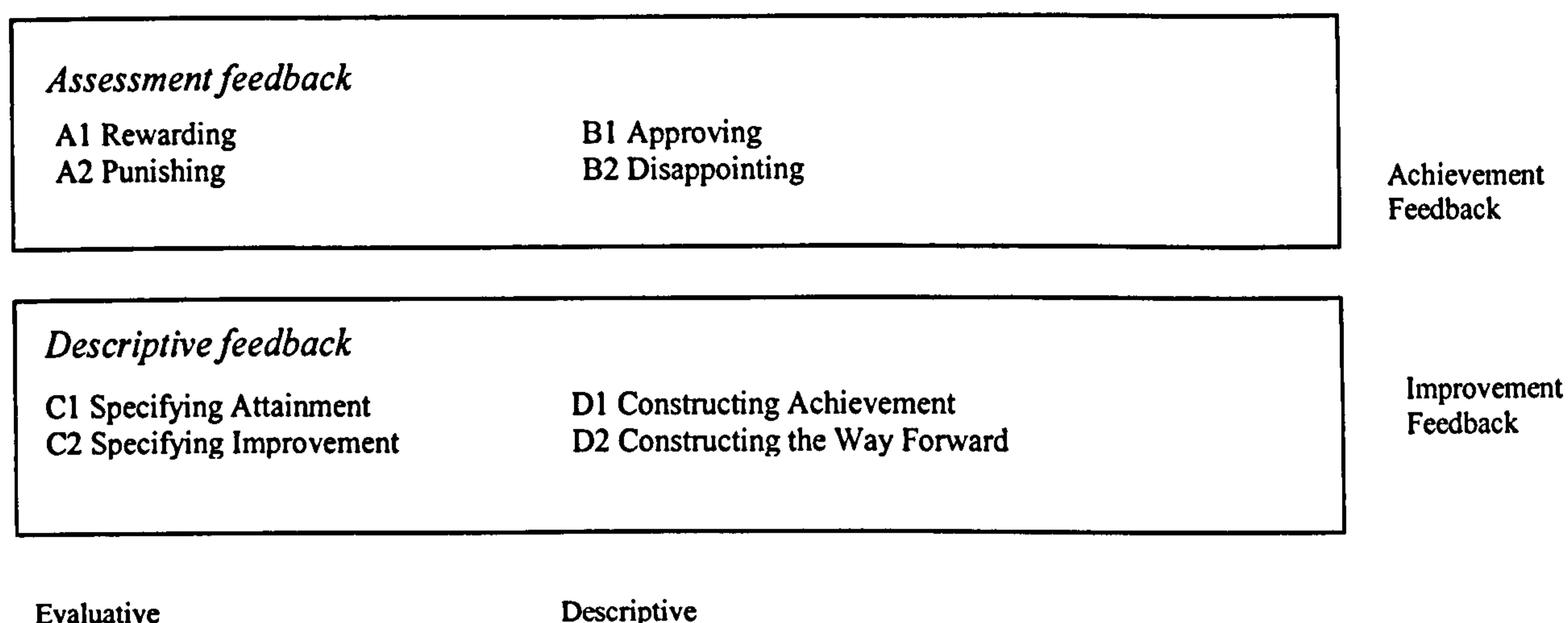


Figure 2.5 Tunstall and Gipps' (1996) Typology of Feedback

Evaluative feedback is described as feedback that is judgmental and descriptive feedback is described as that which is competence related and is associated with formative assessment (Tunstall and Gipps, 1996).

The study, overall, found that the evaluative dimension was strongly represented. A majority of the children in the sample were told by the teacher that their work was 'good' or 'not good enough' and many of the evaluative comments made by the children were highly positive about their own work. A further finding was that other children's negative comments or judgements about an individual's work caused them to comment adversely, highlighting how negative evaluative feedback could lead to low self - esteem in the classroom.

The study also established that children recognise the importance of correcting and checking work and a large number of children mentioned a particular strategy used by the teachers; for example, a sensitive marking system of putting a dot by an error. Children were also able to describe some feedback that was self-regulatory and despite



this being limited Tunstall and Gipps highlight the importance of young children being able to articulate this at all.

A further aspect of the study was in relation to written feedback. Much written feedback was evaluative, for example comments such as 'good' and 'well done' were recorded on children's work. However, a number of children said that they could not always read or understand the written comments. Nevertheless, Tunstall and Gipps argue that much written feedback is accompanied, in most cases, by oral feedback.

The overwhelming factors of the study were that most of the children were able to articulate a variety of feedback which teachers used to help them with their work and the children described feedback that was both behaviourist and constructivist in nature. The study suggests that evaluative experiences and self-regulating strategies are approaches, therefore, that are not too complex for young learners.

However, Alexander notes that although feedback can be distinguished as 'evaluative' or 'formative' there is potential for it to be simply 'phatic'. He comments on the 1990-1992 'Changes in Curriculum-Associated Discourse and Pedagogy in the Primary School' (CICADA) project (ESRC, 1990-1992, cited in Alexander, 2000) and concludes that for some teachers:

"Their feedback was evaluative rather than formative, but because – in keeping with the prevailing professional ideology of the 1970s-80s – they were anxious never to discourage pupils, they sometimes ended up devaluing the evaluation to the point where its function was merely phatic."  
(Alexander, 2000: 369)

Alexander continues, stating that:

“Clearly, after the warm glow induced by the first few of these has subsided, the child may be left none the wiser.” (ibid.)

Yet, the purpose of feedback, as outlined by Black and Wiliam (1998a) is such that pupils can ‘take an action’. One means by which this can be achieved is through target-setting. The role of target-setting in education has recently seen an increase (Clarke, 2001a). Educational targets were first suggested within the school development context as a means of focussing development at school, class and pupil levels. However, as Clarke describes, pressure has cascaded from government to LEAs, to schools and to pupils due to the nature of accountability. In the context of pupil target setting, Clarke describes three main elements: quantitative, qualitative and non-recorded targets.

Quantitative targets are those targets that are used to track pupil progress. Many schools use the SATs data, including the use of optional tests to generate levels of attainment to analyse school performance.

In the context of qualitative targets, Clarke states that it is important to keep some form of ipsative assessment in place in classrooms, whereby a child’s attainment is measured against his/her own prior attainment. Clarke describes a range of means by which ipsative targets can be set, for example; visible targets on cards that can be accessed by an individual throughout the lesson. Furthermore, she discusses the importance of pupils being involved in the setting of targets themselves.

Clarke describes how non-recorded targets frequently occur when pupils self-evaluate, for example, they set themselves targets as a result of what they discover about themselves. This can occur as a result of focused marking whereby children often set

themselves mental targets as they realise how much better their improvement makes their work. Clarke also discusses how the use of paired marking also facilitates the setting of such targets.

In summary, feedback contributes to learning, it seems, if pupils are able to act upon it. Although feedback is perceived as a fundamental aspect of formative assessment, there remain a number of issues about how to provide appropriate feedback to pupils and, in the context of feedback, the role and nature of target setting.

### **Pupil self-esteem**

Black and Wiliam (1998a) discuss the importance of self-esteem and its link with formative assessment. The ultimate user of assessment they state, is the pupil and there are two aspects to this, one negative and one positive. The negative aspect occurs in classroom cultures that focus on rewards and where, for example, pupils who encounter difficulties and poor results are led to believe that they lack ability. The positive aspect occurs in a culture of success, supported by a belief that everyone can achieve.

Pollard (1997) echoes these sentiments and describes how children often feel vulnerable in the classroom as a result of their teacher's power to control and evaluate and highlights how the teacher, in a classroom context, can use his/her power in two ways. The teacher can use power constructively to encourage, to reinforce appropriate pupil actions and to enhance self-esteem. The teacher, however, can use power destructively and this can be negative and damaging. In such negative contexts, children "...avoid investing effort in learning which could only lead to disappointment." (Black and Wiliam, 1998a:9)

Dweck et al (1978) studied feedback to young children and its effect. They found that girls attributed failure to lack of ability rather than motivation and Dweck et al concluded that this was as a consequence of teacher feedback. They describe the concept of 'learned helplessness' whereby some pupils simply 'give up' because they perceive themselves as incapable of success. Furthermore:

“The experience of classroom feedback will affect the way in which children perceive themselves as successful, which in turn will depend on how the teacher responds to their own efforts, and on how a child sees the same teacher’s response to others in the class (Crocker and Cheeseman, 1988)” (Black, 1998:134)

The quality and nature of teacher feedback impacts upon pupil self-esteem and Pollard (1997) suggests that teachers need to 'be positive' with pupils in attempts to build on success, the point being to offer suitable challenges and maximise the use of pupils' achievements. Gipps (1994) suggests that it is not solely feedback from teachers that impacts upon the self-esteem of individuals, but also the feedback from significant others, whereby 'significant others' includes peers and parents. Therefore teachers and pupils need to develop skills in giving feedback to individuals because:

“In the classroom, teachers' verbal and non-verbal behaviour provides information regarding academic content, classroom events, the pupils themselves etc. It is this information which affects pupil reactions including their perceptions of success and failure.” (Gipps, 1994:136)

Furthermore, research suggests that in addition to providing pupils with feedback, teachers need also to value the voices of the pupils in their class in order to gain a grasp of their perceptions of teaching and learning, and therefore assessment, processes. Macdonald et al (cited in Duffield et al, 2000), for example, highlight the importance of establishing pupils' perceptions and giving them a sense that their views matter in life and in school:

“There was a strong message, within the pupils’ accounts, of extrinsic motivation and instrumental goals in tackling the world of school, responding as a pupil rather than a learner...all the pupils interviewed claimed that succeeding in school was desirable and important to them personally.” (Duffield et al, 2000:266)

The study highlighted the importance that pupils place on formal and informal assessment for information about how they are performing and although the pupils involved in Duffield et al’s study were of secondary age the findings remain of interest, given that in the context of this study, the pupils are aged 11.

The pupils used key strategies, namely comparing themselves with their ‘earlier self’ and with others to estimate their place in the class when asked ‘how do you do?’ and relationships were a key aspect of the pupils’ lives and:

“...social isolation could be the penalty for inability or unwillingness to fit in with the norms of the peer group leaders.” (Duffield et al, 2000:268)

Relationships with teachers were seen as crucial although there appeared confusion between achievement in behaviour and learning, that is, pupils believed that if they behaved well and made an effort then they were succeeding. The underlying principle that can be drawn from this study is that a dialogue must be fostered at classroom level that allows pupils to be heard and valued and that improving relationships can contribute to the enhancement of learning and achievement.

The following sections consider motivation, goal theory and perceived academic ability in greater depth. These particular areas have received considerable thought recently as they play major roles in pupils’ academic achievements and have close links with formative assessment.

## **Motivation**

Kyriacou (1997) looks at the issue of motivation and points to the works of Ausbel (1968), Bruner (1985) and Gagné (1965) to highlight one of the most important distinctions made in considering pupils' learning; the distinction being that of 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' motivation. Intrinsic motivation can be described as that which is based on the child's personal interests and includes satisfaction derived from undertaking a specific task. Extrinsic motivation can be described as manipulation through rewards, whereby stars and house points, for example, are awarded to pupils for achievement or effort. Pollard (1997) identifies two additional types of motivation, namely 'collective' and 'coerced compliance'. Collective motivation is derived from the pleasure of shared work experiences and coerced compliance is described as motivation to avoid punishment.

The notion that motivation is derived from an attempt to satisfy needs was addressed by Maslow (1954, cited in Pollard, 1997) who proposed that an individual's basic needs are hierarchical as follows:

- Physiological needs - the need for food, water and oxygen
- Safety needs - the need for security and freedom from anxiety
- Belonging and love needs - the need to feel loved, to love and to belong
- Esteem needs - the need for success and achievement, competence, status and prestige
- Self-actualisation needs-the need to realise one's potential.

Maslow's hierarchy, Kyriacou (1997:27) states:

“...provides us with a useful framework for thinking about pupil motivation and needs. In particular, it draws our attention to the importance of making

sure that those needs in the hierarchy (particularly needs for comfort, safety, security and acceptance) are being met when educational experiences which draw upon the higher needs of esteem and self actualisation are set up.”

Maslow also identified cognitive needs, based on the impulse to satisfy curiosity; to know; explain and understand and he believed them to be interrelated rather than separate from the hierarchical basic needs and Weiner (1984) argues that the most significant factor in determining what motivates a learner is to what they attribute their success or failure. This theory is based on the notion that there are three main attributions that people make, namely: ‘locus’, ‘constancy’ and ‘responsibility’. Locus refers to whether the learner sees responsibility lying with them or with external factors; constancy refers to whether the learner sees responsibility as confined to one event as opposed to being of wider significance and responsibility refers to whether the factors can be controlled or not (Torrance and Pryor, 1998). The ‘Attribution Theory’ suggests that pupils’ need for achievement can, therefore, be influenced by the expectations of not only themselves as learners, but by expectations of others, such as teachers, parents and peers.

A further notion regarding motivation is that of reinforcement. Skinner (1968) argues that reinforcement plays a great role in pupil motivation and claims that positive reinforcement, such as teacher praise and negative reinforcement, such as the removal of an unpleasant consequence increase a pupil’s motivation and in turn increase the likelihood of the behaviour occurring again. Reinforcement is a behaviourist approach and although it can be used successfully to engage pupil motivation, there can be the danger that overt praise may have the opposite of the desired effect (Pollard, 1997).

Yair (2000) set out to investigate motivation and how the structure of learning affects individuals’ learning experiences. The study involved 865 students from both

elementary and secondary schools. Data were gathered using a technique known as the Experience Sampling Method. In practice this method involved students responding to questionnaires about their experiences at given times throughout the day, to generate empirical data. Yair's study is highly critical of the American educational system, and he concludes that students are bored and lack intrinsic motivation to engage in learning. Yair states that the more students feel in command of their own learning and feel excited and activated by it, then they are more likely to fulfil their learning potential, yet he argues that schools do not tackle these needs, largely due to their bureaucratic nature. This contrast between student needs and the inability of the formal school structure to fulfil them is, Yair argues, at the root of learners' low motivation. Brophy (1994) highlights the need for motivation, but argues that to be motivated to do something we need good reasons for doing it, not just the confidence that we can do it successfully if we try. He claims that extrinsic motivation, such as offering rewards for good performance, can stimulate achievement striving, although extrinsic rewards appear more effective for stimulating 'brute-force' learning efforts such as rote learning and skills practice. Intrinsic motivation, Brophy states, seems 'more promising.' However, Brophy highlights the potential difficulties of catering for the intrinsic motivation of all pupils through provision of activities as suggested by Yair. Brophy (1994:31) suggests that the potential for facilitating such tasks in a day to day classroom context is not feasible:

“School is not a day camp where we send children to pursue recreational activities of their own choosing in whatever fashion suits them. Instead, it is a place that we send them to master a curriculum designed to prepare them for adult roles in our society. Most of their time is spent in activities that they would not choose to engage in on their own. Furthermore, their participation in these activities requires concentration and effort, and it results in teacher evaluation and report-card grades.”



Brophy recommends that as practitioners, we need to accept the positive and negative aspects of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors and capitalise on strategies that motivate students to learn by engaging their interest and developing their appreciation for the value of accomplishment; implying that learning should be worthwhile, meaningful and goal orientated.

Black (1998:135) concludes that pupils' motivation to learn is a compound of their intrinsic interest in the work and their desire to succeed at school, and that:

“...this emphasises the importance of teachers' formative assessment being framed in the light of an understanding of pupils' beliefs and feelings, about the feedback process and the context, of personal relationships and self-esteem, in which it takes place. Such sensitivity involves a study of pupils' motivation, and of the values which interact with motivation, so that teachers can create an atmosphere which enables pupils to work with confidence at the learning tasks.”

### **Goal theory**

Over the past decade, goal orientation theory has been used to elicit different cognitive and motivational patterns within achievement settings. Goal orientation theory maintains that the purposes or aims in achievement settings revolve around the pursuit of competence (Miller et al, 1996).

Dweck and Elliott (1983, cited in Dweck, 2000) see motivation as being bound in two types of goals that students have. They categorised achievement goals, identifying two contrasting classes: 'performance' goals and 'learning' goals. Performance goals use relative standing among others as the evaluative criterion; individuals are concerned about demonstrating their ability and the focus is about being judged 'able'. In contrast, learning goals use the improvement of skill or knowledge as the evaluative criterion; the focus being on the development of ability, gaining insight and understanding.

Dweck and Elliott (1983) concluded that children with performance goals:

- Avoid challenge when they have doubts about their ability compared with others
- Tend to be self-handicapping so that they have an excuse for failure
- Tend to see ability as a stable entity
- Concentrate much of their task analysis on gauging the difficulty of the task and calculating their chances of gaining favourable ability judgements
- Attribute difficulty to low ability
- Give up in the face of difficulty
- Become upset when faced with difficulty or failure.

Performance Goals are fostered by competition and encourage normative standards of success, that is, comparison with peers. On the other hand, children with learning goals:

- Choose challenging tasks regardless of whether they think they have high or low ability relative to other children
- Optimise their chances for success
- Tend to have an incremental theory of intelligence
- Go more directly to generating possible strategies for mastering tasks
- Attribute difficulty to unstable factors, e.g. insufficient effort, even if they perceive themselves as having low ability
- Persist
- Remain relatively unaffected by failure in terms of self-esteem.

Learning goals are fostered by collaborative work and encourage personal success.

Dweck and Elliott (1983, cited in Dweck, 2000) claim that rather than using performance goals to create confidence through success, it is better to inform pupils specifically of what is causing their lack of success and to create an emphasis on learning goals and personally challenging tasks.

Ames and Archer (1988) carried out a survey with students (grades 8-11) attending a school for academically advanced students, to investigate how classroom goal orientation was related to specific motivational patterns. Although the students involved were older than those involved in this study, the findings of Ames and Archer highlight some interesting notions. The research on student achievement goals indicates that students who approach tasks with learning goals display more adaptive patterns of behaviour, cognition and affect than those orientated towards performance goals.

Ames (1992) describes how three classroom structures affect goal orientation: tasks, evaluation and recognition, and authority.

Variety, diversity, challenge, control and meaningfulness are dimensions of tasks that are seen as affecting pupil perceptions of goal orientation. Ames suggests that variety in tasks promotes mastery orientation. However, Blumenfield (1992) warns that although variety in tasks can be positive, if not designed appropriately, the variety may detract from the purpose of the task. The motivational factors of the provision of variety may only be short term, suggesting that although interest may be heightened this may be at the expense of cognitive development.

Ames (1992) also looks to the meaningfulness of tasks and suggests that tasks that are meaningful to the pupils successfully motivate them to engage in challenging and worthwhile activities. In relation to formative assessment, links to motivation in terms of the meaningfulness of tasks are evident. Black and Wiliam (1998a), for example, assert that for formative assessment to be productive, pupils require a clear picture of the targets that their learning is meant to attain. Indeed, they state that the choice of tasks is highly important and they need to be justified in terms of learning aims.

Ames (1992) believes that the ways by which pupils are evaluated can affect their motivation; the key issue being that it concerns pupils' perceptions of the meaning of evaluation. The way that evaluation is structured can affect the orientation of a pupil toward different goals. She looks to the work of Brophy (1983) who suggested that much classroom learning is highly 'product orientated' in that children tend to focus on the quantity of work they produce. Ames proposes that this tendency shifts when correctness and absence of errors are emphasised. In addition, social comparison plays a large role in determining tasks and the impact of social comparison on children when they compare unfavourably, can be seen in their evaluations of their ability; avoidance of risk taking activities and use of less effective learning strategies. Ames stresses the negative effect of social comparisons when they are focused on winning or out performing peers. She believes that students themselves come to believe in their own ability, or lack of it, and so too do others in the peer group. These impact upon the individual's incentive to embark upon challenging tasks. Pupils' use of effective learning strategies and problem solving strategies depends on whether they perceive that the effort they put into the task is valued. The awarding of grades can have detrimental effects, as they can support social comparison. However, Ames (1992:265) advises that

if used alongside feedback that serves to improve the work, then pupils are more likely to use such strategies.

Frequently, evaluation of pupil work is accompanied by incentives, that are used to 'motivate' pupils and although extrinsic rewards are given with good intentions, there is evidence (see, for example, Lepper and Hoddell, 1989) that, if perceived as bribes or for control, they can undermine the motivational factor. However, Brophy (1987) contests that when focused on pupil effort, rewards can be positive.

Evaluation and recognition are tied closely to feedback and it seems appropriate to reinforce this link within the context of this section. Black and Wiliam (1998b:8) assert the link between pupil self-esteem and motivation stating that:

“Where the classroom culture focuses on rewards, ‘gold stars’, grades or place-in-the-class ranking, then pupils look for the ways to obtain the best marks rather than at the needs of their learning...Formative assessment can be a powerful weapon here if it is communicated in the right way.”

Ames (1992) claims that mastery orientations are promoted in classrooms that encourage pupil autonomy and decision making and she makes reference to a large body of knowledge that indicates a positive relationship between the autonomy orientation of a classroom and pupils' intrinsic motivation. Blumenfield (1992), however, argues that teachers are required to support, guide and scaffold learning and upholds the view that educators need to know more about how teachers can allow for pupil choice and autonomy whilst still providing appropriate support.

As discussed earlier (see section 2.4.3), assessment for learning is grounded in the social constructivist theory of learning. Sadler (1989) states, when discussing formative

assessment, that where anyone is trying to learn, feedback about their efforts has three key features; the desired goal, the evidence about their present position and some understanding of a means of closing the gap.

### **Perceived academic ability**

Although pupil goals provide direction and incentive for academic work, an additional factor that influences involvement in academic work is pupil self-perception of ability, and:

“Bandura (1986) argued, peoples’ beliefs about their ability to successfully perform a task (i.e., their self-efficacy beliefs) influence their willingness to attempt the task, the level of effort they will expend, and their persistence in the face of challenge.” (Miller, et al.1996:91)

Similar findings relate to pupils’ sense of inner control of their learning; of their sense of being secure, instead of being controlled by others. Bandura (1992) believes that the more students feel in command of their learning and feel excited and active about it, then the more likely they are to fulfil their learning potential and have higher achievements. Yair (2000:194) argues, however, that the daily experiences of many students contrasts with this, due to the formal and bureaucratic nature of the classroom environment and continues:

“...the organisation of instruction in the classrooms (Bidwell & Kasarda, 1980; Rosenholtz, 1989) are preconditions of failure. For many students, they allege, normative comparisons with others, and the public nature of whole classroom instruction (Bidwell & Kasarda, 1980; Yair, 1997a) cause many students to feel they accomplish only mediocre achievements, and that school hurts one’s sense of self and one’s enjoyment of learning.”

The contextual and structural bases of schools therefore impact on individuals’ self-perception of ability.

In a classroom context, teacher expectation has been found to be a major variable in influencing the development of pupil self-perception and a key variable within this is that of the pupil perception of teacher treatment (Blöte, 1995). Blumenfield et al, (1982) established that the relationship between teacher feedback and students' self-concept of ability were closely linked with positive academic feedback resulting in high self-concept of ability.

This links directly to current perspectives regarding the impact of formative assessment on raising standards (for example; Black and Wiliam, 1998a and b and Clarke, 2001).

and Black and Wiliam (1998a:9) state that:

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

More current perspectives (see, for example, Dweck, 2000, Ames, 1992, Blumenfield, 1992) allege that the structure of the instruction, through provision of highly challenging, novel, diverse and authentic tasks with learning goal orientations impact positively on pupil motivation.

Dweck (2000) puts forward some further perspectives regarding pupil motivation and self esteem. Linked to the notion of performance and learning orientation goals, Dweck identifies two frameworks for understanding intelligence and achievement. Some people perceive their intelligence, she claims, as a fixed trait and this is termed 'entity theory'.

The characteristic associated with entity theory is that students must look smart and as

Dweck (2000:3) states it:

“...is a system that requires a diet of success...the well-meant success we hand out and the praise for intelligence that we lavish on them does not encourage a hardy, can-do mentality. What it does is foster an entity theory,

an overconcern with looking smart, a distaste for challenge, and a decreased ability to cope with setback.”

Others have a different perspective on intelligence and for them it is not a fixed trait, but something they can cultivate through learning. This is described as the ‘incremental theory’. Characteristics associated with this perception are that students want to learn, do not worry whether they look ‘smart or dumb’ and thrive on challenge.

These theories of intelligence have implications for self-esteem and Dweck (2000:129) describes how entity theorists’ intellectual self-esteem is high when they do things quickly, easily and in an error-free way, whereas within an incremental framework, self-esteem is how you feel when you are striving wholeheartedly for worthwhile things, and:

“...what feeds your esteem – meeting challenges with high effort and using your abilities to help others – is what makes for a productive and constructive life.”

In discussing the concept of self-esteem, and links with perceptions of intelligence, Dweck (2000:128) puts forward the following view:

“We want our children to have a basic sense of worth and to know that they have our respect and love, but self-esteem is not something we give to them. It is something that they are in charge of, and we can simply teach them how to live their lives so that they will experience themselves in a positive way. In this view, self-esteem is not a thing you have or don’t have. It is a way of experiencing yourself when you are using your resources well – to master a challenge, to learn, to help others.”

There is evidence, as has been demonstrated, that formative assessment impacts directly upon teaching and learning processes and that formative assessment is a highly complex issue. The literature regarding formative assessment implies that, for it to be effective, teachers need to share learning intentions with children, encourage pupil-self evaluation, provide quality feedback and raise pupil self-esteem.



Finally, since commencing the study, the profile of assessment for learning has grown considerably, so much so that the QCA has adopted the Assessment Reform Group's (1999) notion of assessment for learning and provided a range of materials for practitioners. These include a poster outlining their 'ten principles of assessment for learning', together with a definition of and checklist for assessment for learning and a web site that guides the reader to a range of resources. Furthermore, following the proposal for a more flexible approach to testing at Key Stage One, as outlined in the DfES's (2003a) paper *Excellence and Enjoyment*, new assessment arrangements for 7 year-olds at Key Stage 1, combining National Curriculum tests with continuous teacher assessment, were extended nationally to all primary schools from September 2004. Under this new system the tests continue, although there is more flexibility for schools regarding how and when they are administered, and they form part of one single overall assessment of each pupil (DES, 2004).

In addition to these initiatives, a current perspective of assessment has evolved which conceptualises assessment as being not only 'of' learning and 'for' learning, but also 'as' learning (Earl, 2003). The notion of assessment for learning conceives of interaction between teaching and learning, and although Earl concurs with this, she separates the roles of teachers and pupils. Thus, in Earl's description of assessment for learning, teachers are the central characters, whereas in assessment as learning the role of students is emphasised.

Earl (2003) describes how the predominant kind of assessment in schools is, currently, assessment of learning, whereby there is a strong emphasis on testing. The bulk of teacher effort in assessment is taken up with marking and grading and emphasis is placed

upon comparing students, with little direction given in terms of advice or improvement. Assessment for learning and assessment as learning, Earl describes, shift the emphasis from making judgements to creating descriptions that can be used in the service of the next stage of learning.

Earl (2003:24) conceptualises assessment for learning as being a tool for teachers. When involved in assessment for learning activities, teachers are the central characters and assessment for learning is:

“...interactive, with teachers providing assistance as part of the assessment. It helps teachers provide the feedback to scaffold the next steps.”

Earl (2003:25) conceptualises assessment as learning as that which impacts directly upon student learning. She describes how in this conceptualisation, the role of the student is much clearer, whereby:

“Students, as active, engaged, and critical assessors, can make sense of information, relate it to prior knowledge, and master the skills involved. This is the regulatory process in metacognition. It occurs when students personally monitor what they are learning and use the feedback from this monitoring to make adjustments, adaptations, and even major changes in what they understand. Assessment as learning is the ultimate goal.”

The three approaches to assessment all contribute to student learning, but in different ways. Earl describes how in a traditional environment, almost all classroom assessment is summative assessment of learning, that is focused on measuring learning. She claims that a few teachers use assessment for learning, and assessment as learning is virtually non-existent (Figure 2.6).

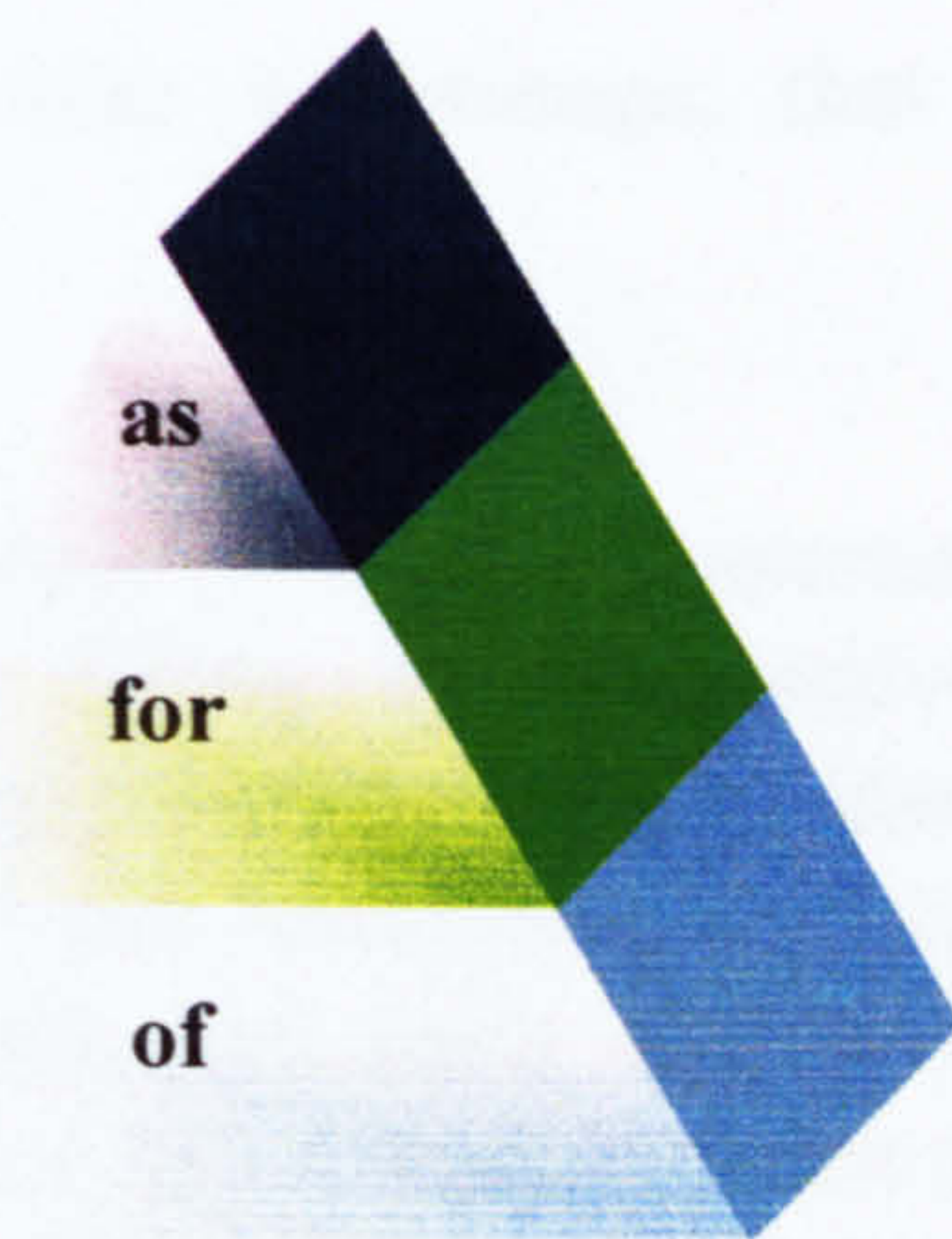


Figure 2.6 Earl's (2003) Illustration of the Current Model of Assessment

The issue, Earl claims, is whether schools should be utilising assessment of learning to such an extent that it leaves no place for anything else. The above figure highlights the traditional relationship of the three approaches to assessment and Earl proposes reconfiguring the pyramid (Figure 2.7) to emphasise the role of assessment as learning:

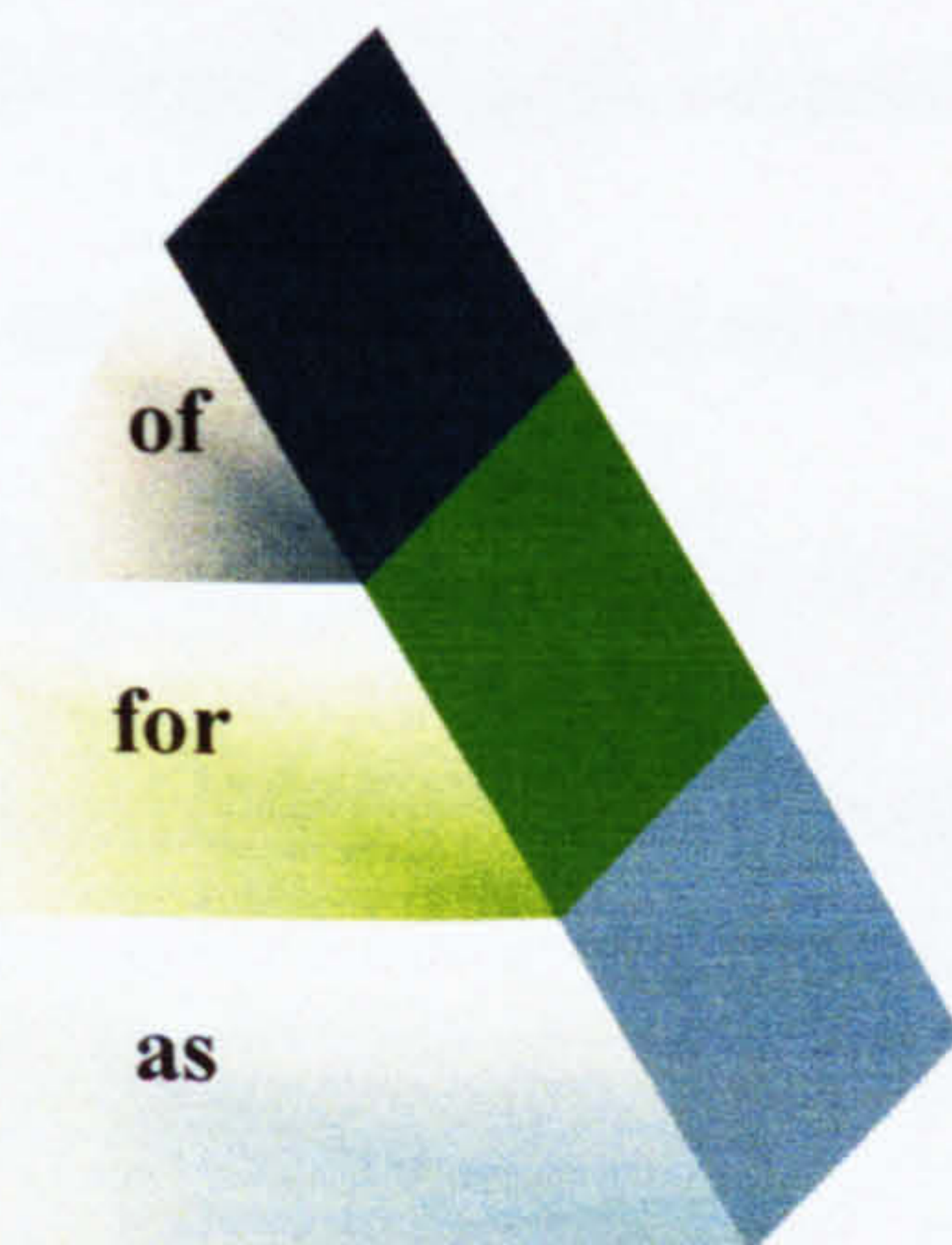


Figure 2.7 Earl's (2003) Illustration of a Proposed Model of Assessment

The above figure highlights that the major focus is on classroom assessment that contributes to learning, by the teacher (for learning) and by the student (as learning) and asserts the roles that both teachers and students play in assessment; emphasising the notion that assessment in this context, would make up a large part of the school day. Thus assessment is perceived as a seamless part of the learning process. The following

analogy, by Earl (2003:83) provides a message; that assessment and learning are inextricably linked:

“Learning is not a linear process. Assessment doesn’t come at the end. Teaching is not the filling in the sandwich between curriculum and assessment. Taken together, curriculum, teaching, learning, and assessment interact in an iterative and sometimes cyclical process. They feed into one another and sometimes dart back and forth in seemingly unpredictable patterns. This does not mean that they are independent of or disconnected from one another. On the contrary, the interconnections are the key.”

#### **2.4.6 Summary**

There is a concerted aim to raise standards in education, and assessment is seen as having a critical role to play. As outlined in section 2.4.1, assessment can take many forms and is used for a range of purposes. However, more recently, there has been a wave of support for assessment for learning with researchers such as Black and Wiliam (1998a and b) putting forward a case for formative assessment, which has received much support from many quarters. Black and Wiliam’s research evidence suggests that by engaging in formative assessment effectively teachers can improve grades significantly. The case for formative assessment lies in the underlying principle that assessment should be at the heart of the learning process. However, although there is evidence put forward by, for example, Black and Wiliam (1998a) and Clarke (2001) of the potential for formative assessment, schools are under pressure to maintain or improve their place in published league tables and the burden this places on teachers comes, some believe, at the sacrifice of considering pupils’ learning (see, for example, Weeden et al, 2002). It is critical to note that although the research evidence highlights that effective learning and formative assessment go hand-in-hand, the manner in which teachers engage in formative assessment is relatively un-explored. Although the work of those interested in formative assessment (see for example, Black and Wiliam, 1998, Clarke, 2001, Tunstall

and Gipps, 1996) connects formative assessment with effective pedagogy, and presents readers with a range of strategies for behaving formatively, notions of reflexivity, enthusiasm, passion and the individual and personal nature of effective teachers are not considered in detail. The investigation of the nature of teaching and formative assessment are therefore of central interest to this current study.

Having identified the nature of the investigation, the following model (Figure 2.8) presents the reader with the study's conceptual framework. This framework has evolved through the process of reviewing the literature that is pertinent to the study and through considering the main research questions that form the basis of the study, namely:

1. What formative assessment strategies do teachers use?
2. What has been the impact of a top-down approach to the teaching of literacy on teachers' approaches to formative assessment?
3. Is there a relationship between teachers' personal and professional biographies and their approaches to formative assessment?

The figure below (Figure 2.8) demonstrates that, although not favoured by all (see for example, Riley 2001) the National Literacy Strategy has adopted a 'top down' approach to the teaching of literacy (see for example, Dann, 2002). The review has also demonstrated that teachers use a range of formative assessment strategies in order to impact upon pupils' learning, motivation, self-esteem and to manage aspects of their teaching. Furthermore, teachers' experiences, contexts and personal biographies have a direct relationship with their teaching values and beliefs and these serve to shape how teachers interpret and implement educational initiatives. Thus, the literature review has

provided the theoretical basis for this study and figure 2.8 provides a visual representation of the study's conceptual framework.

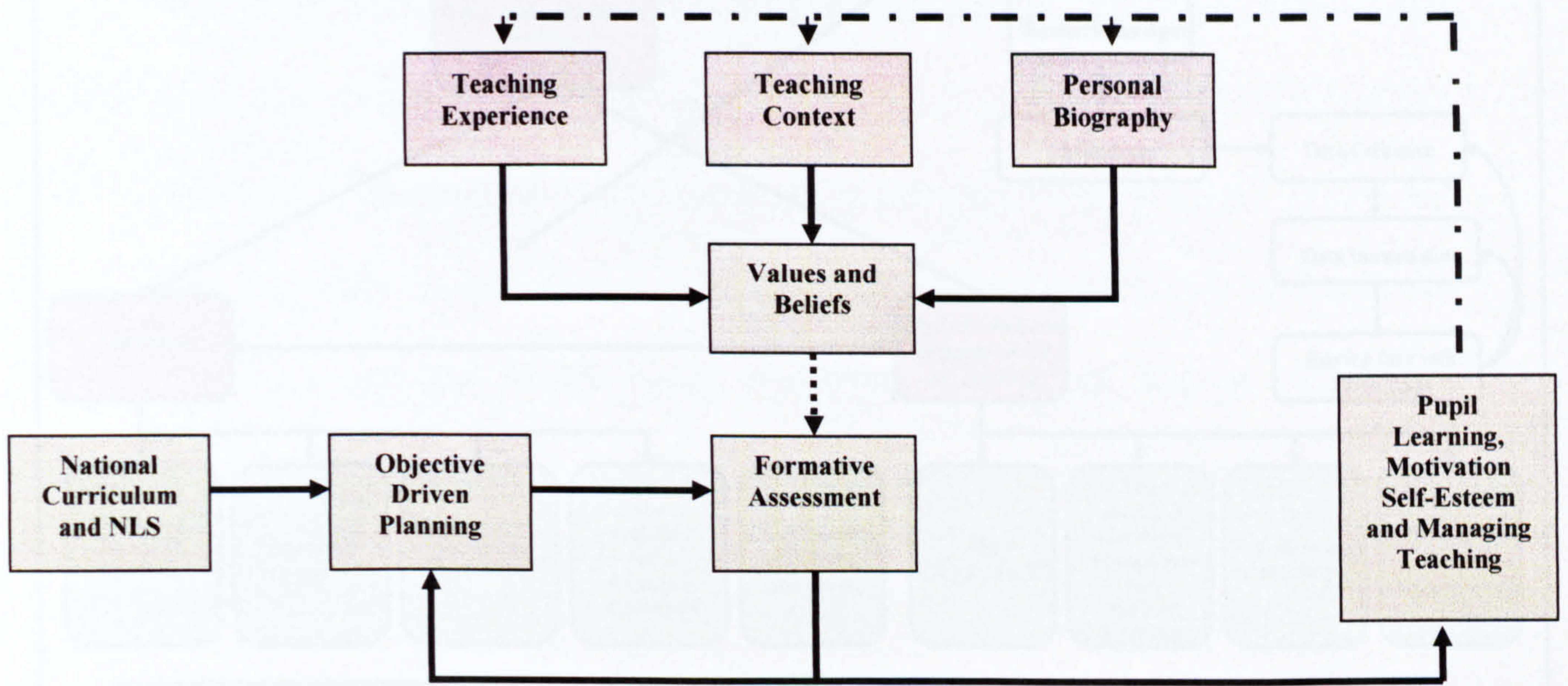


Figure 2.8 The Conceptual Framework of the Study

The following chapter is organised to present the reader with a clear understanding of the methodological approach of a study that sought to respond to the main research questions. However, prior to moving to the subsequent chapter, I believe that it is useful to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the relationship between the three main elements that have formed the theoretical basis of the study, and its methodological approach. This is facilitated through the following model (Figure 2.9).

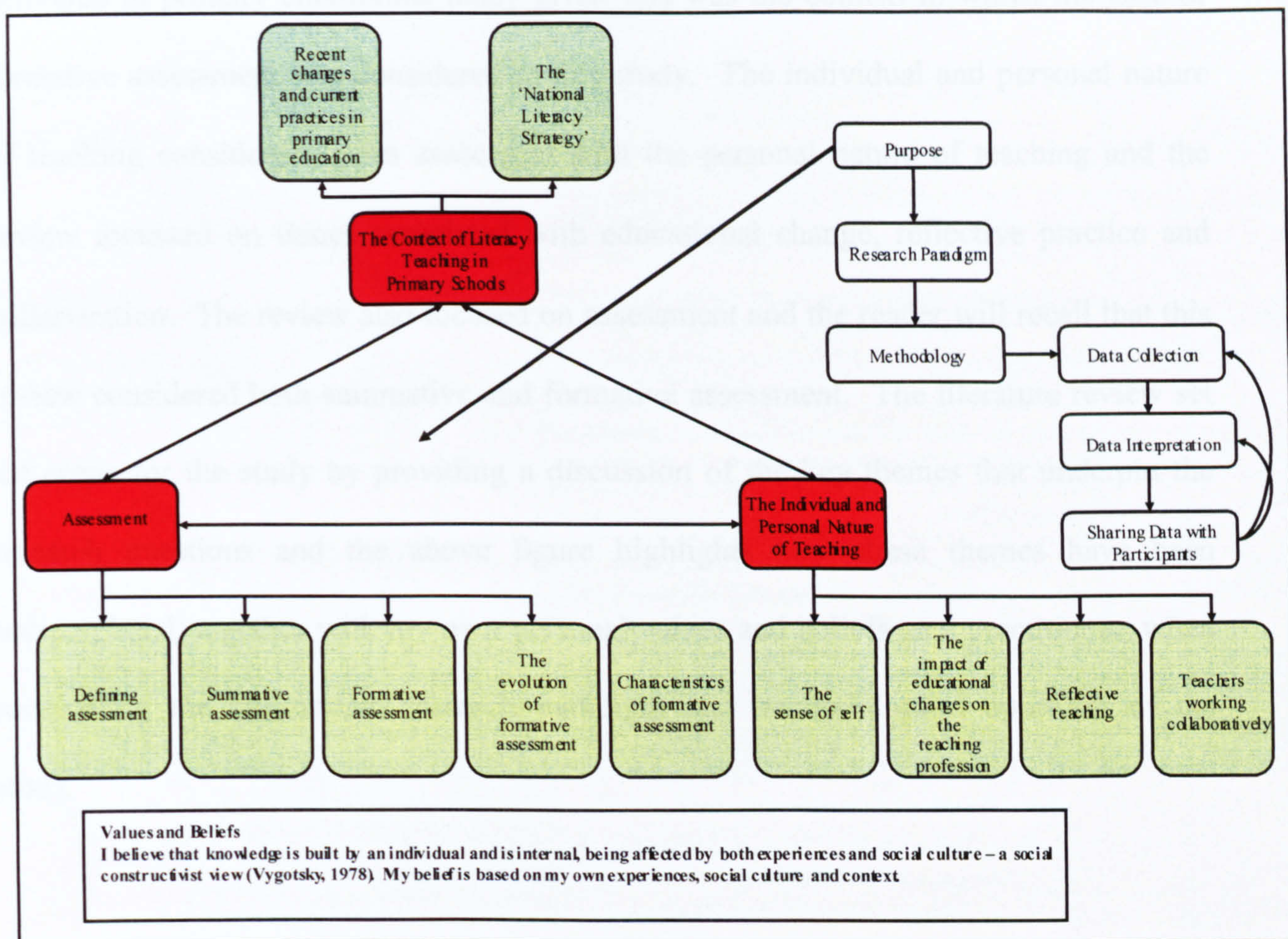


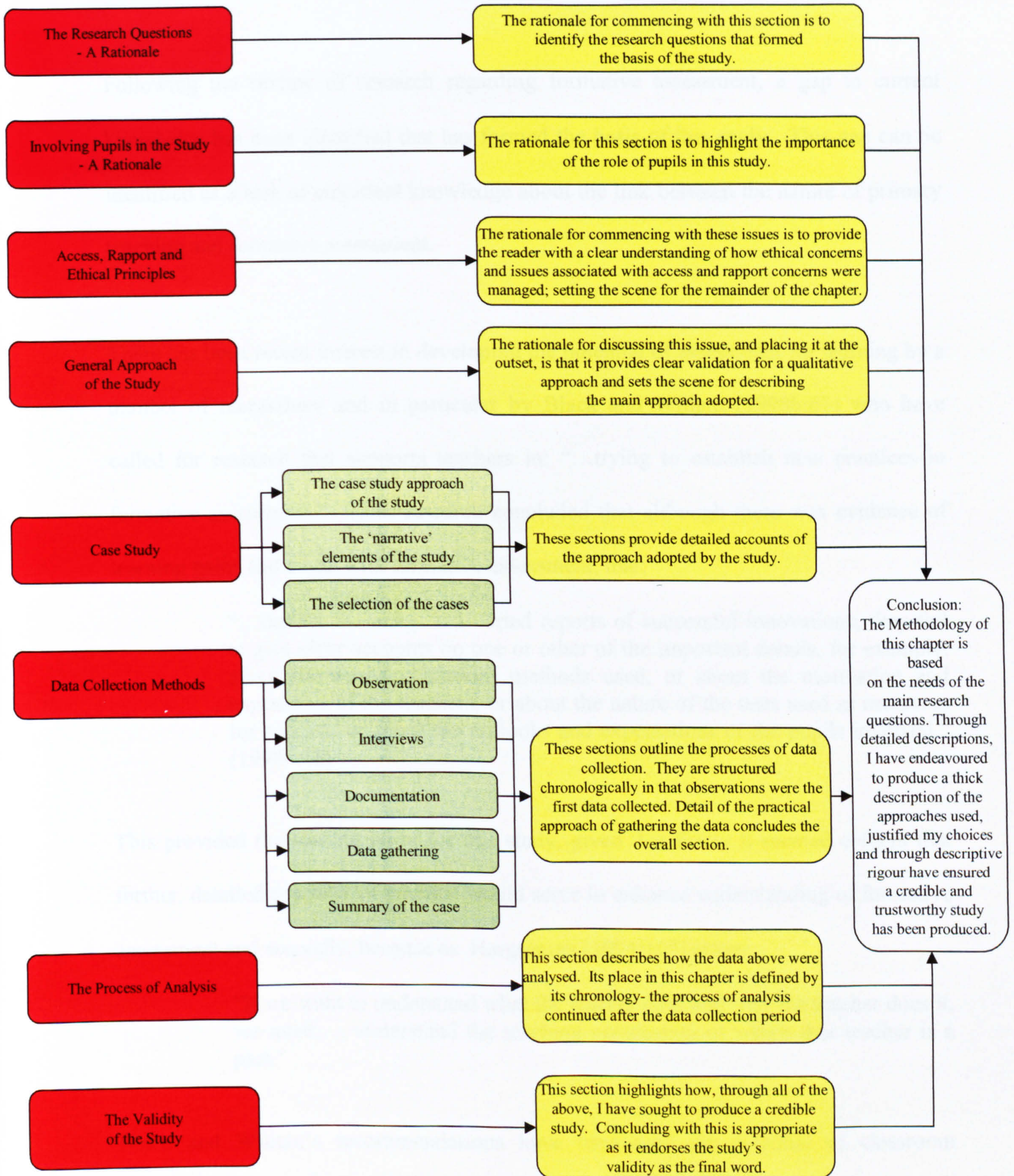
Figure 2.9 A Model to Illustrate the Relationship between the Literature Review, the Researcher's Values and Beliefs and the Methodological Approach of the Study

As can be seen, the approach of the study was such that it was designed to reach into the heart of formative assessment in order to respond to the identified research questions. The literature review therefore drew on material regarding the context of literacy teaching in primary schools; the individual and personal nature of teaching, and assessment. As the above figure illustrates, each main area of focus for the review of the literature was further subdivided to provide the theoretical basis for the study. Hence, in reviewing the literature regarding the context of literacy teaching in primary school, the study considered how the teaching of English evolved and then discussed contemporary issues associated with the teaching of English, considering, in particular, the National Literacy Strategy. The purpose of this was to secure understanding of how literacy is

delivered in primary classrooms today given this was the context in which the case of formative assessment was considered in this study. The individual and personal nature of teaching considered issues associated with the personal nature of teaching and the review focussed on issues associated with educational change, reflective practice and collaboration. The review also focused on assessment and the reader will recall that this review considered both summative and formative assessment. The literature review set the scene for the study by providing a discussion of the key themes that underpin the research questions and the above figure highlights how these themes have been contemplated, together with my own personal values and beliefs as a practitioner, when considering the appropriate research paradigm and methodological approach of the study.



## The Methodology



Legend: ■ Main Sections ■ Sub-Sections ■ Rationale for Organisation

## Chapter 3: The Methodology

Following the review of research regarding formative assessment, a gap in current knowledge has been identified that has formed the basis of this study. This gap can be identified as a lack of empirical knowledge about the link between the nature of primary teaching and formative assessment.

There has been recent interest in developing the potential of assessment for learning by a number of researchers and in particular by Black and Wiliam (1998b:61) who have called for research that supports teachers in: "...trying to establish new practices in formative assessment." Their research concluded that although there was evidence of learning gains and a link with formative assessment, that:

"...despite the many and varied reports of successful innovations, they fail to give clear accounts on one or other of the important details, for example, about the actual classroom methods used, or about the motivation and experience of the teachers, or about the nature of the tests used as measures for success, or about the outlooks and expectations of the pupils involved." (1998b:18)

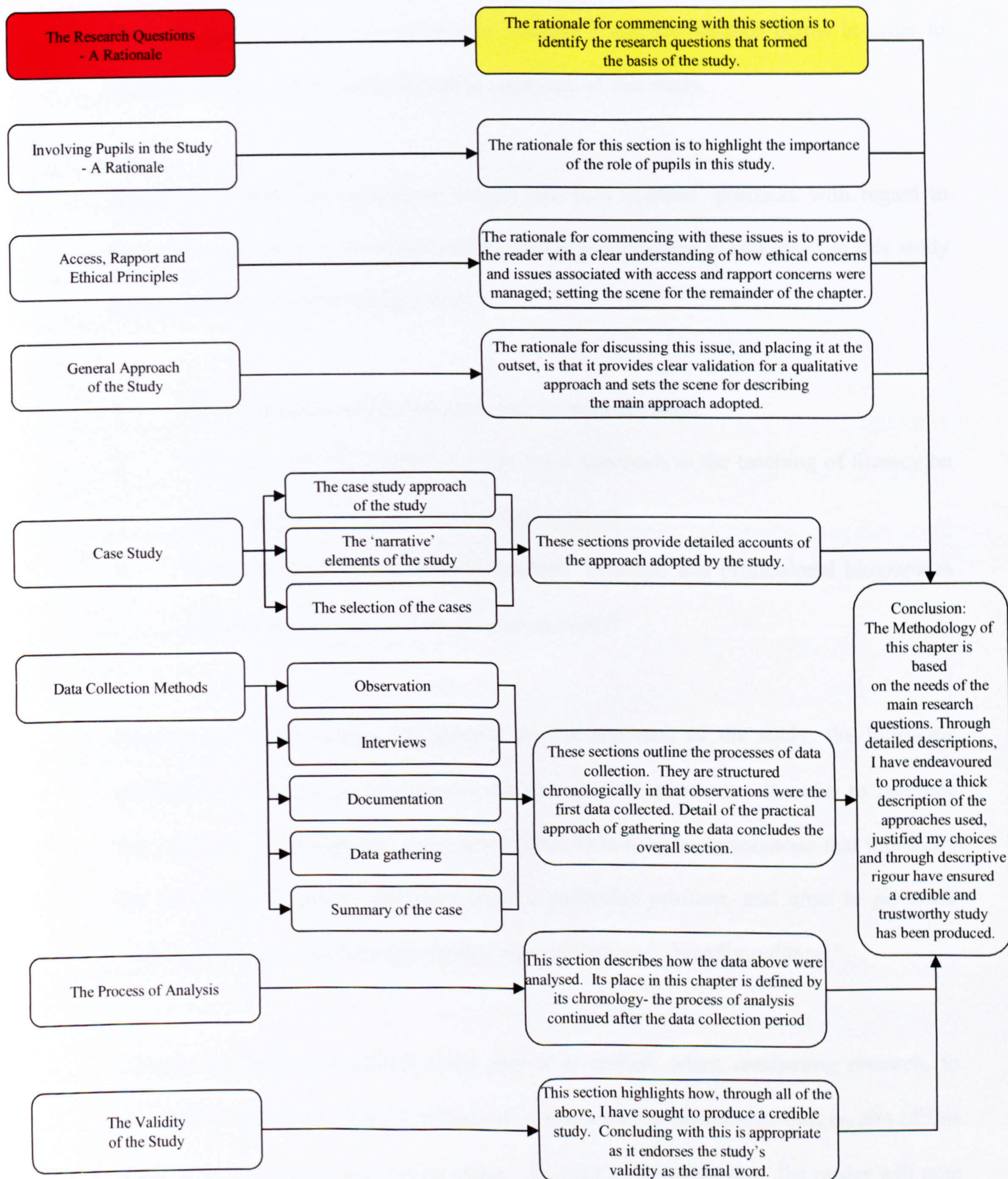
This provided the starting point for this study, given that firstly it seemed evident that further, detailed accounts of practice would serve to enhance understanding of formative assessment and secondly, because as Hargreaves (1994:165) states:

"If we want to understand what the teacher does and why the teacher does it, we must ... understand the teaching community of which that teacher is a part."

Black and Wiliam's recommendations have reinforced the potential of classroom assessment (Earl, 2003), although I believe that there should also be a focus on

understanding what teachers are already doing with regard to formative assessment and, crucially, why.

## The Methodology



Legend: ■ Main Sections ■ Sub-Sections ■ Rationale for Organisation

### 3.1 The Research Questions – A Rationale

The aims of this study were outlined in Chapter 1 and are restated below in order to establish the appropriate methodological approach of this study.

This study is aimed at gaining an insight into two teachers' practices with regard to formative assessment. The investigation of this phenomenon is addressed in this study by considering the following questions:

1. What formative assessment strategies do teachers use?
2. What has been the impact of a top-down approach to the teaching of literacy on teachers' approaches to formative assessment?
3. Is there a relationship between teachers' personal and professional biographies and their approaches to formative assessment?

Prior to moving to discuss the methodological approach of the study, the following provides a discussion of the rationale for the research questions. In order to facilitate this, the work of Clough and Nutbrown (2002: 4) is used to demonstrate that this study set out with: "...specific *purposes* from a particular *position*, and aims to *persuade* readers of the significance of its claims; these claims are...broadly *political*."

Clough and Nutbrown (2002) assert that it is crucial, when conducting research, to maintain a notion of making a difference in some way to something; thus an aim of this study is to *persuade* readers of its value. In order to be persuasive, the reader will note that the study draws on a range of 'voices', these include both the practitioners involved in the study and several of their pupils (see section 3.2). The notion of accessing voices

was important to this study, as its purpose is aimed at 'discovery'. The reader will note that the above research questions are therefore geared at discovering the practice of two teachers with regard to formative assessment.

Clough and Nutbrown (2002: 6) highlight the importance of the purposive nature of research, asserting that:

“There is little point in carrying out a research project (whatever the scale) if there is no ultimate aim to achieve something as a result.”

The purpose of seeking to understand teachers' use of particular formative assessment strategies and the relationship, if any, between the top-down approach to the teaching of literacy and personal and professional biographies with teachers' approaches to formative assessment is two-fold. Firstly, as identified in the literature review, much research associated with formative assessment deals with the strategies that teachers use and a gap has been identified about the link between the nature of primary teaching and formative assessment (see Chapter 2). Secondly, as a teacher and subsequently a trainer of teachers, a personal interest arose with regard to assessment. As described in Chapter 1, I became increasingly aware that PGCE trainee teachers, whom I taught, had some misconceptions about formative assessment. For example, as identified on their planning sheets under the heading 'What evidence do you have of pupil progress?' numerous trainees would simply write 'formative assessment'. Furthermore, in discussion with trainee teachers during tutorials, it became clear that the use of particular formative assessment strategies seemed to be context and experience driven. For example, some teachers advocated the use of sharing learning objectives with children, therefore those trainees based in these particular settings followed this model of teaching, regardless of whether or not they as practitioners personally ascribed to the view that sharing learning

objectives is perceived by many as positive for teaching and learning (see for example, Black and Wiliam, 1998a, Clarke, 2001). This was also the case for those trainees in settings that did not, for example, encourage peer-evaluation. In such contexts, trainees would tend to follow the contextual lead despite being advocates of peer-evaluation.

This stimulated an interest in understanding the practice of experienced teachers, with a view that, through having a raised consciousness with regard to that practice, then it may be available to question and critical scrutiny.

Having established that this study is seeking to understand teachers' use of particular formative assessment strategies, the three questions outlined at the beginning of this section emerged. For the purpose of discussion, the following provides an overview of how each of these arose.

### **What formative assessment strategies do teachers use?**

In order to gain an understanding of the formative assessment practice of the teachers involved, then, fundamentally, the starting point of the study was to unravel the strategies that they use. The rationale being, that discussions about their practice would be based on a secure knowledge of what they do, thus contextualising the study. As Hargreaves (1994) states, if we want to understand what teachers do and why then we must understand their teaching contexts.

Therefore to begin to understand the practices of the two practitioners involved in the study, it became clear that it was essential to establish in the first instance, what they did.

**What has been the impact of a top-down approach to the teaching of literacy on teachers' approaches to formative assessment?**

Through practical experience as a practitioner and engagement with the literature, it is evident that there have been numerous changes, particularly over the past decade, with regard to pedagogy, with, many argue, the government taking an increasing role in terms of defining teachers' practice (see section 2.3.2). Thus, in seeking to understand teachers' use of particular formative assessment strategies, focussing on the context of their practice was an appropriate aspect to consider. Hence, this study was designed to unravel the relationship, if any, between the top-down approach to the teaching of literacy and teachers' formative assessment strategies.

**Is there a relationship between teachers' personal and professional biographies and their approaches to formative assessment?**

The review of research highlights some important aspects associated with the individual and personal nature of teaching, however contemporary research regarding formative assessment tends to focus on the practicalities of conducting assessment and the impact this has on teaching and learning, yet the aspect of the nature of primary teaching and formative assessment is not considered. Therefore, it was deemed essential that in seeking to understand teachers' formative assessment practice, the teachers were 'understood'. As Lortie (1975) points out, teachers are individual beings, who bring to the profession a uniqueness and individualism which are very much at the heart of teaching. This study therefore was designed to establish the relationship between the individual and personal nature of teaching and formative assessment. The rationale being that in seeking to understand the two teachers one would have a raised perception of the values entrenched within their practice.



Having considered the purposive nature of this study, the following considers Clough and Nutbrown's (2002) notion that social research is positional. Clough and Nutbrown state that the ways in which one conducts an enquiry, and the nature of the questions, are expressions of our positionality. With regard to this study, the research questions outlined above, demonstrate that the context within which the study took place was important. In addition, the methodological approach of the study drew on other work in the field, as outlined in section 2.1. Furthermore, the reader will note that section 2.4.6 presents the reader with a visual model (Figure 2.9) to demonstrate the relationship between the three main elements that formed the theoretical basis of the study, its methodological approach, and to highlight that the focus of the research and subsequent research questions were also informed by my own values and beliefs as a practitioner.

The final feature of social research as outlined by Clough and Nutbrown (2002: 12) is that social research is political.

“Social research which changes nothing – not even the researcher – is not research at all. And since all research takes place in policy contexts of one form or another research itself must therefore be seen as inevitably political.”

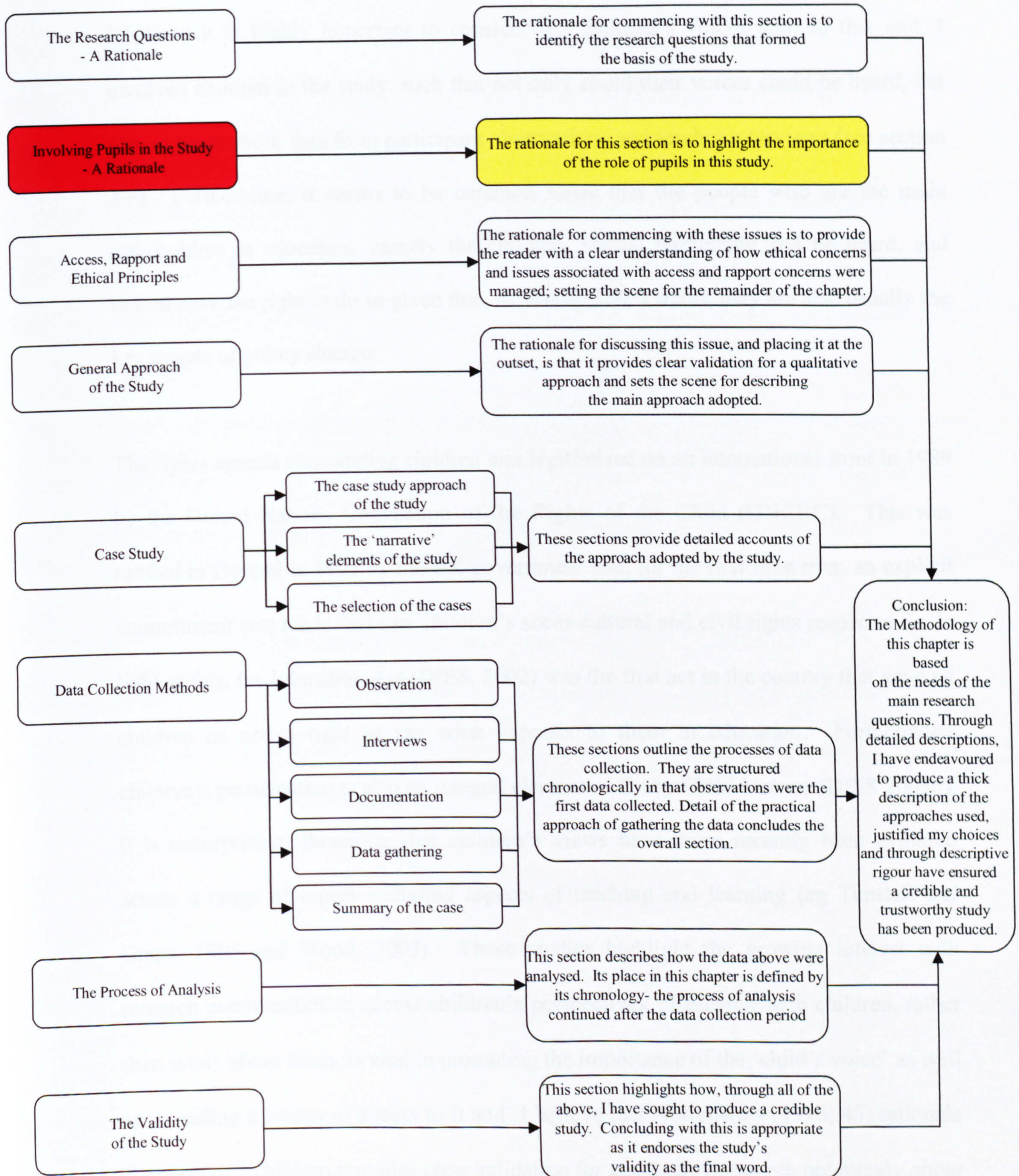
This study is, as has been outlined earlier, aimed at discovering the practice of two experienced teachers with regard to formative assessment, with a view that, through having a raised consciousness with regard to that practice, then it may be available to question and critical scrutiny to, ultimately, inform future practice. The research questions which formed the focus of the enquiry were designed to facilitate this.

In summary, this study therefore investigates the formative assessment strategies employed by two teachers and is contextualised within the teaching of literacy. The study highlights a range of strategies that are employed by these practitioners in their day

to day teaching, with data collected through: the gathering of documentation, participant observations and a range of semi-structured interviews and participatory activities with the teachers to explore teachers' formative assessment practice.

It is worth noting at this point that not only did this study value the importance of the involvement of two experienced practitioners and their colleagues (see section 3.5.3), but the involvement of pupils was also perceived as vital. Therefore, prior to commencing the discussion of issues associated with access and rapport, the following provides a rationale for involving children in the study.

## The Methodology



Legend: ■ Main Sections ■ Sub-Sections ■ Rationale for Organisation

### 3.2 Involving Pupils in the Study– A Rationale

I believe it is highly important to consider the children's voices and, to this end, I involved children in the study, such that not only could their voices be heard, but also to cross-check data from participant observations and teacher interviews (see section 3.8). Furthermore, it seems to be common sense that the people who are the main stakeholders in education, namely the children, should participate and be heard, and indeed have the right to do so given that, as Wood (2003) states, they are also usually the key targets of policy change.

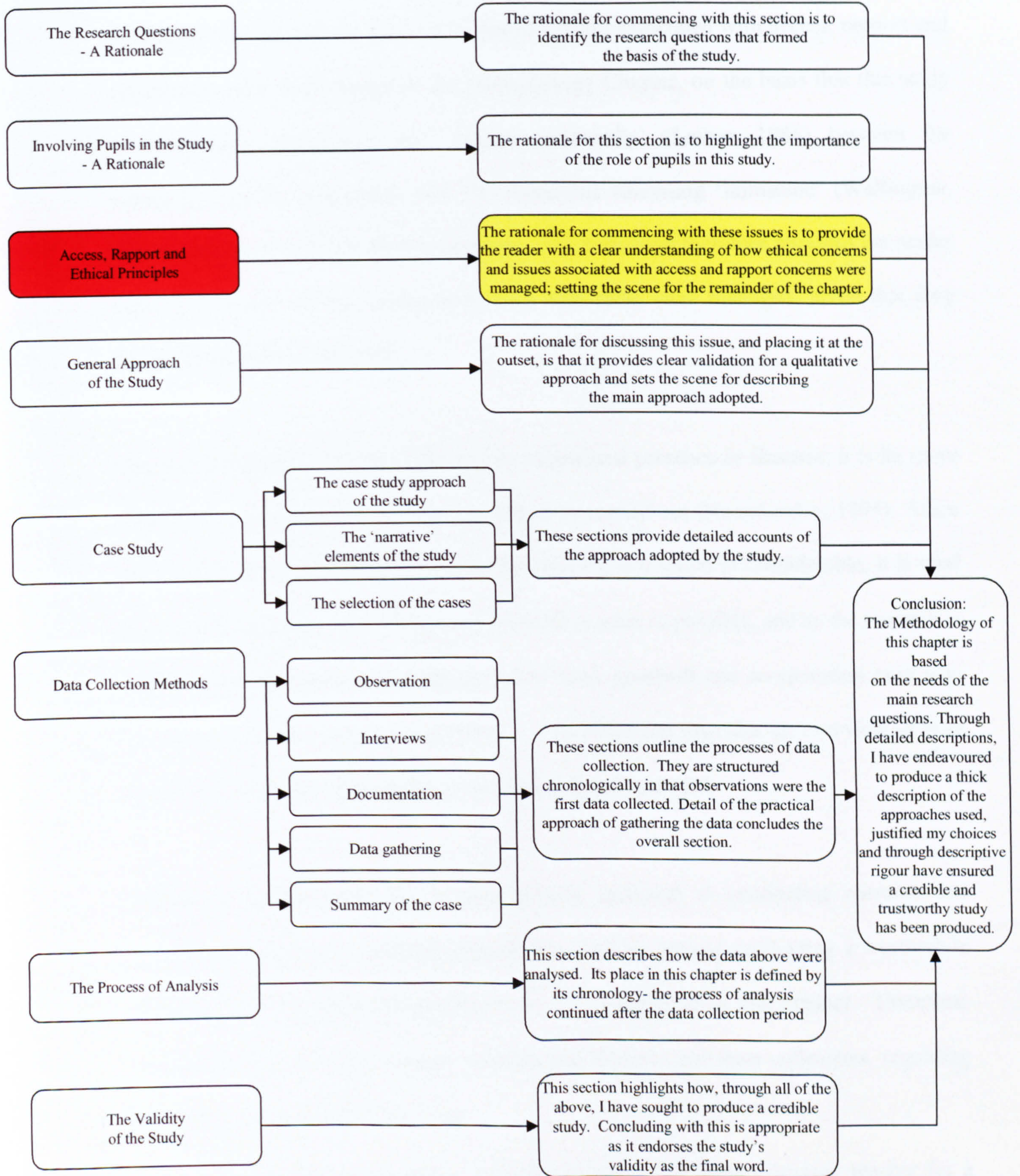
The rights agenda surrounding children was legitimised on an international front in 1989 by the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This was ratified in December 1991 by the UK government and, for the first time ever, an explicit commitment was made that saw children's socio-cultural and civil rights respected. In light of this, the Education Act (DfES, 2002) was the first act in the country that gave all children an active right to say what happens to them in education. Furthermore, children's participation is also an integral element of Every Child Matters (DfES 2003b). It is unsurprising, therefore, that children's views have more recently been explored across a range of topics including aspects of teaching and learning (eg Tunstall and Gipps, 1996 and Wood, 2003). These studies highlight the growing interest with research communities to access children's perspectives. Research with children, rather than solely about them, is vital in promoting the importance of the 'child's voice' as well as providing a means of access to it and I believe that Nutbrown's (1996: 45) rationale for observing children provides clear validation for conducting research not merely *about* children, but with them. She states:

“Children approach their learning with wide eyes and open minds, so their educators too need wide eyes and open minds to see clearly and to understand what they see...Children and the things they do need to be seen in the whole context and adults working with them must be open to seeing what *exists* not what their professional minds tell them they *should* see.”

This, I feel is imperative, and through engaging children in the research process, by inquiring about their world, from their perspective it is the intention of this study to provide a fuller picture of formative assessment. And, as Nutbrown states, adults’ knowledge about children’s learning must derive from informed observation of them and dialogue with them. Like Lansdown (1996), I believe that I have an obligation to involve children in matters that affect them and perceive this as not only challenging, but exciting too. Therefore the premise that children’s voices will be heard and shared underpins the rationale for involving children in the study.

Prior to moving to discuss the methodological approach of the study, the following sections discuss issues associated with access, rapport and ethical principles. The purpose of this is to highlight the importance of these considerations and to demonstrate how these issues were considered throughout the study.

## The Methodology



Legend: ■ Main Sections ■ Sub-Sections ■ Rationale for Organisation

### **3.3 Access, Rapport and Ethical Principles**

In Chapter 1, I outlined my decision to discuss issues associated with access, rapport and ethical principles at the outset of the Methodology Chapter, on the basis that this study involved close partnership and ‘mutual reciprocity’ (Lather, 1986) between the researcher and the researched, with the researcher becoming ‘immersed’ (Wellington, 2000 and Bassey, 1999) in the two contexts. The following therefore provides the reader with an overview of how issues associated with these were managed, given that they were fundamental to the study.

The notion of access does not refer simply to physical presence or absence; it is far more than the granting of permission for research to be carried out (Hammersley, 1995). Since the researcher’s potential for intrusion and possibly disruption is considerable, it is vital that mutual, amicable relationships are fostered as soon as possible, and as the research is to be carried out over an extended period of time, goodwill and co-operation must also be achieved (Cohen and Manion, 1994). The following provides an overview of how mutual and amicable relationships were fostered and managed.

Wellington (2000) states that a good general approach to conducting research and accessing settings is to establish oneself as a credible person conducting a worthwhile project and he identifies the importance of, for example, dress and manner. Therefore, on first meeting the headteachers, Amanda and Bethany and their colleagues, regarding the study, I explained the following:

- My teaching experiences – I explained that I had been a primary teacher for a number of years. By doing so, I felt that I was clarifying my position, in that I had valid teaching experiences and was therefore ‘credible’ (Wellington, 2000).

- The purpose of the study – I provided the participants with an overview of why I was interested in the study as both a practitioner and as a researcher, and how my own teaching experiences had caused me to have an interest in assessment. In doing so, I was assuring the participants that the study was a ‘worthy project’ (Woods, 1986).

In terms of presenting myself in the two school environments, I drew on my experiences as a class teacher and as a visitor to both of the schools on previous occasions. I therefore dressed and presented myself, I believe, in an appropriate manner. I took care to wear clothes that were smart, but comfortable when working with children and was professional and friendly in my manner.

Wellington (2000: 64) states that a researcher may be viewed in a number of ways and: “Attitudes towards the researcher are likely to vary from suspicion, mistrust or cynicism to awe, trust or friendship.”

In order to dissipate suspicions of mistrust and cynicism and to avoid ‘awe’, on first meeting Amanda and Bethany regarding the study, I explained the following:

- The purpose of the study – I presented the teachers with copies of the research proposal and outlined my interest in developing an understanding of formative assessment through gaining insights into their practice.
- My teaching experiences – I explained that although I had taught for a number of years, my experiences were largely confined to Key Stage One. By doing so, I felt that I was clarifying my position, in that I was not an ‘expert’ or critic and thus avoiding attitudes of ‘awe’. (Wellington, 2000).



Furthermore, having worked alongside both Amanda and Bethany and forged professional working relationships with them in terms of Initial Teacher Training (ITT), I felt assured that they would not be suspicious of my role (see section 4.1).

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:112) highlight a particular issue that presents itself to the ethnographic researcher, whereby:

“The ethnographer needs to be intellectually poised between familiarity and strangeness; and in overt participation he or she will usually be poised between stranger and friend.”

Given that my research role was overt (see section 3.6.1) and that time in the field would feasibly lead to the forging of relationships, then the above caution to ethnographic researchers was heeded because, in overt research there is the strain of living with the ambiguity and uncertainty of one's social position. Indeed, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) point out that one must avoid feeling 'at home'.

This implied a need for reflexivity, and it is with this in mind that I chose to maintain a research diary and monitored my research role, the purpose of which was to maintain critical and professional distance.

In addition to considering the importance of credibility and of dress and manner Bassey (1999) highlights the importance of 'Respect'. He identifies the importance of the respect for democracy, truth and persons. Bassey states that, in a democratic society researchers can expect certain freedoms, including: the freedom to investigate and ask questions; the freedom to give and receive information and the freedom to express ideas, criticise others and publish research findings. However, these freedoms, he states, are subject to the respect for both truth and persons in case study research. The following

therefore presents an overview of how this study sought ‘respect for truth’ and ‘respect for persons’.

### **Trustworthiness**

Some writers have suggested that qualitative studies should be judged by different criteria to those used by quantitative researchers (see for example, Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and, although the validity of this study is considered in relation to Maxwell’s typology (see section 3.8), I feel that it is appropriate to consider Bassey’s (1999) protocol for considering the trustworthiness of the study. Bassey’s protocol is based on Lincoln and Guba’s concept of ‘trustworthiness’, and I believe that in demonstrating how issues associated with trustworthiness were considered, I am ensuring that this study has ‘respected the truth’.

### **Has there been prolonged engagement with the data sources?**

Bassey (1999) explains how prolonged engagement with the data sources relates to the notion of spending sufficient time on a case in order to be immersed in its issues and building trust for those involved as participants. Throughout the study, these issues were fundamental. I had forged professional relationships with Amanda and Bethany prior to the study and spent as much time as possible in the settings to build up effective working relationships with the teachers, their colleagues and the pupils involved in the study. Prior to gathering the data, I spent time in the schools to focus on the aspect of building relationships with all of the participants and, during the data collection period, I remained in the schools and particular classrooms for the remainder of the day. This served the purpose of allowing professional relationships to flourish, whilst developing a bond of trust. However, whilst relationship building was fundamental given my

immersion in the study, I needed to maintain critical and professional distance. This was facilitated through the maintenance of a research diary and regular meetings with my supervisors to discuss the study.

**Has there been persistent observation of emerging issues?**

Bassey (1999) explains that persistent observation of emerging issues refers to the extent to which the data have been thoroughly searched for salient features. A key feature of this study has been the involvement of external judges (Atkins, 1984) to ensure that the data were thoroughly scrutinised and analysed at all stages of the data collection and analysis periods. In addition, the frequency of my visits to the sites was intermittent to allow time between observations and interviews to be given to initial gross analysis. This facilitated the opportunity of focussing interviews on emerging issues and ensured that data from the field were ‘saturated’ (Jeffrey and Troman, 2005).

**Have raw data been adequately checked with their sources?**

Bassey (1999) believes that it is good practice after an interview to, for example, take the report of the interview back to the interviewee such that they can endorse that it is a true record and likewise with observational data. Throughout the entire data collection process and during the stages of analysis, reports, records and observations were shared with the teacher participants to ensure that they were ‘true’ and accurate.

**Has there been sufficient triangulation of raw data leading to analytical statements?**

Bassey (1999) highlights how, in triangulating methods, data are gathered from different sources. This study gathered a range of data from a range of sources to respond to the research questions and to ‘cross-check’ evidence (see section 3.6).

**Has the working hypothesis, evaluation, or emerging story been systematically tested against the analytical statements?**

Evaluative statements and emerging story lines need to be carefully and systematically tested against the analytical statements which have been made about the data (Bassey, 1999). In seeking to address this issue, data were analysed and re-analysed with independent judges (Atkins, 1984) according to thorough categories that were either observer-identified or adapted and 'borrowed' from the literature (see section 3.7). In addition, the conceptual framework for the study, drawn from the theoretical underpinnings, served to add to the careful and systematic nature of the analysis (see section 2.4.6).

**Has a critical friend thoroughly tried to challenge the findings?**

Throughout the study friends and colleagues engaged in critical discussions with me about the findings. In addition, I had the support of several supervisors during the period of study who critically challenged the findings.

**Is the account of the research sufficiently detailed to give the reader confidence in the findings?**

In order to ensure confidence in the findings, the account of the research is, I believe, thorough. This chapter presents the reader with a detailed account of the methodological approach of the study and data collection methods, in addition, issues that arose throughout the study are made explicit (see section 3.6). Furthermore, the teachers are presented to the reader in Chapter 4 in a comprehensive and structured manner, with supporting materials to add additional detail and information, presented in the appendices.

### **Does the case provide an adequate audit trail?**

The principle of ensuring an adequate audit trail is Bassey (1999) states, that the researcher systematically maintains a record to certify that conclusions are justified. In order to ensure that this study has an adequate audit trail, the reader will note that throughout the main findings (see Chapter 4), examples from many data sources are provided verbatim and additional evidence to demonstrate that sources were substantial is presented in the appendices.

The reader will also note that multiple sources of data were collected. This is a fundamental advantage of case study approaches (see section 3.5), and in this study it facilitated the opportunity to 'build' the case.

The above section has highlighted how the study sought to respect the truth, and, in line with Bassey's recommendations, the following demonstrates how, in addition to seeking respect for the truth, this study respected those persons involved.

### **Has permission been granted to conduct the research?**

Permission was granted to conduct the research in several ways. Firstly, permission was granted by my supervising tutor, following the submission of my research proposal. Secondly, the headteachers and teachers involved in the study granted permission for the study to take place within each setting. In addition, although assent was granted by the headteachers on behalf of the pupils, I also ensured that I had the permission of the pupils themselves (the notion of informed consent is discussed in greater detail later in this section).

### **What arrangements have been agreed for transferring ownership of the record?**

At the outset of the study it was agreed that the two teachers, Amanda and Bethany, would have access to all records and drafts of reports and findings. The rationale for this was such that they could validate the evidence and ensure that their practice had been accurately presented. Both teachers agreed for findings to be shared with the headteachers and their colleagues, although it was negotiated that this would only take place after they had been consulted regarding the findings. With regard to the pupils, it was explained that data would be shared with teachers, although I made it explicit that I had agreed with the teachers that they would receive 'summaries' of findings from data gathered from the pupils, and these would be 'nameless', unless pupils wanted, specifically, to be named.

### **What arrangements have been made for either identifying or concealing individuals and settings?**

It was made clear to all parties that, when in the public domain, the schools, teachers and pupils would be given pseudonyms. However, given that my research role was overt, it was impossible to conceal the names of those involved from colleagues within the schools. However, as described above, I negotiated that, with particular regard to the pupils, should they request their names to be omitted from feedback to the teachers and headteachers, then this would be arranged.

### **What arrangements have been agreed for giving permission to publish the case?**

The headteachers and teachers were consulted at the outset regarding the potential of publication of the case studies and it was agreed that, on the basis that the schools, staff and pupils could not be identified, publication was acceptable.

Throughout the study, I feel that mutual, amicable relationships, not only with the two teachers involved in the study, but with their pupils and colleagues, were maintained. I believe that this was because I considered the above carefully, but also believe that this was due to the teachers themselves. Both teachers were enthusiastic about participating in the research and welcomed me very warmly into their settings as recorded in my research diary:

“Met Amanda. She is very friendly and bubbly. The staff are all interested in what I’m doing and very helpful.” (Research diary entry, 27<sup>th</sup> Nov, 2000)

“Bethany very friendly. Had lots of things ready for me, planning information etc.” (Research diary entry, 27<sup>th</sup> Nov, 2000)

In addition, although mutual and amicable relationships were maintained, I believe that throughout this study I maintained critical distance. This was managed through the maintenance of a research diary and also as a consequence of regular meetings with my supervisors throughout the period of study and through regular consultation with a range of ‘external judges’ (Atkins, 1984).

Bearing in mind the high stake of access in this study, (see section 3.3) it was necessary to consider ethical principles. In case study research, Stake (2005: 459) states that there is an intense interest in personal views and circumstances and that:

“Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict.”

Conducting an ethical study was therefore imperative, and in seeking to adopt an appropriate ethical code, I turned to the work of Spradley (1979). Spradley refers to the American Anthropological Association in his guide for ethnographers and identifies six

key ethical principles, although he points out that this list is not exhaustive. Although this study is not ethnographic, it has, as is outlined in section 3.4.1, adopted ethnographic style elements, hence consideration of the following was deemed highly appropriate:

- considering of the informants first
- safeguarding the informant's rights, interests and sensitivities
- communicating the research objectives
- protecting the privacy of informants
- not exploiting informants
- making reports available to informants.

These six ethical principles underpinned the study from the outset, as the aim was to gain the trust and confidence of the participants. Given that the participants involved in the study included pupils, adopting an appropriate ethical code was particularly salient. This is largely because all researchers are potentially in a position of power and that power carries the potential for abuse. Grieg and Taylor (1999: 148) point out that the relative power of adults to children:

“...makes this a double edged sword when involving children as research subjects...it is always important for researchers to consider the potential implications of their work and to ensure that they are guided by ethical principles.”

The following therefore considers the six elements outlined above with reference to both the teachers involved, including their colleagues, and to the pupils.

### **Consider informants first**

There is a general agreement, Bryman (2004) states, that people should not suffer as a consequence of their involvement in the research. It is the responsibility of the



researcher to ensure that participants come to no physical or psychological harm during or as a consequence of the research.

With regard to this study the following concerns were considered.

With regard to physical harm, the study was designed such that no physical harm would come to any of the participants. The purpose of the study was to observe practice in its 'natural setting' (see section 3.4). However, interviews (both individual and group) were conducted with the pupils, and these were conducted outside the classroom. In each school, the interviews were conducted in safe environments within the school buildings.

With regard to psychological harm, in liaison with my supervisor and the class teachers, given the nature of the study, it was deemed appropriate to conduct research with the children such that their voices could be heard with regard to formative assessment practices within their settings. A potential harm here could have been that the research area was, as Denscombe (2003) states, 'intrusive' or could 'touch sensitive issues' given that the children would be discussing aspects of their teachers' practice. To avoid such harm, it was made explicit to the children that the purpose of the study was to seek their views to:

“...really get to understand what happens in your lessons. I'm interested in this and so is your teacher. We both want you to feel that you can talk about what really happens...we don't want you to feel worried. The reason for all of this is that we want to get better as teachers and if we listen to what you have to say then this'll help us.” (Ref. Group Interview, Amanda's Class)

In being explicit about the study to the children, it was felt that their 'safety' was assured. In addition, it was made clear to them during the interviews that information

would be shared between myself and the teachers, but should they feel uncomfortable with this then I would respect their confidentiality. What is of interest here is that during group and individual interviews, all of the children participated highly enthusiastically and actively asked for their voices, opinions and ideas to be shared with the teacher.

The study relied on mutual trust between the participants and myself and in this respect I considered the informants first through discussing with the headteachers, the two teachers referred to as Amanda and Bethany, and their respective colleagues the most appropriate time for observing and interviewing and negotiated a regular observation schedule. I made it clear to all of the participants, including the pupils that I would adhere to the schedule to the best of my ability.

### **Safeguard informant's rights, interests and sensitivities**

From the outset of the study, I made it clear to all of the participants that I would only be observing Literacy sessions, and that although I would be in the classroom at other teaching times these would not be recorded. In addition, I explained that findings would only be shared with colleagues after consultation with the two main participants. Ensuring that the pupils felt relaxed and comfortable during the tasks and interviews was vital, and I explained to them that I and their teachers wanted them to respond honestly and openly.

Furthermore, safeguarding the children's rights, interests and sensitivities also had a direct influence on the data gathering methods chosen for their part in the research. As mentioned earlier, a fundamental ethical challenge for researchers is the issue of power relations and a task of the researcher, therefore, is to address this. Mauthner (1997)

suggests that researchers adopt a child-centred approach to data collection, viewing the children as subjects rather than objects of research. Thus, in liaison with my supervisor, I decided to conduct participatory activities with the children (see section 3.6.2).

### **Communicate research objectives**

At the outset of the study, I ensured that everyone involved had a clear understanding of the study's purpose and as a consequence an understanding of their involvement in the process. Through engaging in discussion with Amanda and Bethany, their headteachers and colleagues about the study and sharing the objectives and aims of the study, informed consent was granted to conduct the study within the two settings. It was agreed that Amanda and Bethany would be participating as volunteers, that they could withdraw from the study if they so chose and that they were clear of the purpose of the study and their roles.

At the outset of the study, I considered the issue of conducting research with children and the need for consent as paramount for, as one paragraph in BERA (1992: 1) states:

“Care should be taken when interviewing children and students up to school leaving age; permission should be obtained from the school and, if they so suggest, the parents.”

Therefore, in the initial stages of the study, I made it clear to the teachers and headteachers that I was keen to involve children in the study and it was agreed by all parties that this would be feasible. I liaised with the headteachers at both schools regarding consent and gave both of them copies of the research proposal. The headteachers both explained that there would be no requirement to seek individual parental consent for the study as parents had already given consent at the beginning of the year for their pupils to be involved in school and university-based research projects

designed to understand teachers' practice, provided that the study would not put pupils at risk. This was because both schools were involved in teacher training at Newcastle University and trainee teachers were frequently engaged in conducting small-scale studies with teachers and pupils.

Thus, the teachers gave informed consent for themselves and the headteachers gave informed assent for the participation of the pupils.

People should never be forced or coerced into helping with research, but should participate in a voluntary capacity, with sufficient information about the research to be able to arrive at 'informed consent.' Greig and Taylor (1999: 149) clarify this, stating that informed consent is about:

“...ensuring that they *know* that they have the choice as to whether to participate in the research (in other words that they are true volunteers), that they *know* that they have the right to withdraw from the research at any time if they so wish without detriment to their care, and that they *know* exactly what their role in the research is (that is, what they must do if they choose to participate).”

A key issue of the study, as outlined earlier was a desire that the children participate in the study as subjects rather than objects of the research. Although assent had been granted by the headteachers for the pupils to participate, it was deemed crucial to ensure that the children were informed; that they knew they had a choice to participate or not, that they knew they could withdraw if they so chose, and that they knew exactly what their role was. An aim of the study was such that the voices of the children could be heard and I therefore aimed at facilitating this through inviting them to join as voluntary participants who had a clear understanding of the research purpose and process.

With regard to child consent, Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) clearly states children's rights to express themselves on matters that affect them. And, as Alderson and Morrow (2004) point out, in English law 'competent minors' under the age of 16 can give valid consent. Competence is defined as having sufficient understanding and intelligence to understand what is proposed. Therefore, it was deemed appropriate to gain informed consent from the children themselves and, as the reader will note later in the study when the findings are presented, the responses from the children indicate that they were 'competent' and confident enough to grant or withdraw consent, given the candid quality of the comments they made with regard to their teacher's practice.

### **Protect the privacy of informants**

It became clear that the two teachers involved in the study would be recognised by their colleagues from school, as my research role was not covert and furthermore, their roles within the school were particular to them individually. I felt, therefore, that it was important to explain this to both of the teachers. It was agreed that pseudonyms for both the schools, teachers and pupils would be used so that, as far as possible, when in the public domain, privacy could be protected. In addition, I also felt that it was appropriate to keep the teachers informed during the study and I provided the participant teachers with a de-brief of the findings as the study progressed and provided them with drafts of the main findings.

It was also made clear to the pupils that the information gained from them and their teachers would be in the public domain. I assured them that I would protect their

anonymity in the public domain by using pseudonyms for the school, teachers and all of the pupils.

### **Don't exploit informants**

The people who agreed to be involved in the study were 'doing me a favour' and on this basis I felt that it was important to 'offer something in return'. I offered to work within the classrooms, following observations, on a voluntary basis. This offer was accepted and I took on the role of Classroom Support Assistant for the remainder of the day. In order to avoid exploiting the pupils, I conducted the research activities with the pupils during negotiated periods of time, where it was agreed between myself, the headteachers and Amanda and Bethany, that the involvement of the pupils would not impact upon taught sessions, lunchtimes or play times. The individual and group interviews at both schools were therefore conducted during the early morning and mid-afternoon registration periods and during the afternoon singing practice. Withdrawing the pupils from whole school singing practice did not imply lack of concern with regard to this session from either the teachers, headteachers or myself, rather that this was, in both schools, a long session and pupils would be absent for only part of it. The aim was for the research process to have minimal impact upon the daily teaching and learning of the teachers and pupils. The pupils involved in the study were happy to work alongside me during interviews and all of those involved expressed a desire for their voices to be heard and were eager and willing participants. They also felt comfortable working with me throughout the day, where I supported them with other aspects of the curriculum in my role as Classroom Support Assistant, and displayed enthusiasm at my presence. During this time I ensured that I worked not only with those involved in the research process but other members of the class too. In seeking to avoid exploiting the pupils, my role as

classroom support assistant allowed for the development of positive working relationships.

### **Make reports available to informants**

Throughout the study, observation notes and interview notes were made available to each teacher and I verbally fed-back the findings throughout. Amanda and Bethany and their respective colleagues and pupils were briefed about the objectives of the study, at the outset. In addition, as data were collected, they were fed back to the teacher participants.

Given that accessing the voices of the children was an important aspect to this study (see sections 3.2 and 3.6.2), and their participation in the research process was fundamental, then honesty was critical. The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of the formative assessment strategies that their teachers use, therefore seeking children's perspectives was crucial and implied that they had a clear understanding of the rationale for the research.

Ideally, it would have been valuable to have included the children in ensuring the validity of the findings, by, for example, sharing them with them. However, this was impossible as at the end of the data collection process, the children had all left their primary school and moved to their secondary school. Nevertheless, I asked the two teachers involved in the study to ensure that accurate pictures had been portrayed of the children involved.

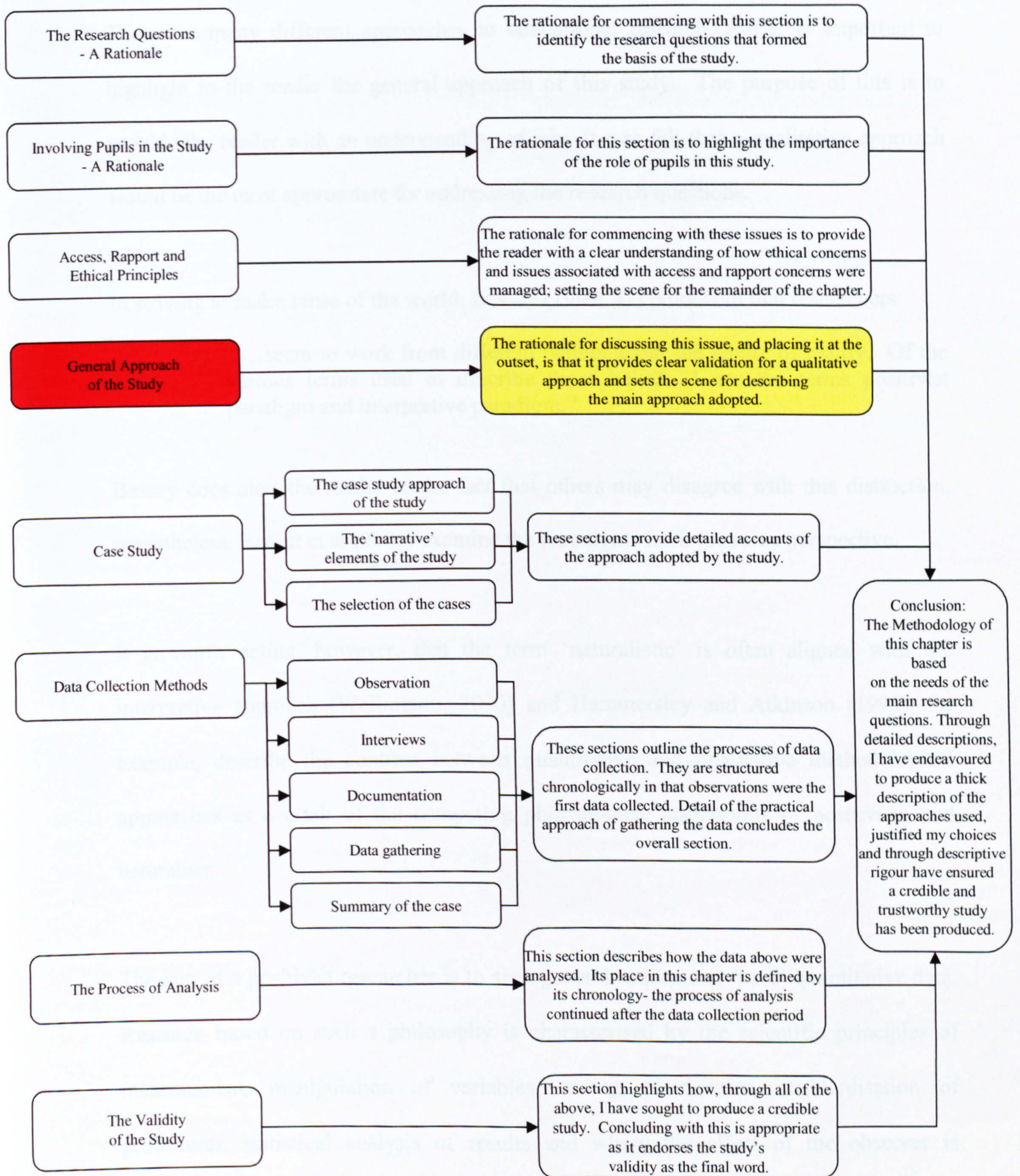
Therefore there are a number of issues regarding access and ethics that are particular to the study. The following is a summary of what I did in order to try to address these:

1. My research role was overt, and in this context, I feel that everyone involved was clear of the purpose of my role. Informed consent was gained from the teachers involved, including their headteachers and colleagues, and headteachers granted assent on behalf of the pupils, who were involved in the study.
2. I felt that a key to this study was my relationships with those involved. Prior to commencing the study, I spent time in the classrooms in the role of 'classroom assistant' to become familiar with the pupils and staff of the school.
3. During the field study, I remained in the classrooms to work under the guidance of the teacher. The purpose of this was to provide the teachers with an 'extra pair of hands' and to develop my relationships with the teachers and pupils. I made it clear that during these times I would not be carrying out research. Therefore, following the literacy lesson, the teachers directed me to carry out a range of tasks, for example: photocopying, assembling classroom displays, working with groups of children during numeracy lessons. The tasks that I undertook were very much of the type associated with volunteer support in a primary classroom.
4. I shared findings with teachers throughout the study, thus ensuring that they were informed as to what would be written and to ensure the accuracy and clarity of the findings.

To summarise this section, I made myself approachable and used my knowledge of the nature of teaching in a primary classroom to ensure that I presented myself appropriately in each classroom, both in terms of appearance and in terms of the way that I behaved.



## The Methodology



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### 3.4 The General Approach of the Study

There are many different approaches to educational research, and it is important to highlight to the reader the general approach of this study. The purpose of this is to provide the reader with an understanding of why it was felt that a qualitative approach would be the most appropriate for addressing the research questions.

In striving to make sense of the world, Bassey (1999: 42) points out that researchers:

“...seem to work from different beliefs about the nature of reality. Of the various terms used to describe these beliefs, I use the terms positivist paradigm and interpretive paradigm.”

Bassey does alert the reader to the fact that others may disagree with this distinction, nevertheless, Bartett et al (2001) examine the paradigms from the same perspective.

It is worth noting, however, that the term ‘naturalistic’ is often aligned with the interpretive approach (Wellington, 2000) and Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), for example, describe the contrast between quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches as a clash of the competing philosophical standpoints of positivism and naturalism.

The aim of a positivist researcher is to seek generalisations and ‘hard’ quantitative data. Research based on such a philosophy is characterised by the scientific principles of measurement, manipulation of variables, testing of theories, standardisation of procedures, statistical analysis of results and where the effect of the observer is eliminated (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Wellington (1996:13) describes

positivists as believing in: “...an external, objective reality which is rational and independent of the observer.”

The main features of interpretive research, in contrast, are related to the description of events and contexts, the gaining of deep insights into how people perceive their own actions and those of others within their setting, and the social world being studied in its ‘natural state’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). The belief underpinning the interpretive paradigm is that the social world is created by the interactions of the individuals. This meaning implies that the social world should be as undisturbed as possible when it is being studied. Therefore, researchers often make use of individual accounts and biographies, informal interviews and observations (Bartlett et al, 2001).

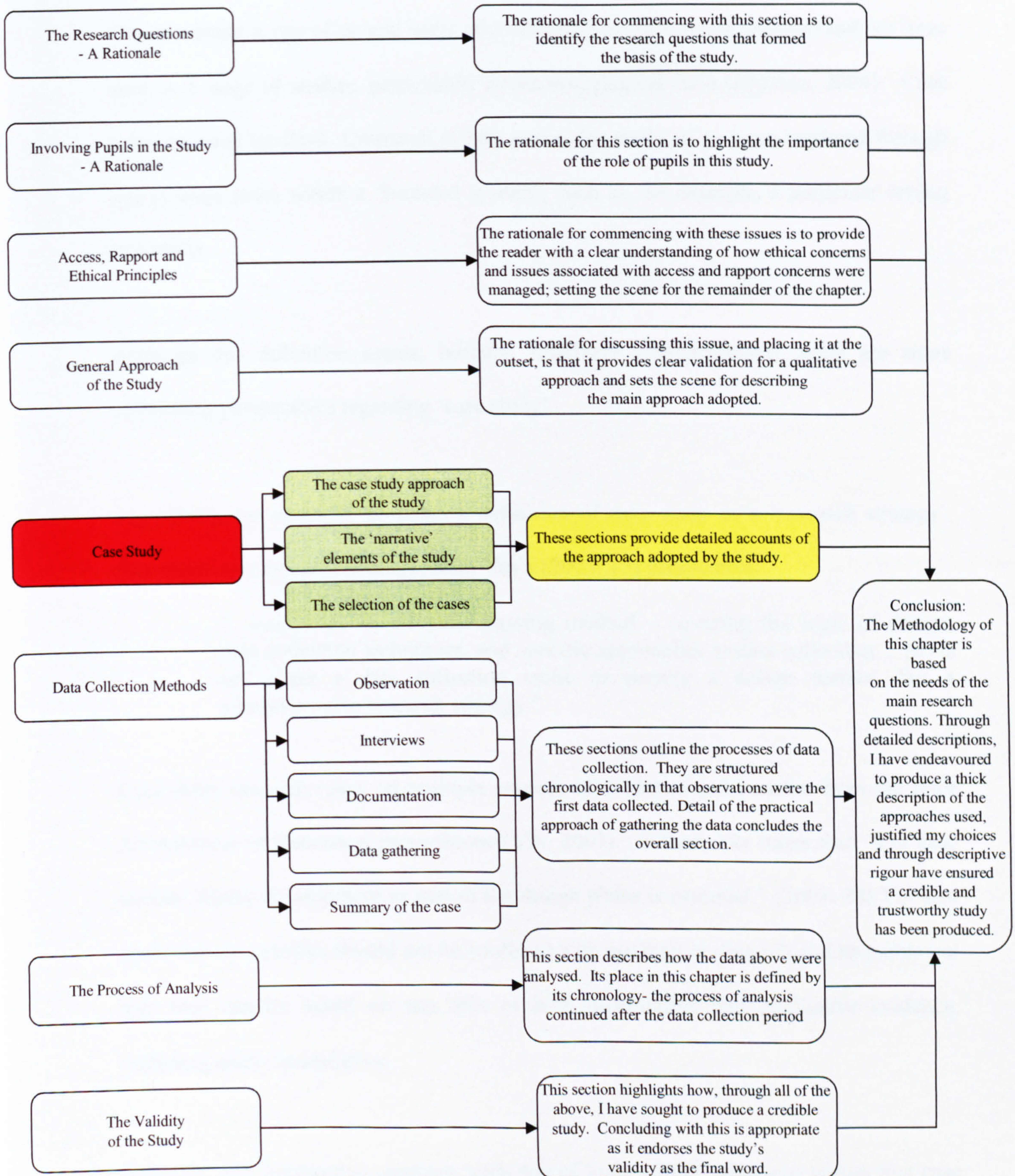
It was decided that an interpretive stance would describe the methodological approach best suited to this study as it is concerned with:

- Studying teachers and pupils in their ‘natural settings’
- Gaining a deep understanding of the actions of teachers with regard to formative assessment
- Discovering as opposed to testing a theory.

Furthermore, as described in chapter 1, I felt that a qualitative research paradigm was best suited towards my own personal values and beliefs, given that I believe that knowledge is built by an individual and is internal, being affected by experiences and social culture (see figure 1.1).

Qualitative research often involves a naturalistic stance. This means that the researcher seeks to collect data in naturally occurring situations (Bryman, 2004). As such an approach seemed to be the most appropriate choice for the study, I do not intend to carry out a detailed comparison of the relative merits of quantitative or qualitative methods in educational research; rather, I aim to explain the reasoning that underpins my choice of methods.

## The Methodology



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### 3.5 Case Study

The case study is one of several ways of conducting social science research and has been used in a range of studies, particularly in the sociological field (Bryman, 2004). Case study research involves, Cresswell (1998) states, the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a 'bounded system', such as, for example, a particular setting or context.

Although this definition seems, initially, relatively straightforward, there are some contrasting perspectives regarding 'case study'.

Yin (2003), for example, proposes a definition of case study as a 'research strategy'.

Case study as a research strategy, from Yin's (2003: 15) perspective:

"...comprises an all-encompassing method – covering the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data collection... (it) is not either a data collection tactic or merely a design feature...but a comprehensive research strategy."

Case study research relies on multiple sources of evidence and benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions (Yin, 2003). Indeed, Yin states that: "For case studies, theory development as part of the design phase is essential." (2003: 28) Yin also notes that case studies should not be confused with qualitative research and he points out that they can be based on any mix of both quantitative and qualitative evidence, including solely quantitative.

However, this perspective contrasts with that of Stake (2005: 448) who argues that case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of what is to be studied, whereby case

researchers seek out what is common and what is particular about the case. He points out that:

“Case uniqueness traditionally has not been a choice ingredient of scientific theory. Case study research has been constrained even by qualitative methodologists, who grant less than full regard to study of the particular.” (Stake, 2005: 447)

He asserts that authors, such as Yin, have written about case studies:

“...as if intrinsic study of a particular case were not as important as studies intended to obtain generalisations pertaining to a population of cases.” (Stake, 2005: 448)

With regard to this study, its fundamental aim is about discovery as opposed to testing a theory thus, being more akin to the notion of case study as outlined by Stake.

There are differing perspectives about case study which prompt discussion of the particular case study approach of this study.

### 3.5.1 The case study approach of the study

This section discusses a range of case study types and illustrates the overall case study approach adopted by the study.

Stenhouse (1985) identifies four 'broad styles' of case study, namely: ethnographic, evaluative, educational and case study in action research. The ethnographic case study, Stenhouse explains is:

“... studied in depth by participant observation supported by interview, after the manner of cultural or social anthropology.” (1985: 49)

Ethnography is the organised study of other groups of people and is commonly associated with anthropological studies of other cultures and Spradley, (1979:5) significantly took the ethnographic approach and related it to the study of particular groups within society and describes an ethnographic approach as one which portrays a culture, referring to the term culture as:

“...the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behaviour.”

Ethnography can be a long process, requiring the ethnographer to spend much time with a group of people and entailing him/her to 'live' with the people being studied in order to establish something of importance about a whole human culture.

The principle of this study is to describe the assessment practices of two teachers, to understand and to search for meaning and in this sense, an ethnographic approach to the study is appealing.

However, in Hammersley and Atkinson's (1995:3) terms, ethnography:



“...involves the ethnographer participating...in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions-in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research.”

Ethnography, therefore requires researchers to invest considerable amounts of time in fieldwork (for example, Ball, 1981) and for this study this is somewhat problematic. Given the time constraints, it was decided that time spent in the field would be intermittent over a period of two years. Furthermore, ethnographic studies tend to involve the researcher being immersed in one social setting for an extended period of time (Bryman, 2004) and although Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) describe how it is possible to study a small number of settings, generally speaking, the more settings, the less time can be spent in each. In this study, a decision was made to involve two teachers from two settings (see section 3.5.3).

Therefore, although participant observation was used as a data gathering tool, the study itself was not ethnographic (see section 3.5).

Stenhouse (1985) describes another style as that of ‘evaluative’ case study. Evaluative case studies are, Stenhouse states, those which facilitate ‘educational actors’ or ‘decision makers’ with information that will help them to judge the merit and worth of policies, programmes or institutions. This study is not about evaluating the assessment practices of two teachers with the purpose of making judgements about their practice in terms of ‘worth’ or ‘merit’, rather, it is about gaining an understanding of their practice. One could argue, however that research by its very nature is ‘evaluative’, in that:

“...it would appear to be the systematic gathering, presenting and analysing of data...Research, however complex or formally presented, is part of the process of knowing and understanding.” (Bartlett et al, 1999: 39)

Stenhouse (1985) identifies that case studies can take the form of 'educational' case study. This style, he states, is where researchers are concerned with enriching the thinking and discourse of educators through, for example, the development of educational theory. Again, although the reader will note that this study, in its conclusion, puts forward a case for considering 'Reflective Assessment' (Chapter 5), the development of theory was not the main aim of the study. The study is largely concerned with understanding the practice of two experienced teachers, with a view to gaining an insight into their approaches to formative assessment.

The final style put forward by Stenhouse is that of case study in action research, which is concerned with contributing to the development of cases through feedback. Although aspects of this study involve mutual reciprocity (Lather, 1986) with findings being shared with teachers throughout, the rationale for this was to engage in critical discussion of their practice, rather than to revise and refine their practice during the case study period.

In addition to Stenhouse's perspectives of case study style, Stake (2005) makes a distinction between three types of case study: the intrinsic case study, instrumental case study and collective case study. The intrinsic case study, Stake (2005: 445) asserts, is undertaken in order to gain a better understanding of a particular case, stating:

"It is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but instead because, in all of its particularity *and* ordinariness the case itself is of interest."

An instrumental case, on the other hand, is used to provide an insight into an issue. In this instance the case itself is of secondary interest. Collective case is, Stake (*ibid*) explains, "...instrumental study extended to several cases."

Bassey (1999), on the other hand, identifies the following types of case study: evaluative case studies, theory-seeking and theory-testing case studies and story-telling and picture-drawing case studies.

Evaluative case studies are, Bassey (1999: 63) describes, those which set out to explore some educational programme, system, project or event to focus upon its 'worthwhileness'. They draw on theoretical notions but are not necessarily intended to contribute to theory development unlike those described below.

In theory-seeking and theory-testing case studies, the focus is the issue rather than the case and is aligned with Stake's (2005) notion of the instrumental case study. Bassey (1999) describes how through such case studies one can make 'fuzzy generalisations'. Fuzzy generalisations carry an element of uncertainty, reporting, Bassey (1999: 52) explains, that something has happened in one place and that it may happen elsewhere, there is : "...an invitation to 'try it and see if the same happens to you.'"

Story-telling and picture-drawing case studies are, Bassey (1999) states, analytical accounts of educational events, projects, programmes or systems, the aims of which are to illuminate theory. Both should provide theoretical insights expressed, Bassey states, as a claim to knowledge, although this is more discursive than the fuzzy generalisations of theory-seeking and theory-testing case studies. Story-telling is predominantly a narrative account whilst picture-drawing is predominantly a descriptive account. The principle of this study is to describe the assessment practices of two teachers, to understand and to search for meaning and it is this use of the insight gained from the detailed study and 'picture drawing' which is the intention of this study.

Although the above demonstrates that a picture-drawing case study would best suit the needs of the study, I became increasingly fascinated by the notion of a teacher's biography and therefore feel that it is important, at this stage in the study, to highlight the 'narrative' element of the study.

### **3.5.2 The 'narrative' element of the study**

There are a range of forms of narrative research practices such as, Cresswell (1998) states, biography, autobiography and life history. A biographical study is a form of narrative that focuses on the experiences of another person's life, in which the researcher writes and records these experiences. Ellis (2004) states that autobiography is written and recorded by those who are the subject of the study. Life history research, Cresswell states, depicts an individual's entire life. Autobiography, biography and other forms of life history, each committed to the significance of an individual's experience, have become increasingly popular methods in educational inquiry, indeed Dhunpath (2000: 344) puts forward a very strong case for such approaches, stating, for example:

“...that the life history approach is probably the only authentic means of understanding how motives and practices reflect the intimate intersection of institutional and individual experience in the postmodern world.”

Goodson (1992: 112) has called for:

“...reconceptualising research so as to assure that 'the teacher's voice' is heard, both loudly and articulately.”

And studying teacher's lives is a research mode that above all else, Goodson states, seeks to listen to the teacher's voice. In recent years, as Elbaz (1991: 10) notes:

“...the notion of voice has been central to the development of research on teachers' knowledge and thinking.”

Goodson (1992) argues that data about teachers' lives are important factors for educational studies and he identifies both strategic and substantive reasons for this. From a strategic perspective, Goodson argues that teachers are encouraged to become involved as teacher-researchers as a consequence of their engagement in the research process and, substantively because, in his experience, when involved in discussing aspects such as, for example, curriculum development or school organisation, teachers inevitably draw on their own lives and experiences. This, Goodson states is clear evidence that the teachers themselves perceive such issues to be of significant importance.

The importance of teachers' biographies or professional lives is acknowledged by several educationalists (see, for example, Clandinnin and Connolly, 1996, Goodson, 1992) because as Goodson (1992: 10) states:

“In understanding something so intensely personal as teaching, it is critical that we know about the person the teacher is.”

For the purposes of this study, it was decided to incorporate a specific 'biographical element' into the study in order to gain additional insights regarding the two teachers. It is worth noting that although the narrative research approach was considered appealing in terms of its capacity to explore the life of an individual (Cresswell, 1998), the study was about providing a detailed understanding of formative assessment practices through developing a comprehensive description and analysis of two practitioners, hence the overall approach is that of 'case study' (Cresswell, 1998). Nevertheless, the notion of accessing teachers' voices, of understanding something as personal as their teaching was deemed critical. Therefore, with regard to this study, I decided to incorporate 'biographical interviews' with the case study data.

### 3.5.3 The selection of the cases

As described above, it was deemed that a picture-drawing case study would best describe the approach suited to the needs of the study. The implication, therefore, of such an approach is that cases need to be 'chosen'.

The first decision that had to be made with regard to the study was the number of cases to be involved. Given the time constraints associated with the study (in that I was working for approximately 3 days per week at the time), I had to make practical, as well as theoretical decisions.

The literature surrounding case studies identifies that researchers have the opportunity to conduct single or multiple case studies. In single case studies one case is looked at in depth. In multiple or collective case studies, several cases are considered and they are chosen because:

“...it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, and perhaps better theorising, about a still larger collection of cases.” (Stake, 2005: 446).

Yin (2003) identifies that a common example of multi-case studies is in the field of school innovations.

In considering the number of cases to be studied, it was decided that a multi-case approach would be appropriate. The rationale for this being that, as Yin (2003: 53) states:

“...although all designs can lead to successful studies, when you have the choice (and resources), multiple-case designs may be preferred over single-case designs. Even if you can only do a 'two-case' study, your chances of doing a good study will be better than using a single-case design. Single case

designs are vulnerable if only because you will have put ‘all your eggs in one basket.’ More important, the analytic benefits of having two (or more) cases may be substantial”

Therefore, although it is acknowledged that, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) state, in multi-case settings, less time can be spent in each, it was deemed appropriate to select more than one case, to minimise vulnerability and because multiple case designs are often perceived as more compelling and therefore the overall study regarded as more robust (Yin, 2003).

From a practical perspective, although a decision was made to study more than one case, time was only available to study two cases. The following provides a discussion of the rationale for why the two particular cases were chosen.

As discussed in Chapter 1 two teachers, referred to throughout by the pseudonyms of “Amanda” and “Bethany,” were involved in the study. Approval of the two teachers was granted by the headteachers of their respective schools and by my supervising university tutor, following the submission of an approved research proposal. These teachers were involved in the study for specific reasons.

Firstly, the study was designed to gain a deep understanding of formative assessment. I was interested, therefore, in uncovering the approaches of *experienced* practitioners and working with those who were keen to develop their understanding of formative assessment.

Secondly, I decided to focus specifically on the formative assessment approaches used during the teaching of English within the “literacy hour” (DfEE, 1998). The rationale for

this was to seek to understand the impact of the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE) on teachers' approaches to formative assessment. In addition, by focussing on one particular subject I could manage the study more easily. For example, I could organise visits to schools, in liaison with class teachers effectively as times for teaching English were "set", and I could work with experienced teachers who had similar interests, the intention being that we would all have a shared dialogue, which would aid the research process.

Finally, imperative throughout were relationships between myself and the participants, given the depth of the approach and personal reflections that were required of those involved. I therefore deemed it vital that those involved in the study were keen to be involved and committed to the research process.

Initially, I approached two head teachers known to me professionally, to discuss with them my area of interest. I was then invited to each school to meet with the Key Stage Two (pupils aged 7-11) teaching staff to discuss my proposal. I explained that I was interested in working collaboratively with teachers to develop a greater understanding of formative assessment within the context of literacy and, from a personal perspective, of developing my experiences of working alongside Key Stage Two pupils and practitioners.

In each setting, the experienced Year Six teachers (pupils aged 11) both voiced a particular interest in the study, in terms of working in collaboration with me to develop an understanding of their own practice with regard to formative assessment and in its



development. Therefore, in negotiation with me and with their respective Key Stage Two colleagues, Amanda and Bethany were elected as the main teacher participants.

Amanda has been a qualified teacher for twenty-eight years and throughout this time she has taught in a range of year groups across Key Stages One, Two, and the Foundation Stage. During the study, Amanda was based in Year Six.

The Year Six classroom in which she was based was streamed by ability. Amanda taught the “more able” children for literacy, worked with the “bottom group” for maths, and taught her own year group class in the afternoons. During the biographical interview, Amanda described how she enjoys teaching in this way, working closely with her colleagues to plan lessons. Amanda is passionate about teaching and during the “incident” interview, she explained,

“I don’t think the children always know why they are at school. They come to school because they have to come to school, I think what I’m trying to do is say to them ‘Yes! You’ve achieved that and the reason why, so they know there’s a purpose.’” (Ref. Incident interview with Amanda)

At the time of data collection, Amanda had responsibility for leading literacy across the school, and attended the literacy training that was put into place within the Local Education Authority (LEA) at the outset of the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS). As the leader of literacy, Amanda was responsible for the delivery of the in-house training for the NLS and her role also involved the training of other colleagues, and she visited a number of other schools in the LEA to observe practice and provide feedback to staff.

Bethany has been teaching since 1996. Her teaching has been focused on Key Stage Two, she has held responsibility for leading a Key Stage Two team. At the time of the study, Bethany was based in a Year Six, mixed ability class and worked alongside another Year Six teacher in a semi open-planned environment. Both teachers planned lessons together to ensure continuity within the Year Six age range. Bethany is fervent about involving pupils in their own learning and during the "Assessment" interview she stated:

"Involving pupils in their own learning is something I really value, spelling out what the objectives are and giving them models is perhaps what I do most. I've been thinking about my daily lessons and when I look back, I always tell them what the objectives are...The kids need to know what's going to happen in a lesson, it really focuses them and I find it useful for class management." (Ref. Assessment interview with Bethany)

At the time of the study Bethany was also the literacy co-ordinator. This involved her attending a range of appropriate training sessions within the LEA to impact upon her literacy subject knowledge and working with colleagues to deliver in-house staff training within the school.

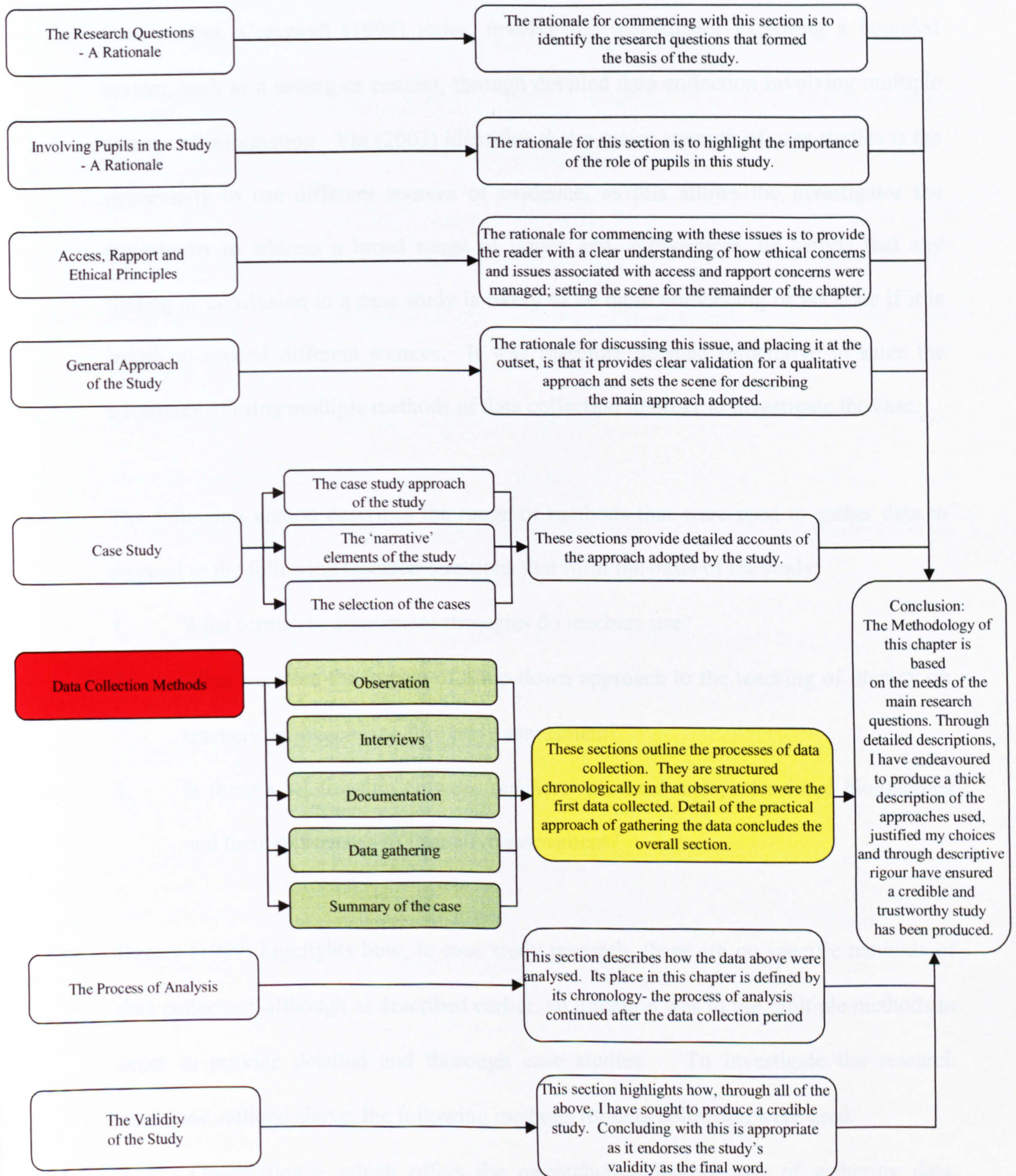
Amanda and Bethany were elected as the main participants because both were experienced Year Six teachers, both were responsible for the management of the teaching of literacy across the school, and both had a personal interest in formative assessment.

"Amanda commented that she was looking forward to the study and keen to get better at formative assessment! This is great as it is a good starting point" (Research diary entry, 27<sup>th</sup> Nov 2000).

"Bethany told me that she was looking forward to the study. She is happy to be observed and said that working with someone else is always useful for her own development" (Research diary entry, 27<sup>th</sup> Nov 2000).

In summary, both Amanda and Bethany were experienced Key Stage two practitioners, experienced teachers of literacy, committed to and enthusiastic about the research process.

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### **3.6 Data Collection Methods**

Case studies, Cresswell (1998) states, involve the investigator exploring a bounded system, such as a setting or context, through detailed data collection involving multiple sources of information. Yin (2003) identifies that a major strength of case studies is the opportunity to use different sources of evidence, as this allows the investigator the opportunity to address a broad range of issues and, furthermore, he asserts that any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be more convincing or accurate if it is based on several different sources. It was therefore deemed imperative to seize the advantage of using multiple methods of data collection in order to investigate the case.

The following section describes the range of methods that were used to gather data to respond to the following research questions that form the basis of the study:

1. What formative assessment strategies do teachers use?
2. What has been the impact of a top-down approach to the teaching of literacy on teachers' approaches to formative assessment?
3. Is there a relationship between teachers' personal and professional biographies and their approaches to formative assessment?

Bassey (1999) highlights how, in case study research, there are no specific methods of data collection, although as described earlier, an intention was to use multiple methods in order to provide detailed and thorough case studies. To investigate the research questions outlined above, the following methods for data collection were used:

- Observation – which offers the researcher a distinct way of gathering data, drawing on: "...explicit evidence through the eyes of the observer". (Moyles, 2007)

- Interviews – which can provide depth of information and insights (Bryman, 2004)
- Documentation – which can be a valuable source of information as there is often an enormous amount of written material available that can be an invaluable research resource (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

In addition to generating a range of data using the three data sources, this strategy served to ensure that I was triangulating my methods. Triangulation is an approach that facilitates as full and balanced a study as possible through allowing the researcher to cross check the existence of certain phenomena. Although triangulation is often associated with quantitative research, qualitative researchers often check out, for example, their observations with interview questions (Bryman, 2004). Triangulation in this study was facilitated by cross checking data from observations with the data gathered from: informal and five formal interviews with individual teachers (Amanda and Bethany); a pair of group interviews with the respective colleagues of Amanda and Bethany; individual interviews with six pupils from each of Amanda and Bethany's class, and a group interview with six pupils from each class. In addition to cross checking data from the observations, such an approach enabled the cross checking of data gathered from the teachers with that of the pupils. By incorporating such an approach to data collection, I endeavoured to ensure that the study was trustworthy, authentic and credible.

The following sub-sections provide a discussion of the data collection methods that are used in the study.

### 3.6.1 Observation

To investigate the case, observation of teaching episodes was crucial. The rationale for this was to gain an understanding of the practice of the two teachers with regard to formative assessment and facilitated the opportunity to begin to 'build' the case. For example, in order to gain a deep understanding of the practice of the two teachers involved in the study, it was essential to gain an initial understanding of their practice in their 'natural settings'. This then allowed for further investigation in later observations and interviews. When deciding on the most suitable role for myself as observer, I considered the following:

- It would be difficult to enter a classroom context in a 'covert' way. The schools in the study are partnership schools with the university, and subsequently I have developed professional relationships with the head teachers and class teachers in the school.
- Both teachers expressed concerns regarding the notion of video-taping lessons and therefore this was not carried out.

The most obvious choice of 'observer role' for this particular study was therefore that of observer as participant (Gold, 1958, cited in Bryman, 2004). The role of the observer is uppermost when the researcher's role is that of observer as participant and members of the group accept that role and Coolican (1994:104) states that:

"If valued, the researcher may be given quite intimate information but will be constrained in reporting it when such information is offered as secret."

This role also has its disadvantages, as the presence of a participant observer must change group behaviour to some degree (Coolican, 1994). However, Kidder (1981) argues that the longer the participant observer spends in the field, where their aims and

purposes are disclosed to group members, the less likely it is that their presence will influence or distort the behaviour of those being observed. This observer role seemed to fit well with the study, as I wanted to ensure that I could liaise with the participants regarding events that occurred in order to gain a deeper understanding of the assessment practices within each setting.

The literature acknowledges two means of gathering data by observation: namely structured and non-structured observations (see, for example, Coolican, 1994).

There are, however, a number of criticisms associated with structured observations. Structured observations are subject to a high degree of control and are frequently pre-specified (Coolican 1994). Delamont and Hamilton (1984, cited in Hammersley, 1986:29) argue that such observations:

“...typically ignore the temporal and spatial context in which the data are gathered...(and) prespecified coding systems are usually concerned with overt, observable behaviour. They do not take into account the differing intentions that may lie behind such behaviour.”

As the study is concerned with gaining rich or ‘thick’ data regarding the assessment practices within two schools, and involves dialogue between myself and the participants, this form of observation did not seem appropriate. Unstructured observations therefore seemed to fit the nature of the study more suitably as its intention was to gather raw and rich data. Robson (2002) does, however, highlight that unstructured observations can be complex, requiring the observer to perform difficult tasks of synthesis, abstraction and organisation of data. Despite this, I remained convinced that this choice was the most appropriate as structured observations could distort or ignore qualitative features through the use of crude measurement techniques (Delamont and Hamilton, 1984).



### 3.6.2 Interviews

A decision was made to conduct interviews in order to gather information and gain insights into the practice of Amanda and Bethany. The following explains how the interviews were structured to facilitate the ‘building’ of the case.

Interviews were conducted with a range of participants: Amanda and Bethany, the two key teachers, were interviewed on several occasions in order to gain a deep understanding of their practice with regard to formative assessment; colleagues of Amanda and Bethany were also interviewed, as were pupils from each class

#### *Interviews with the Teachers*

The interviews with Amanda and Bethany took two forms. To gain insights into the teachers’ practice, informal interviews were conducted following observations in order to add further detail and to clarify anything that had happened during the lessons. More ‘formal’ interviews were then held to gain a deeper understanding of the practice of Amanda and Bethany. These interviews were designed to provide a scaffold for the case and it was decided that the most appropriate type, for the purposes of the study, would be unstructured (Coolican, 1994). The rationale for this is that in such situations, the researcher’s role is unobtrusive, and they allow the interviewee to use their own words and develop their own thoughts, as Fontana and Frey (2003: 74-75) state:

“(Structured interviewing) aims at capturing precise data of a codable nature in order to explain behaviour within preestablished categories, whereas the latter (unstructured interviewing) attempts to understand the complex behaviour of members of society without imposing any priori categorisation that may limit the field of inquiry.”

Given that un-structured interviews were deemed a suitable way of gathering data for the study, I turned to Spradley’s (1979) work on ethnographic interviews as a means of

identifying important elements of the interviews. Although not an ethnographic study, the study has adopted ethnographic elements and it was therefore deemed useful to consider how best to conduct the interviews to ensure rich data were gathered. Spradley describes the ethnographic interview as a series of friendly conversations into which the researcher slowly introduces ethnographic elements. Spradley identifies three key elements:

- explicit purpose
- ethnographic explanations
- ethnographic questions.

### **Explicit purpose**

When the researcher and informant meet together, it is evident that the interview is heading in a particular direction. Each time they meet, it is necessary to remind the informant of the direction of the interview. The role of the researcher in such interviews is to take a lead and facilitate opportunities to discover the cultural knowledge of the informant. In the context of the study, my role was overt and therefore the purpose of the interviews was known. However, I felt that Spradley's advice needed to be heeded and I decided to give each interview a 'title' to highlight its explicit purpose (see section 3.6.4).

### **Ethnographic explanations**

Throughout the series of interviews it is necessary for the researcher to repeatedly offer explanations. Throughout the study, explanations were offered regarding the purpose of the interviews, the purpose of some of the questions and the purpose of some of the participatory activities (see section 3.6.4).

## **Ethnographic questions**

Ethnographers do not usually decide beforehand the exact questions they want to ask, the sequence in which topics will be covered or restrict themselves to a single type of questioning. In these senses, ethnographic interviews are similar to friendly conversations. However, it was important to remember that despite the apparent 'feel' of a friendly conversation, the ethnographic interviews were being used to elicit information from Amanda and Bethany (Hammersley, 1995).

I also decided to conduct an interview with the teachers based on Kelly's (1955, cited in Stewart, 1997) construct elicitation exercise to contribute to the validity of the findings and to gain a deeper insight into the relationship between teachers' thinking and their practice in terms of formative assessment.

Kelly, the original proponent of personal construct theory, devised a means of an interviewer gaining a mental map of how interviewees view their world. Stewart explains how this can be conducted. In the exercise, the interviewer takes three cards and writes a word on each card. The interviewee is then asked to do the following:

- Think of ways in which two of the words are like each other and different from the third.
- Think of something that two of them have in common where the third is different.

The interviewee produces as many bi-polar distinctions as possible. This process is known, Stewart states, as construct elicitation and she highlights one of its main strengths as being its lack of observer bias, because the interviewer plays no part in suggesting the actual nature of the constructs, as they are a very personal reflection of

how the interviewee sees their world. In the context of the study, this activity seemed highly appealing, both in terms of responding to the main research questions, and particularly in supporting the validity of the study (see section 3.8). I therefore elected to conduct a construct elicitation exercise with both teachers, to gain a deeper insight into their thinking about teaching and learning and to draw links with the formative assessment strategies that they use.

A final interview with teachers was also organised. The nature of this was a group interview at each school, involving members of teaching staff. The manner of the group interview was very much associated with that of 'focus group' interviewing. Bryman (2004) states that a focus group interview involves several participants, has an emphasis on the questioning of a particular topic, is based upon interaction within a group and the joint construction of meaning. Bryman points out that focus groups have considerable potential for research questions in which the processes through which meaning is constructed is likely to be of interest, and therefore such an interview was deemed appealing for this study. However, Nutbrown (1999, in Clough and Nutbrown 2002) highlights that authors such as Vaughn, Schumm and Sunagub (1996), proponents of the focus group interview, offer rigid rules for a 'moderator' and stringent guidelines on data analysis and Nutbrown therefore proposes the notion instead of the 'focused conversation'. In Nutbrown's conception of focused conversation, the researcher actively participates. Nutbrown acknowledges that others may perceive this as a 'muddying' of the data, however she asserts that the role of the researcher in such a context is legitimate and turns to the work of Stanley and Wise (1993: 161) to support this conviction. Stanley and Wise state that:

"Our experiences suggest that 'hygienic research' is a reconstructed logic... It is also extremely misleading, in that it emphasises the 'objective' presence

of the researchers, and suggests that she can be 'there' without having any greater involvement than simple presence. In contrast...the basis of all research is a relationship, this necessarily involves the presence of the researcher *as a person.*"

Nutbrown describes how although there are similarities between focus group interviews and focused conversation such as, for example, the principle is that of an informal group discussion, focused on a specific topic, that the focused conversation is more aligned to oral/life history research. Focused conversations, Nutbrown (1999, in Clough and Nutbrown 2002: 77) states, allow the researcher to focus not only the stories and experiences of practitioners' work with children, but also in the way that their: "...collective experiences fit together" and, Nutbrown continues:

"The richness of the process lies in the openness of those participants and their willingness to allow their ideas to be shaped by those of others, and to examine their own experiences in the light of what they hear others say."

Like Nutbrown, the rationale for conducting such a focused conversation in this study was to facilitate the opportunity of:

"Combining the richness of detail and experience which could be obtained from long interviews with shared consensus and meaning-making which involved all participants." (Nutbrown 1999, in Clough and Nutbrown, 2002: 77)

Such an approach was attractive and was an important element of the study's triangulation, contributing to the validity of the study (see section 3.8). In addition, the group activity allowed me the opportunity to explore implications of the findings and, by engaging in a group activity and sharing data, I was 'giving something back'. The teachers had 'done me a favour' by allowing me to work alongside them, and this needed to be reciprocated. Finally, as Lewin (1946) states, the task is not over when the research ends, and I personally believe that it is good practice to share findings with colleagues.

### *Interviews with the Pupils*

In many ways research with children is not very different from research with adults; however, there are a number of issues. Brown (2001: 2) for example, encountered:

“...reluctance among teachers to use evidence from pupil consultation to make changes to their classroom practice (and found that) some pupils lack skills for expressing their opinions.”

This highlights that when children are consulted, what they say needs to be heard and acted upon, otherwise it is merely ‘tokenistic’, placing their contributions as secondary to adults’. Morrow and Richards (1996:98, cited in Thomas and O’Kane, 1998:337) contend that:

“The biggest ethical challenge for researchers is the disparities in power and status between adults and children.”

A task of the researcher, therefore, is to redress such an imbalance. The following therefore provides a discussion of the general approach used to redress the imbalance as outlined by Morrow and Richards (1996).

Mauthner (1997) suggests that a child-centred approach to data collection, that views the children as subjects rather than objects of research, is a suitable means of tackling the issue and in seeking to adopt a child-centred approach, the work of Christensen and James (2000) was considered. Christensen and James highlight the importance of context when interviewing children, and suggest that ‘aids to memory’ are useful and they also discuss the use of participatory techniques to enable children to talk about issues that affect them. Participatory techniques are thought to be less invasive and more transparent and children consider them to be innovative and fun. In addition, Christensen and James conclude that such techniques can assist in transforming the

power relationships between adults and children, allowing the children to set the agenda and describe their own reality (see section 3.6.4).

For the purpose of the study, I therefore chose to conduct pupil interviews that used ‘aids to memory’ and participatory techniques, as these less intrusive methods would encourage pupils to feel comfortable and therefore generate much data.

### **Organising the interviews**

It was decided that opportunities to talk with the class teachers would take place after observations in an ‘informal’ way. The purpose of these informal meetings was to allow me to ask questions and/or clarify any specific events or points that may occur throughout a lesson. The nature of these informal interviews varied as they took place in response to something that occurred within a lesson. Nevertheless, my aim was to ensure that data gathered were rich and interviewees felt relaxed and at ease. In terms of the main interviews I felt that it was appropriate to arrange specific interview times and settings with both the teachers and the pupils. The purpose of this was that the interviews could be lengthy, and therefore negotiating availability for interviews was necessarily crucial. Additionally, the setting of the interviews needed to be such that they could take place undisturbed. Given that schools and classrooms are exceptionally busy places, negotiating an area and time for interviews was not only courteous but also essential.

The focused conversations (Nutbrown, 1999) with the teachers were held at the end of a school day to ensure that all of the teachers involved could attend. It had been negotiated with Amanda and Bethany and their headteachers that these meetings would take place

during a regularly held Year Group Meeting. In each setting such meetings were held termly, as a means of providing an opportunity to discuss the progress of pupils in each particular Year Group. Therefore, members of staff who had responsibility for working with each Year Six class were invited to attend. Two colleagues of Amanda's and three colleagues of Bethany's were present at the respective meetings.

The individual and group pupil interviews at both schools were conducted during the early morning and mid-afternoon registration periods and during the afternoon singing practice. These took place in safe environments within each school.

### **3.6.3 Documentation**

As discussed earlier, a main advantage associated with the case study approach is the opportunity to use multiple sources of data collection. As has been described, observations were used to gain a picture of the two teachers' practice with regard to formative assessment and these were supplemented with a range of interviews in order to build the case. In addition to these two key data sources, documentary sources were used to gain further insights into the teachers' practice. Sources for the study therefore included such documents as the long, medium and short term planning formats, samples of pupils' work, assessment policies and OFSTED reports. The purpose of drawing on such documentation is contextual and provides the researcher with, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:173) state, a:

“...rich vein of analytical topics as well as a valuable source of information. Such topics include: How are documents written? How are they read? Who writes them? Who reads them? For what purposes? On what occasions? With what outcomes? What is recorded? What is omitted? What does the writer seem to take for granted about the reader(s)? What do readers need to know in order to make sense of them?”



In addition, the research diary that I maintained could be described as a documentary source. It was put into place at the outset of the study, for the purpose of answering the research questions and to contribute to the validity of the study (see section 3.8).

### **3.6.4 Data gathering**

This section provides the reader with detail regarding the data gathering processes of observation and interview.

Throughout the study, I observed both teachers, referred to in this study as Amanda and Bethany, delivering a total of 24 Literacy Lessons. The observations were designed to draw out the formative assessment strategies that the teachers were using during their day-to-day teaching.

The timing of observations was paramount and was negotiated with both teachers. Following discussions with the teachers, it was agreed that the Spring Term would be the most suitable time. This was agreed due to the following:

- By observing in the middle term, both teachers felt that they would have a 'clearer picture' of the pupils within their respective classes and teacher-pupil relationships would be established.
- Time would be available in the Summer Term to follow-up observations with interviews with teachers and pupils.
- The Spring Term was described by both teachers as being most suitable because of the 'lack of disruption'. The Autumn Term included the Christmas Festivities and performances in both schools and the Summer Term included SATs delivery and preparation in Year Six, together with the end of year performances.

- I was able to enter both schools during the Autumn Term, as a ‘non-observer’, to work alongside the teachers and therefore develop relationships with both teachers and pupils alike.

I observed the teachers on a weekly basis, and again timing was an issue that needed to be negotiated. I was based in Alpha Primary School on Thursdays and in Beta Primary School on Fridays.

At the outset of the study, I decided that the most suitable research role would be that of observer as participant. As described earlier (see section 3.6.1), the role of the observer, in this context, is uppermost and members of the group accept that role. Given this, I observed whole literacy lessons in each class and to carry out the observations I sat amongst the class. It is worth noting here that I did consider video taping the lessons, however, both teachers were vehemently opposed to this and given that a key feature of the study was its reciprocal nature, I re-considered this. I had originally decided that an unstructured approach to observations seemed the most appropriate means of gathering data (see section 3.6.1). I had been fairly confident with this choice of technique and following the first observations, recorded events in a narrative way. These observations, I felt, lacked detail and I became concerned that I was missing opportunities by not taking some notes of key events during the lesson. I was also concerned that my observation notes tended to lack focus and that I was being selective in my recordings. I noted these concerns in my research diary:

“This week’s observations seemed to lack detail. I must make sure that I write them up very carefully and not fall in to the trap of leaving too much time between doing the observations and writing them up. Next week, make sure to keep a focus, I feel that I ‘drifted’ a bit. Need to consider ‘structure’?” (Research diary entry, 12th Jan, 2001)

The purpose of carrying out the observations in a non-structured way was designed to 'minimise' disruption; however, following the second observation, although I felt that I had made more detailed observational notes, I remained concerned about the focus. Crabtree and Miller (1999) describe how, although most field notes during participant observation are written outside the field, it is possible for the researcher to carry out 'jottings'. Jottings, Crabtree and Miller state, are an accurate description of what the researcher is able to do in the field, whereby the researcher is able to jot down phrases or words that serve as a trigger later when writing more expanded field notes. Given this, I therefore liaised with the teachers about the possibility of note-taking during sessions, and both teachers were comfortable with this. During observations, I made brief notes of 'key events' in relation to formative assessment and added detail to the notes following the lessons.

I had originally decided to observe the whole literacy lesson; however, as the study progressed, this became increasingly difficult. As mentioned earlier (see section 2.2.3), the literacy hour is organised into key sections:

- Whole class work
- Group work
- Plenary (with whole class).

The whole class work comprises half an hour with group work occurring for twenty minutes and the plenary lasting ten minutes. My first observations focused largely on the whole class activities (including the plenary). This resulted as a consequence of two events that I lodged in my research diary:

“My notes focused largely on whole class aspects-it was very intrusive trying to observe the class teacher teaching small groups of children and both of us clearly felt uncomfortable.

I feel that when I’m observing the teacher during group work I’m missing out on what children are doing independently.” (Research diary entry, 12th Jan 2001)

As stated earlier, the study was designed to minimise intrusion, and in light of the above notes, I decided to keep my research role during the whole class aspects of the lesson as observer as participant, but implemented a subtle change to my role during group work. During group work periods, my research role shifted to that of participant as observer (Gold, 1958). Therefore, during group work activities, I participated alongside the teacher and pupils and took on the role of ‘classroom assistant’. This allowed me to participate in activities and note down key events at the end of the lesson.

### **Interviews with teachers**

The interviews with the teachers took three forms:

1. Informal interviews following each lesson
2. Formal interviews:
  - Interview 1, the ‘Preparatory Interview’ was designed to discuss specific logistics regarding the study and to select pupils for the pupil interviews and group activities.
  - Interview 2, the ‘Incident Interview’ was designed to discuss specific formative assessment strategies that had occurred during lessons.
  - Interview 3, the ‘Assessment Interview’ was designed to discuss teachers’ views and understanding of formative assessment.
  - Interview 4, the ‘Biographical Interview’ was designed to discuss teachers’ biographies.

- Interview 5, the 'Participatory Interview' was designed to engage teachers in a practical activity to discuss formative assessment.

### 3. Focused Conversations

The interviews with the teachers were designed to draw out the formative assessment strategies that they were using and to gain further insights into their practice.

The nature of the informal interviews was unstructured and took the form of a conversation following the lessons. Notes from these interviews was written alongside observational recordings, and served to add further detail to observations and clarify anything that had happened during the lessons.

The first formal interview was not recorded as this was designed merely to gain an overview of the management of the study. However, during this interview, with the agreement of the teachers, I took notes. However, for the remaining formal interviews (2-5), I used a dicta-phone, again after having agreed this with the teachers, and audio-taped the session.

For the formal interviews (Interviews 2-5), I had originally decided that the most appropriate type, for the purposes of the study, would be unstructured (Coolican, 1994). However, I began to feel that such a dialogue would lack focus and despite being aware that less structured interviews can provide rich data, I had to take the pragmatic view that I had limited time in which to conduct the interviews. Furthermore, as this issue had arisen with my observation techniques, I decided to re-evaluate this:

“Am a little concerned that an unstructured interview won't work for me-I think I need more structure to feel more confident, especially after the

observations and problems with an unstructured technique here.” (Research diary entry, 21st Jan 2001)

I therefore used my research diary as a ‘sounding board’ and jotted down some possible questions that could be used during the interviews. However, as I was doing this activity, I began to be concerned that structured questions would be too restrictive:

“This is too much!! These questions are too tight. This means I can’t discuss observations. Need to think about best way of managing this-I want some structure-for me-but want it fairly open.” (Research diary entry, 10th Feb, 2001)

Following these, I returned to the literature, and decided to adopt an approach to interviewing that was ‘informal but guided’ (Coolican, 1994). In light of this, I provided myself with a list of prompts for the interviews (Appendix F). During the incident interviews, these prompts were useful; however, I did allow the interviews to ‘stray’ a little at times and reflected on this in my research diary:

“The prompts were useful, but sometimes Amanda and Bethany went ‘off the point’. Must use prompts more effectively next time.” (Research diary entry, 16th Feb, 2001)

Prior to conducting the Assessment Interviews with Amanda and Bethany, I noted in my research diary the potential for the use of questionnaires, that had been used in a previous study regarding teachers’ perceptions about assessment (Neesom, 2000, on behalf of QCA), as prompts for the interviews:

“Will use QCA questionnaires with my teachers-may be useful as a means of contextualising my study-don’t feel it is appropriate to use as a questionnaire per se, but could give this to them to look at before interview?” (Research diary entry, 20th May 2001)

The participatory interview with the individual teachers was designed to elicit their ideas and beliefs about teaching, learning and to draw links with their formative assessment strategies. Furthermore, its purpose was to contribute to the validity of the study (see

section 3.7). The two teachers were presented with a selection of cards and asked to perform a construct elicitation exercise as described earlier (3.5.5). The activity was conducted in two parts. The first aspect was an exercise to elicit teacher's learning views and provide data in relation to the second research question, and they were each presented with visual images of different learning contexts (Appendix G). The second activity was also designed to feed into the second research question, and was concerned with the teacher's perceptions of assessment for learning. This activity was conducted using a range of formative assessment statements (Appendix G). The statements were chosen on the basis that they were examples of that which had occurred during the observations. I found this interview very easy to conduct, and the teachers both commented how they had enjoyed the activity. However, I did find it very difficult to prepare for this activity, and selecting statements and visual cues to meet the needs of the activities was extremely challenging.

The focused conversations were designed to contribute to the validity of the study and to elicit information from the teachers and their colleagues regarding its implications. The format of these interviews was such that the all of the teachers were presented firstly with an overview of the case study descriptions, to ensure that a true representation of the case study teachers and pupils had been made. Secondly, the teachers were presented with an overview of the main findings of the study, and asked to discuss what they perceived their implications would be (Appendix H).

### **Interviews with pupils**

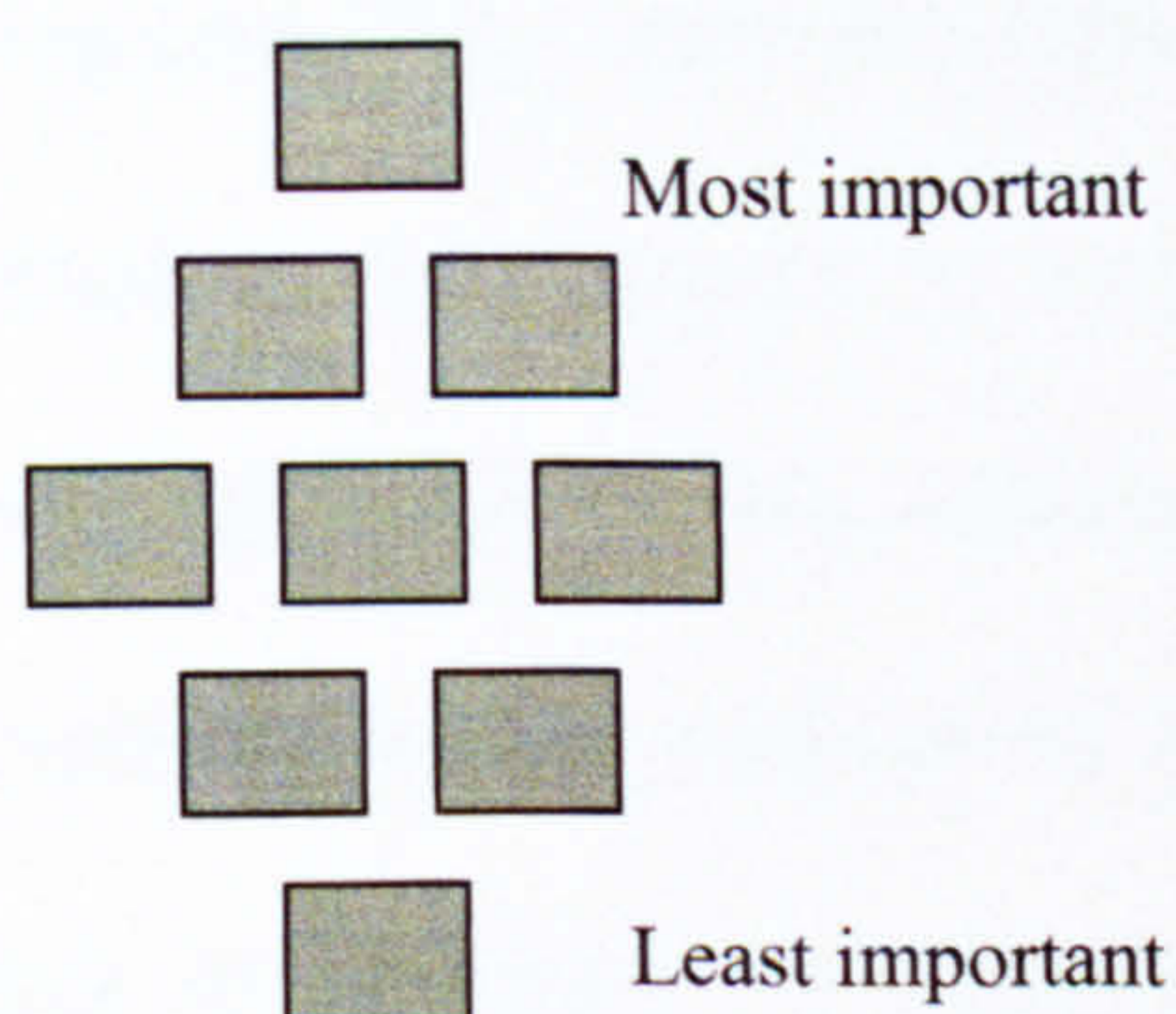
The interviews with the pupils took two forms:

1. Group interviews with six pupils from Amanda and Bethany's respective classes

## 2. Individual interviews with six pupils from each class

The interviews with pupils were designed to draw out their perceptions of assessment practices, both in terms of what the teacher does during whole class sessions, group sessions and with them as individuals and to cross check data from the participant observations and teacher interviews.

The purpose of the group interview was primarily to gain an insight into the pupils' perceptions of the formative assessment strategies employed by the teachers, as informed by the observations. For the purpose of the group interview, I drew on the work of Christensen and James (2000) and devised a diamond ranking activity, whereby the children were involved in deciding which, of a series of nine statements were the most or least important, and organise the statements as follows:



Prior to commencing the activity, I explained to the children that they would be placing some key phrases in rank order (Appendix I) and that I was interested in what they had to say about them.



The purpose of the individual interviews was to allow the children to discuss their teacher's practice with regard to them personally. In order to conduct these interviews, I felt that it was highly important that they were kept as comfortable as possible. Therefore, using the interviews with the teachers as a model, and referring to the work of Christensen and James (2000), I used prompts with children to 'aid their memory' (Appendix E). For the individual interviews, I asked the children to bring a recently completed and marked piece of work. The purpose of asking the pupils to bring a sample of work to the session was to provide them with a context in which to discuss assessment. The children involved in these interviews were the same as those involved in the group interviews.

### **3.6.5 Summary of 'the case'**

Prior to moving to discuss the process of analysis, the following provides the reader with a summary of 'the case'. As highlighted in section 3.4.1, this study adopted a picture-drawing case study approach (Bassegy, 1999) in order to gain insights into the practice of two teachers with regard to formative assessment. Picture drawing case studies are predominantly descriptive accounts which, Bassegy explains, draw together the results of the exploration and analysis of the case. The reader will note that in Chapter 4, the findings are presented in a descriptive manner and exploration and analysis are brought together using the Reflective Assessment Model as a framework for organisation (see chapters 4 and 5 and figure 5.1).

Bassegy (1999) presents a definition of case study which will be used here to scaffold the summary of the decisions made regarding the case and its investigation. The rationale for this is to illuminate how this picture drawing case study was 'built'.

A case study approach was chosen for its appropriateness in exploring the complexity of a chosen phenomenon, in this instance, that of formative assessment, within its natural context (Bassegy, 1999). Bassegy (1999) states that a case study is an empirical enquiry which is conducted within a localised boundary of space and time. With regard to the 'space' boundary, two teachers from two different primary schools were chosen, together with pupils from their respective classes, to participate in this study. The teachers and pupils were chosen because of their range of characteristics and because both teachers were keen to be involved in the study (see sections 3.5.3 and 4.1). An aim of the study was that it should be multiple-case by design (see section 3.5.1), however, given time demands, the maximum number that could be included in the study was two. The time boundary of the case was two years; from Autumn 2000, with observational data gathered during Spring 2001 and final interviews with the teachers and their colleagues taking place in the Summer term of 2002.

Bassegy (1999) states that case studies should be 'interesting'. It was a concern of this study that the areas under scrutiny should be of interest to the researcher, the researched and, hopefully, to others interested in formative assessment. Therefore, this study is grounded in consideration of formative assessment during the literacy hour and the individual and personal nature of teaching. The area of formative assessment at the outset of this study, was, arguably, one of interest to teachers, researchers and policy makers alike, and was attributed in large to the seminal work of Black and Wiliam (1998a) (See for example, Earl, 2003). Following the review of research regarding formative assessment, a gap in current knowledge was identified that formed the basis of this study, this therefore comprises the 'interesting' aspect of Bassegy's (1999) conceptualisation of case study, in that this gap can be identified as a lack of empirical

knowledge about the link between the nature of primary teaching and formative assessment.

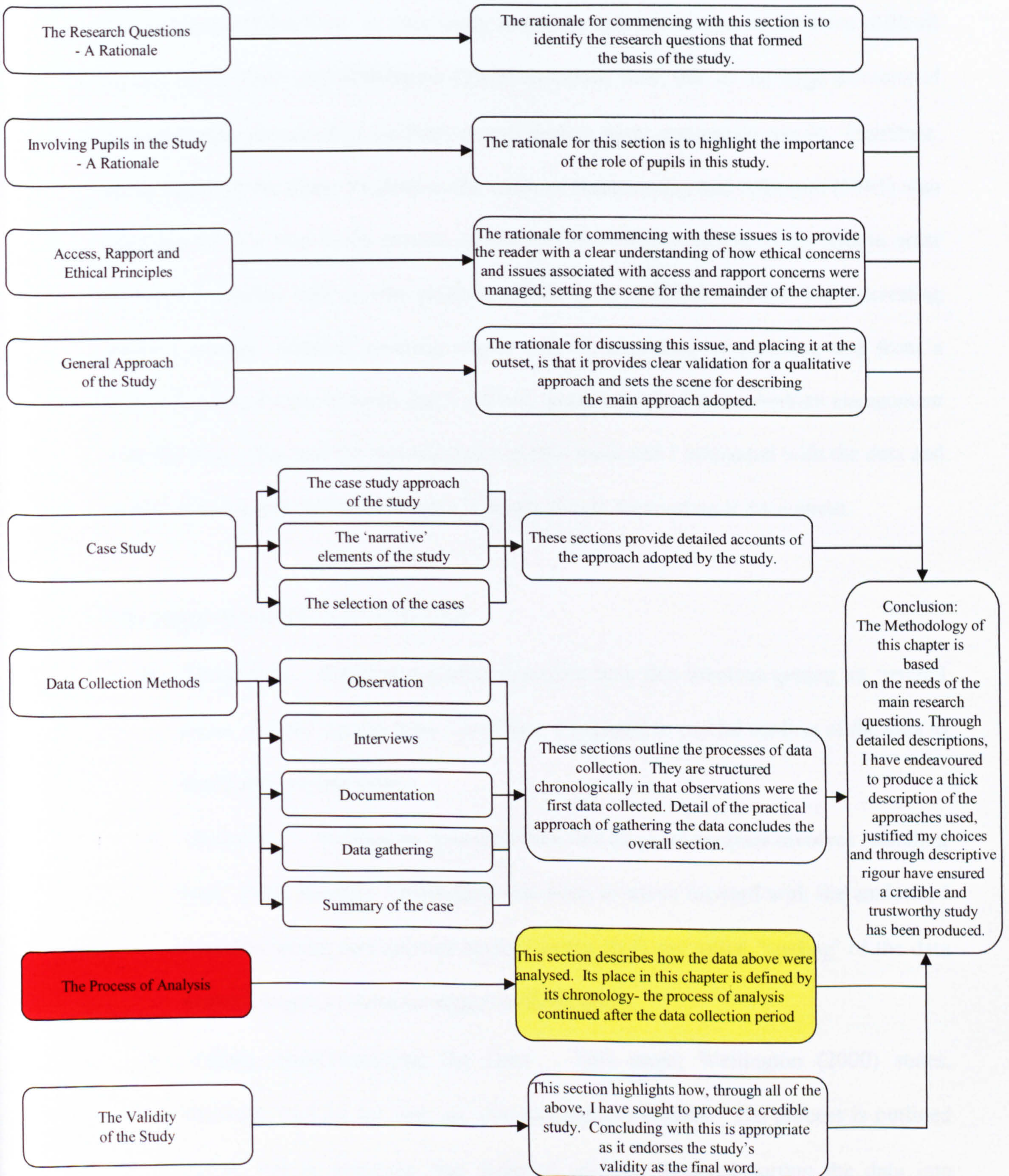
Bassey (1999) proposes that case study should be conducted in its natural context, with an ethic of respect for persons. The aim of the study was to gain an understanding of teachers' practice within their natural settings given that, as Bassey states:

“It seems unlikely that educational actions, or the consequences of educational decisions, can be studied trustworthily other than in their natural context.” (1999: 60)

Immersion in the field was therefore paramount, such that participant observations could be conducted and relationships could be forged, the intention being that, as Kidder (1981) states, the longer the participant observer is in the field, then the less likely it is that their presence will effect the behaviour of those being observed.

Therefore, in summary, this picture-drawing case study incorporates the following elements: a multiple case study involving two key informants, recognised throughout as 'Amanda and Bethany'; the gathering and analysis of data from multiple sources over a two-year period in order to build the case; the researcher maintaining a research diary to monitor self-awareness and ensure critical distance was maintained; the establishment of effective relationships with informants through immersion in the study and with consideration given to ethical principles and respect for those involved in the study.

# The Methodology



Legend: ■ Main Sections ■ Sub-Sections ■ Rationale for Organisation

### 3.7 The Process of Analysis

Yin (2003) identifies how, in case study research, analysis is one of the most difficult aspects of the study and Wellington (2000) describes how, due to the large amounts of data frequently generated by qualitative case studies, panic commonly sets in. Therefore, at the outset of the study, I turned to the work of Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) who state that the first step in the process of analysis is a careful reading of the data in order to become familiar with it. The purpose of this is to establish whether any interesting patterns emerge, whether anything stands out, is surprising or puzzling and from a practical point of view ensured that I did not 'panic' as I had an immediate engagement with the data. This was the starting point of this study and I interacted with the data and as Hammersley and Atkinson suggest, I progressively focused on it throughout.

The stages of analysis were as follows:

- 'Immersion'. Wellington (2000) describes how this involves getting an 'overall sense' or 'feel' for the data. Therefore, I engaged in careful reading of the data to familiarise myself with it.
- 'Reflecting'. Wellington describes how this stage of analysis involves 'standing back' from the data. Although I was keen to move forward with the analysis, I took this advice and allowed several weeks from my initial 'reading' of the data before I began to move to stage 3 in the process.
- 'Taking Apart/Analysing the Data'. This stage, Wellington (2000) states, involves 'carving the data up' into manageable chunks. The process is outlined below, but in principle, this stage of analysis involved sorting the data into 'gross' themes (Atkins, 1984).

- ‘Recombining/Synthesising the Data’. Wellington outlines how this stage of analysis is the phase of looking for themes, paradoxes and irregularities. This aspect relates to Glaser and Strauss’ notion of grounded theory (1967, in Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) and the practice that was adopted is outlined later in this section.

Having carefully read the data, it became clear that in order to scrutinise for themes and trends, I needed to apply some ‘structure’ to the data as, much like Nias’ (1989) study of teachers’ practice, the research process had generated a large amount of data and I wanted to ensure that, as Yin (2003) states, I had attended to all the evidence. From a practical perspective, I therefore printed all of the evidence from interviews, observations and documentation onto a particular colour of paper. This activity served the purpose of providing a visual cue for suggesting themes by the ‘weight of evidence’ (Nias, 1989). For example, this task served to provide the emergence of nested feedback types in oral and written feedback types. The ‘weight’ of the observational data, for example, indicated that the two teachers involved in the study used a range of analytical feedback strategies in oral feedback, although this evidence was, by its ‘weight’, limited in documentary data (see sections 4.2 and 4.3).

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) describe how the initial task in analysing qualitative data is to find some concepts that help us to make sense of what is going on, with the aim being to make the data intelligible in an analytical way.

To initiate the data analysis, it was essential to consider the research questions that formed the basis of the study:

1. What formative assessment strategies do teachers use?
2. What has been the impact of the 'top-down' approach to the teaching of literacy on teachers' approaches to formative assessment?
3. Is there a relationship between teachers' personal and professional biographies and their approaches to formative assessment?

And in addition, I drew on the initial conceptual framework of the study (figure 2.8) that was introduced in Chapter 2 and is re-presented below. The rationale for this was to ensure that, as Yin (2003) states, the analysis addressed the most significant aspects of the study.

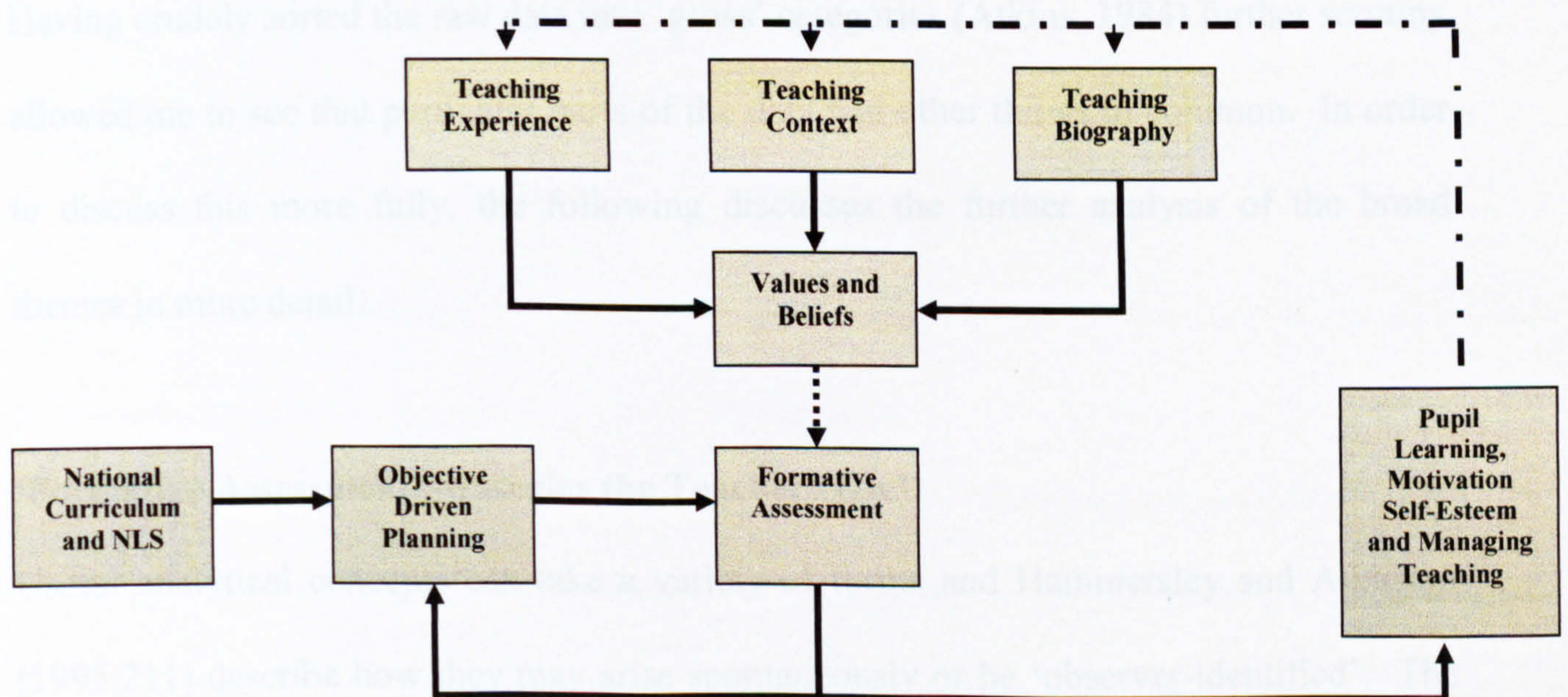


Figure 2.8 The Conceptual Framework of the Study

Yin (2003) describes how he has known case study data to be put aside for long periods of time because of 'not knowing what to do with the evidence' and I was resolute that

this would not occur during this study. Therefore, using the research questions and the conceptual framework as a starting point, data were initially categorised very broadly into three main themes: 'Formative Assessment Strategies the Teachers Use'; 'Why Teachers Use Particular Strategies' and 'Influencing Factors.' In practice, this process occurred by data being cut and pasted onto A3 sheets of paper. With regard to the category entitled 'Formative Assessment Strategies Used' it became evident the data were drawn from a broad range of the strategies used for data gathering, namely: the lesson observations, samples of pupils' written work and interviews with both pupils and teachers. Evidence relating to the second broad theme was drawn largely from teacher interviews and observations and data relating to the third broad theme emerged largely from scrutiny of planning and teacher interviews.

Having crudely sorted the raw data into 'gross' categories (Atkins, 1984) further scrutiny allowed me to see that particular parts of the data had other things in common. In order to discuss this more fully, the following discusses the further analysis of the broad themes in more detail.

### **'Formative Assessment Strategies the Teachers Use'**

Useful analytical concepts can take a variety of forms and Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:211) describe how they may arise spontaneously or be 'observer-identified'. The formulation of observer-identified categories can draw on general, common-sense knowledge, personal experience or be generated by: "...borrowing or adapting existing concepts from the literature."



Borrowing existing concepts from the literature for the purpose of analysis served two functions. Firstly, using Tunstall and Gipps' (1996) categories of 'descriptive' and 'evaluative' feedback to sort the data served as a starting point for considering themes and trends with regard to the formative assessment strategies employed by the teachers, and ensured that the investigation was not stalled at the analysis stage (Yin, 2003). Therefore, from a pragmatic perspective, 'thinking about rival explanations' (Yin, 2003: 137) facilitated immediate engagement with the data and more fundamentally, ensured that I began to 'think' with the data. As a consequence of this, and in attempting to rigorously adopt Tunstall and Gipps' typology, it became evident that the data related to formative assessment were not falling neatly into the ascribed categories. In discussion with independent judges (Atkins, 1984) it was agreed that the following categories be used to describe the formative interactions between teachers and pupils, and pupils and pupils:

- Phatic Feedback (Alexander, 2000)
- Evaluative Feedback
- Analytical Feedback.

Using the above categories proved illuminative, and as a consequence of further scrutiny and engagement with the literature, further sub-categories arose. With regard to phatic feedback, it became clear that this occurred in oral and written interactions and the reader will find further discussion of this phenomenon in section 4.3. Analysis of the evaluative feedback resulted in observer-identified categories. These are identified as 'reference to learning objectives' and 'reference to hidden objectives'. The category of analytical feedback proved more complex with a more diverse range of categories. Again these

were observer identified, although informed by the work of Tunstall and Gipps (1996).

The sub-categories are identified as:

- Making connections to prior learning
- Making specific reference to learning objectives
- Modelling using teacher's examples
- Modelling using children's work
- Pupils engaging in self evaluation
- Follow-up response
- Target setting

To illustrate the process of analysis, I have included an example of part of a colour-coded lesson observation below and the complete lesson can be found in the appendices (Appendix J). This demonstrates that I used a colour coding technique to identify the main assessment feedback types used by teachers in their daily lessons. Green indicates feedback types that are analytical in nature; lemon indicates those that are evaluative and blue highlights merely phatic feedback (see section 4.3) and sub-categories can be recognised as comments to the right of the text.

A boy explained that it had been about a trip to the fair and that people had been disappointed:, "people were disappointed with their trip to the fair." **(USING CHILDREN'S EXAMPLES)**

The teacher encouraged further detail with a leading sentence..."Yes. So the letter was to..."and a different boy explained that it had been to 'complain' **(TAKING A STATEMENT FURTHER)**

The teacher smiled and praised. Well done! **(ORAL)**

She then explained that the LO of today's lesson was to write a letter using formal language by asking children. The LO was written on the whiteboard and Bethany read it out. She asked the children a question: **(MAKING REFERENCE TO LO)**

In practice, the above process was conducted using highlighter pens and each statement was annotated on the back. Statements were then collected and sorted into labelled envelopes. This process involved working on the data and using the constant comparative method as identified by Glaser and Strauss (1967, cited in Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). This procedure involved close examination of the data in terms of a particular category and I noted similarities and differences to other data.

The process of analysis employed by this study involved what Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:206) describe as progressive funnelling. Progressive focussing, in the analysis of data in this study, involved a gradual shift from concern with describing the day-to-day formative assessment strategies employed by two teachers to the development of possible explanations about why teachers use particular strategies. These are discussed in greater depth as the findings of the study are explored (see Chapter 5).

### **‘Why Teachers Use Particular Strategies’**

The basic analytical strategy adopted for the analysis of data related to understanding why the two teachers used particular strategies, was to follow the theoretical underpinnings of the study. The reader will recall that in Chapter 2, the notion of formative assessment was explored in depth and Black and Wiliam (1998a), for example, claim that successful learning occurs when learners are motivated, when they have ownership of their learning and when feedback is used to modify teaching and learning activities. Thus, the categories which were used as a means of organising the data with regard to establishing why teachers use particular strategies were:

- Motivate pupils

- Promote independence
- Improve pupils' learning
- Manage teaching.

What is of interest with regard to the above is that all data related to this particular aspect fit into one of the above ascribed categories.

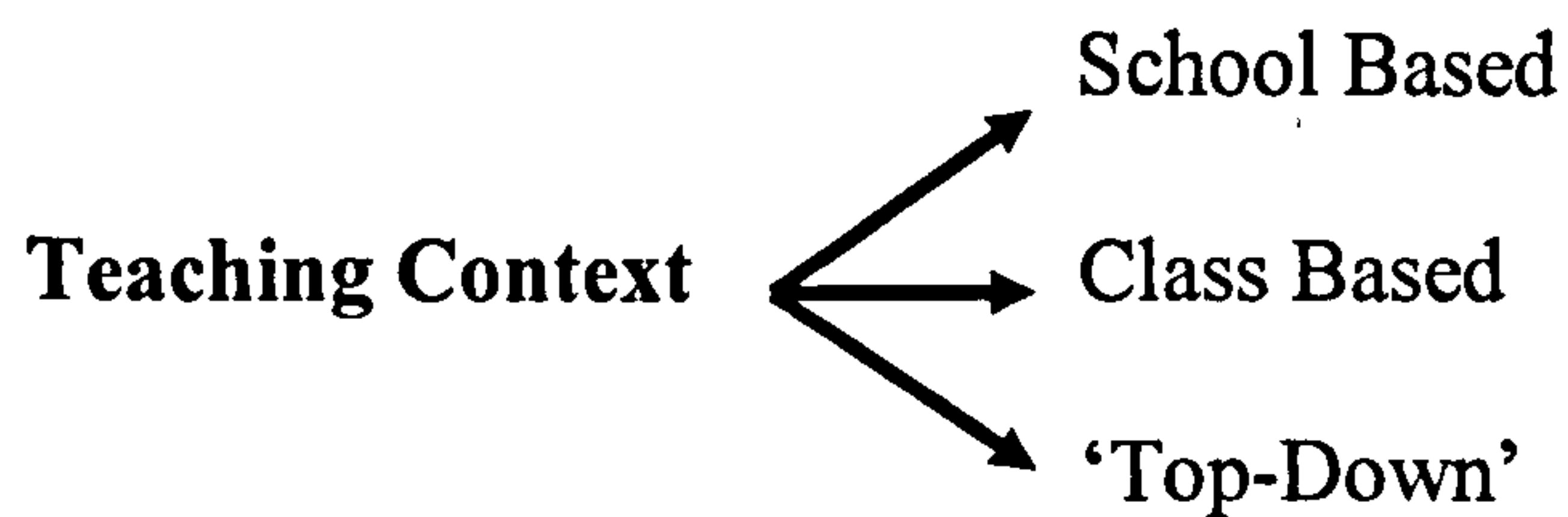
### **'Influencing Factors'**

In seeking to establish the factors that influence the teachers' use of particular strategies, I initially had no starting point for sorting the data, other than that, in relation to the research questions, I was intrigued to understand the relationship, if any, between the top down approach to the teaching of literacy, teachers' sense of self and the formative assessment strategies that they use.

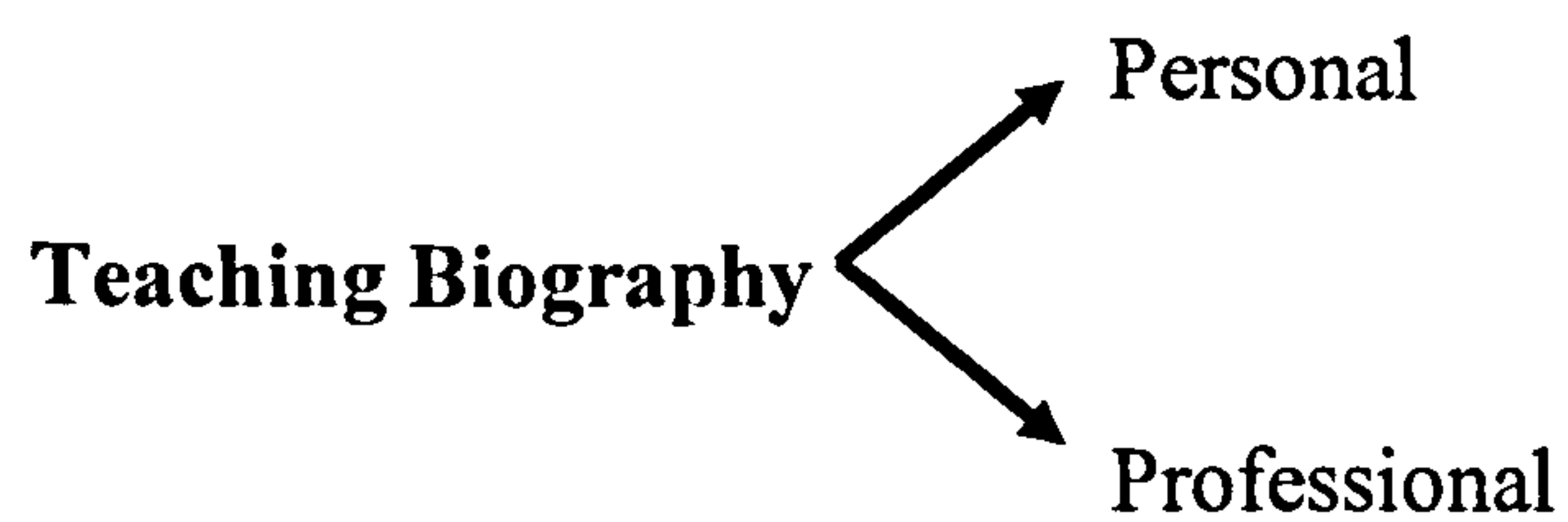
However, the reader will recall that the initial conceptual framework for the study (figure 2.8) identifies that teaching experience, context and biography are factors as identified by the review of literature, that influence a teacher's values and beliefs. Therefore, with this in mind, Beijaard et al's (2000) typology, as discussed in section 2.3.1 was adopted as a means of understanding the factors that influence the teachers' use of formative assessment. These categories for sorting the data are identified therefore as:

- Teaching Context
- Teaching Experience
- Teaching Biography.

It is worth noting that all data related to this particular aspect fit into one of the above ascribed categories, however, these categories were sub-divided into observer-identified categories as follows:

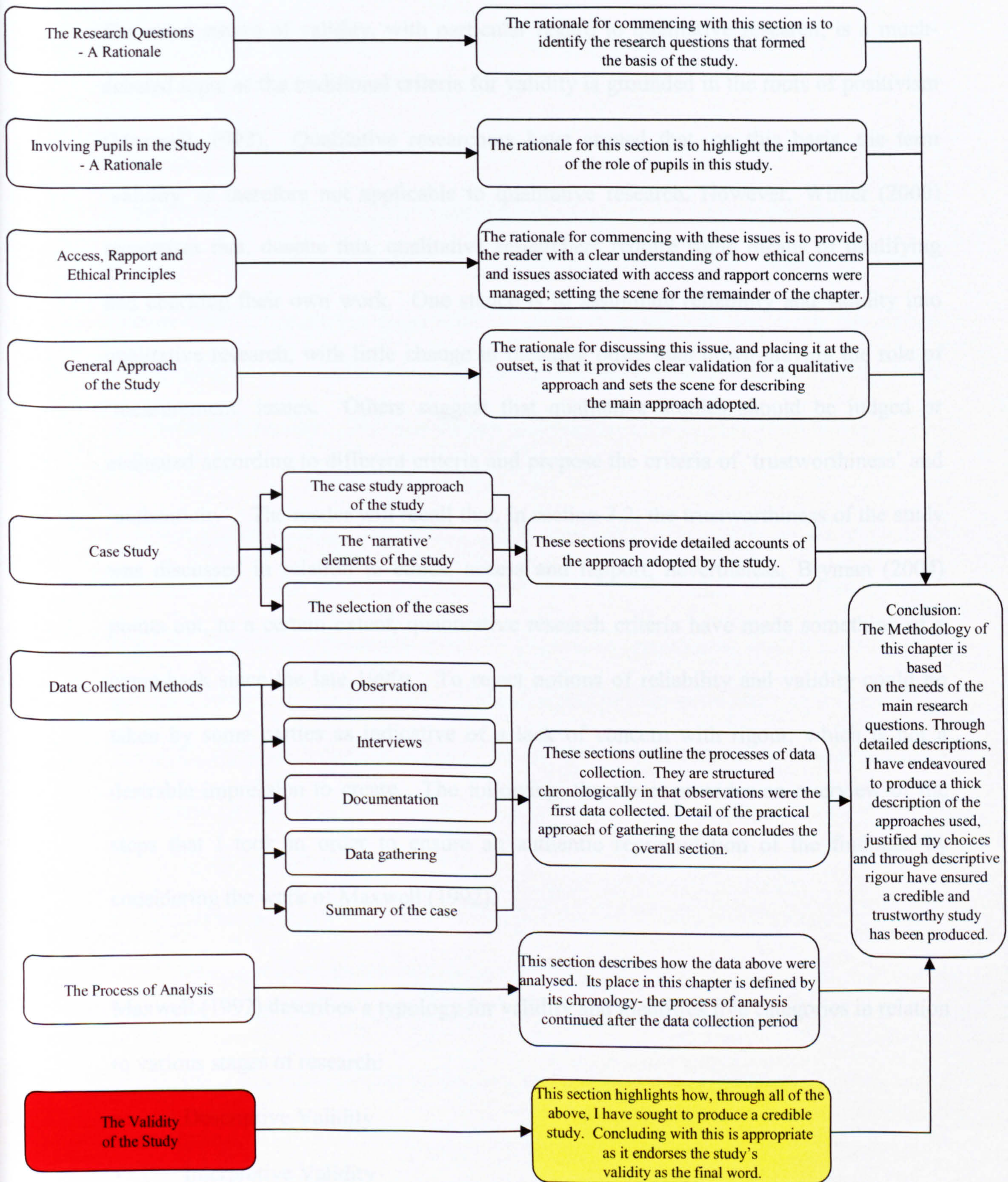


### Teaching Experience



Prior to presenting the main findings, the following presents the reader with an overview of the validity of the study. The rationale for this is to allow the reader to interpret the study's validity in light of having been presented with a clear picture of the methodological approach of the study.

## The Methodology



Legend: ■ Main Sections ■ Sub-Sections ■ Rationale for Organisation

### **3.8 The Validity of the Study**

The exact nature of validity, with particular regard to qualitative research, is a much-debated topic as the traditional criteria for validity is grounded in the roots of positivism (Maxwell, 1992). Qualitative researchers have argued that, on this basis, the term ‘validity’ is therefore not applicable to qualitative research. However, Winter (2000) recognises that, despite this, qualitative researchers require some means of qualifying and checking their own work. One stance is to assimilate reliability and validity into qualitative research, with little change in meaning other than down-playing the role of ‘measurement’ issues. Others suggest that qualitative studies should be judged or evaluated according to different criteria and propose the criteria of ‘trustworthiness’ and ‘authenticity’. The reader will recall that, in section 3.2, the trustworthiness of the study was discussed in relation to ethics, access and rapport, nevertheless, Bryman (2004) points out, to a certain extent, quantitative research criteria have made something of a come-back since the late 1990s. To reject notions of reliability and validity could be taken by some parties as indicative of a lack of concern with rigour, which is not a desirable impression to create. The following, therefore, provides an overview of the steps that I took in order to ensure an authentic representation of the findings, by considering the work of Maxwell (1992).

Maxwell (1992) describes a typology for validity and identifies five categories in relation to various stages of research:

- Descriptive Validity
- Interpretive Validity
- Theoretical Validity
- Generalisability

- Evaluative Validity.

The following provides an overview of how this study relates to Maxwell's typology.

### **Descriptive Validity**

Descriptive validity is concerned with the factual accuracy of the researcher's account. Maxwell (1992) identifies two distinct types of descriptive validity. Primary descriptive validity refers to what the researcher has seen or heard, and secondary descriptive validity refers to accounts of things that could, in principle, have been seen or heard, but were inferred from data. The central issue of descriptive validity is factual accuracy.

In the context of the study, the validity of it is based on the descriptive nature of the data. However, it is clear that there is potential in descriptive validity for issues to arise. Maxwell (1992:296) considers that: "...qualitative researchers deal primarily with specific threats to the validity of particular features of their accounts." In the context of this study, there are a number of issues that need to be identified as particular threats to its descriptive validity:

- Delay in feedback
- Technical issues
- Absence of two pupils from individual interviews.

Transcribing the data was time consuming and this meant that the feedback given to the teachers was not always immediate. A particular example of delay in feedback occurred between the Summer term of 2001, and the interviews carried out in January 2002. A large amount of time had elapsed between interviews that was unavoidable (I had been



involved in a car accident and was unable to attend scheduled meetings) and the ability of the teachers to comment on events that occurred over such long periods of time could be regarded, therefore, as an issue for validity.

When interviewing, there were a number of technical issues. Tape recorders would not operate during the first interviews, and the teachers, in both contexts (this occurred with both teachers despite using different machines, and having checked them prior to using them), had to then spend time looking for a suitable recording machine for the interviews. I felt concerned that these issues reduced my professional standing in the eyes of the teacher, as I appeared ill prepared and possibly unreliable. My access to their thinking therefore could have been jeopardised.

To ensure descriptive validity in this study, I shared data with the participant teachers and triangulated my methods through the use of observations, interviews and documentation.

Furthermore, to ensure that the descriptions were authentic, I also shared the data and findings with teachers in a group interview (see section 3.6.4 and Appendix H). To this end, examples from the data and summaries of the main findings were presented and the descriptions were agreed by the teachers and their colleagues as portraying an accurate representation of the schools, staff and pupils at the time of the study (Ref. Teacher Group Interview at Alpha Primary School and Beta Primary School).

## **Interpretive Validity**

Interpretive validity is concerned with the rhetoric that the researcher uses to describe a situation. Maxwell (1992:290) asserts that interpretive validity is inherently a matter of inference of words and actions of those being studied and that:

“...a key part of the realm external to an account is the perspective of those actors whom the account is about.”

Again, in the context of the study, interpretation of rhetoric was a potential concern; however, as mentioned previously, the data and findings were shared with the teacher participants and their colleagues to address this and the process of triangulation occurred.

## **Theoretical Validity**

Maxwell (1992:291) claims that theoretical validity:

“...goes beyond concrete description and interpretation and explicitly addresses the theoretical constructions that the researcher brings to, or develops during, the study...It can also incorporate participants’ concepts and theories, but its purpose goes beyond simply describing these participants’ perspectives.”

Maxwell continues, saying that what counts as theoretical validity, rather than descriptive or interpretive, depends on whether there is consensus of agreement about the terms used to describe the phenomena.

In the context of the study, to establish theoretical validity I did, as Atkins (1984) suggests, use independent judges to verify the theoretical validity of the study. This role was shared with a number of people. I discussed the raw data with my university supervisors and involved a friend in the initial stages of analysing the raw data.

Threats to the theoretical validity of the study may lie in the fact that the teachers were made overtly aware of the purposes of the study, and therefore may have responded and behaved in a particular manner. However, I felt that, as Kidder (1981) stated, the longer I was in the field where my role was known, then my presence was less likely to influence or distort behaviour.

In addition, the teachers had been involved in discussion with myself regarding the choice of children for the study and this may be conceived as a threat to the validity of the study. However the processes involved in choosing the children were for explicit reasons and I would argue that rather than being a threat to the validity, this activity served to impact positively on the validity, because since both myself and the teachers knew the children and could select pupils who would feel at ease in an interview context and could establish which pupils could work effectively together during a group activity then:

- Rich data were gathered
- Children felt at ease in an interview context and could respond openly
- Children felt at ease and therefore able to work effectively during group tasks.

Furthermore, the individual and group participatory activities reduced potential for observer bias and in addition, the main findings of the study were shared with the two teachers involved and their colleagues. The purpose of this was to ensure descriptive validity as described earlier and also to contribute to its theoretical validity. To this end, teachers were invited to participate in an activity to reflect on the main findings of the study and consider implications for practitioners, policy makers, teacher training and future research.

## Generalisability

Generalisability refers to the extent to which it is possible to extend the findings of a particular situation to wider groups. In qualitative theory, generalisation usually takes place through the development of a theory, and is normally based on the assumption that the theory may be useful in making sense of similar situations (Maxwell, 1992). The notion of generalisability with regard to case study approaches to research design is one of contention, with many arguing that one cannot generalise from case studies. Yin (1994: 9), for example, recognised that within the academic community there is opposition to case study on the grounds of: "...little basis for generalisation." However, Flyvbjerg (2004: 420) asserts that this 'conventional wisdom' is misleading and states:

"One can often generalise on the basis of a single case...But formal generalisation is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas 'the force of example' is underestimated'." (2004: 425)

Similarly, Stake (2005: 454) asserts that from case reports: "...we convey and draw forth the essence of qualitative understanding." Stake identifies 'naturalistic generalisations' whereby, through the researcher's narrative providing a 'vicarious experience', readers then extend their perceptions of the happenings. In short, this implies that people make some generalisations entirely from personal or vicarious experience. In addition, although the focus of the study is about 'discovery' as opposed to theory testing, it is important to note Bassegy's (1999: 52) conceptualisation of 'fuzzy generalisations'. Fuzzy generalisations, Bassegy reports, identify that something has happened in one place and could happen again elsewhere. As described earlier, (see section 3.5.1) this study is described as a 'picture-drawing' case study (Bassegy, 1999) and is predominantly a descriptive account. The purpose of this study is to make what 'fuzzy generalisations' such that: "...what was found in the singularity will be found in similar situations elsewhere." (Bassegy, 1999: 12)

## **Evaluative Validity**

Evaluative validity refers to the application of an evaluative framework to the participants in the study.

The study is not about evaluating the assessment practices of two teachers; rather its purpose is to encourage the reader to evaluate their own practice, given the nature of assessment for learning within two particular contexts. However, teachers and their colleagues were involved in the latter stages of the study through the group participatory interview in considering implications of the study and in this respect this could be deemed as contributing to its evaluative validity.

Prior to moving to discuss the main findings of the study, I feel it is necessary to provide an overview of the methodological approach of the study and this is illustrated in figure 3.1 below.

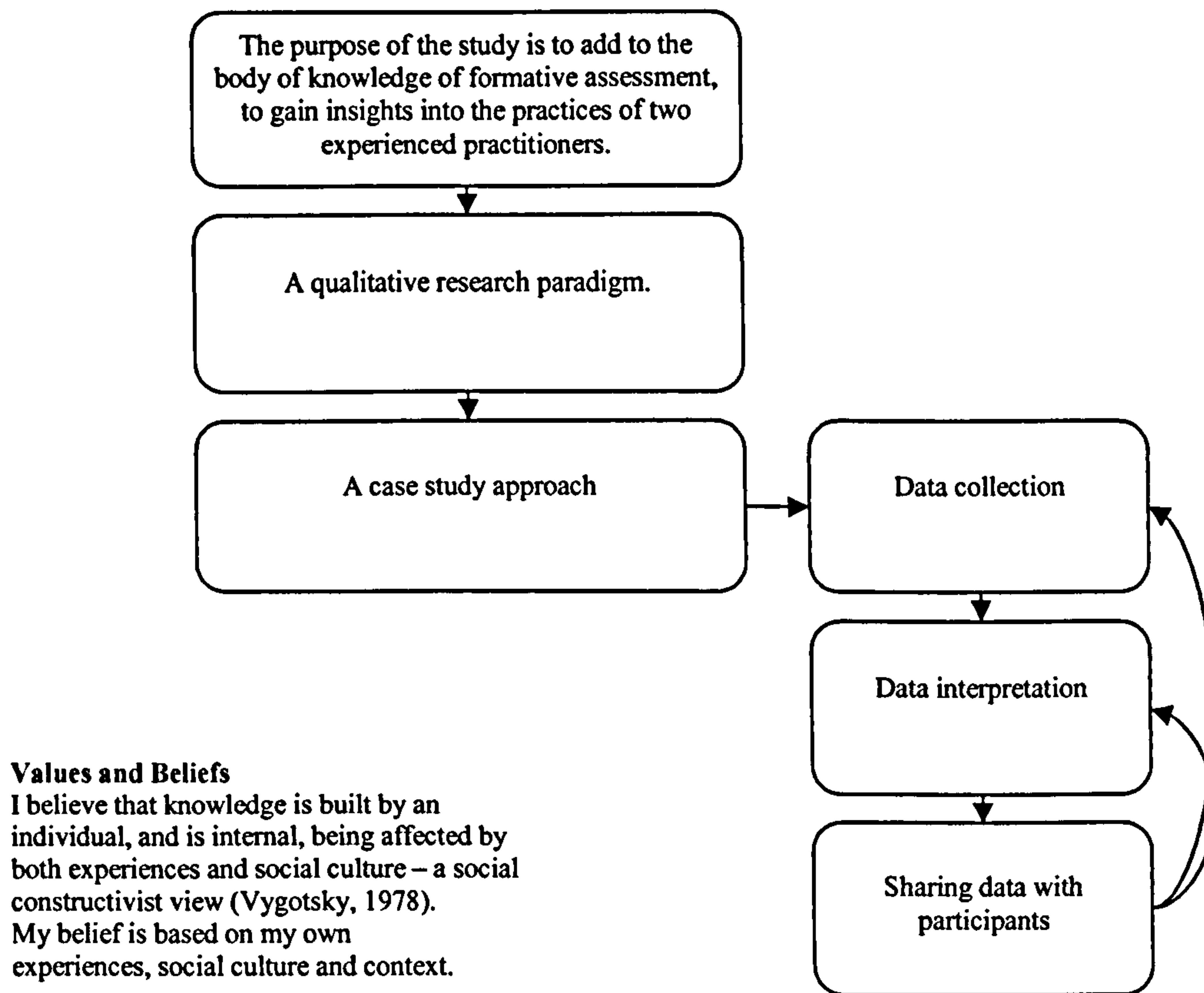
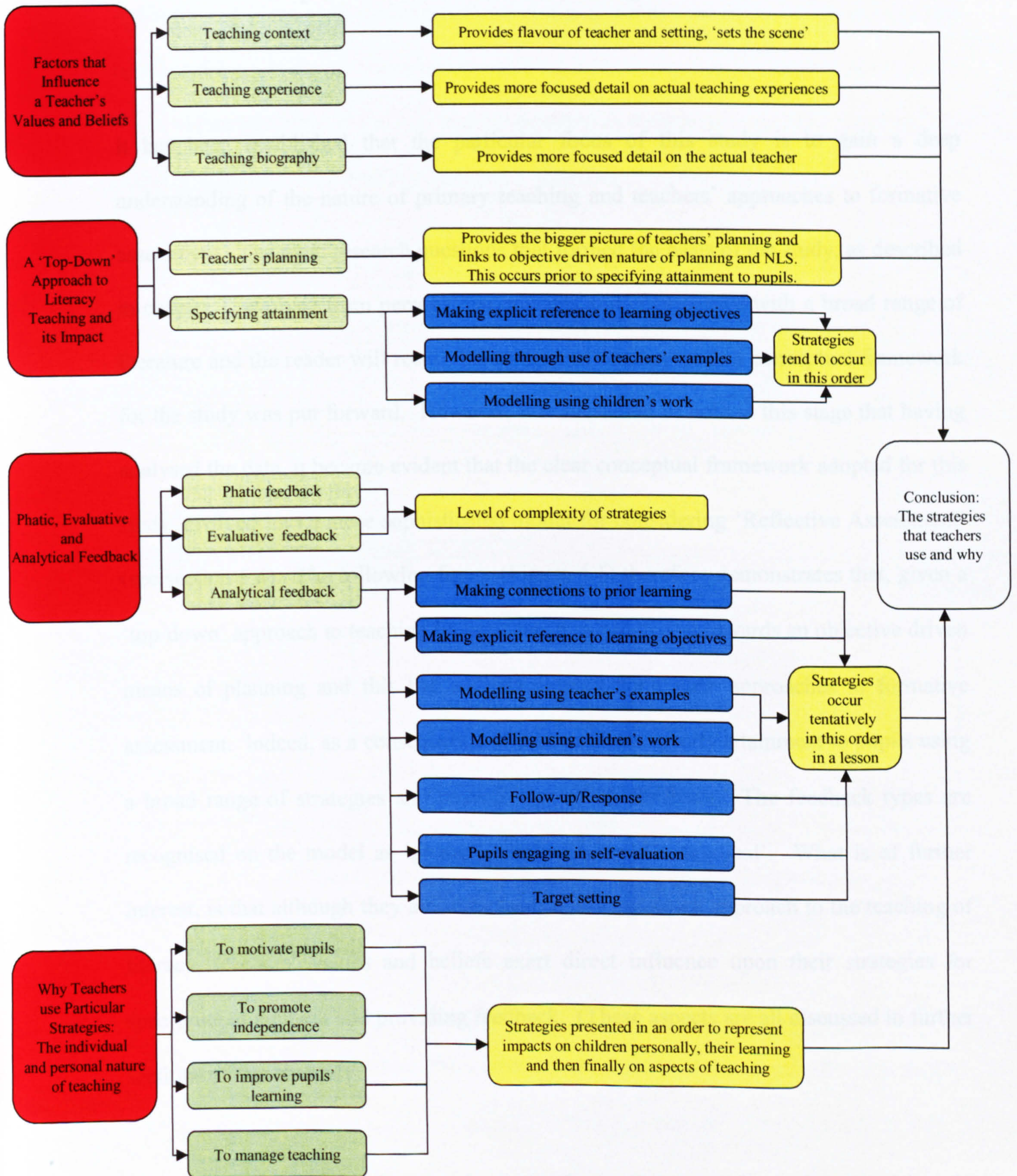


Figure 3.1 A Model of the Research Process that Underpins the Study

As can be seen, the methodological approach of the study is grounded in my own personal values and beliefs and this was used as a starting point for considering the design of the study. I believe that knowledge is built by an individual, and is internal, being affected by both experiences and social culture – a social constructivist view (Vygotsky, 1978). As such, I felt that given that I wanted to further develop my own understanding of the phenomenon of formative assessment, I had to reflect on how I would learn about it most effectively, and this had significant influence on my decision to adopt a qualitative research paradigm. I felt that such a paradigm could offer me the opportunity to learn from the social, cultural and experiential contexts of two practising teachers. Therefore, in summary, this study incorporates the following elements: the identification of two key informants; the gathering and analysis of data from classroom

observations, interviews and documentary evidence over a two-year period, with the researcher adopting the role of participant observer; the researcher maintaining a research diary to monitor self-awareness; the establishment of effective relationships with informants, with consideration of ethical principles and the validity of the findings being established in relation to Maxwell's typology for validity. On the basis of this, and the methodological rigour as described in this chapter, I have endeavoured to produce a credible and trustworthy study.

## The Main Findings of the Study



Legend: ■ Main Section ■ Sub-Sections ■ Further Sub-Sections ■ Rationale for Organisation



## Chapter 4: The Main Findings of the Study

It has been established that the particular focus of this study is to gain a deep understanding of the nature of primary teaching and teachers' approaches to formative assessment. The main research questions that formed the basis of the study, as described in chapter 1, evolved from personal experiences and engagement with a broad range of literature and the reader will recall that at the end of Chapter 2, a conceptual framework for the study was put forward. However, it is important to note at this stage that having analysed the data, it became evident that the clear conceptual framework adopted for this study, evolved into a more sophisticated model for considering 'Reflective Assessment' (see section 5.4). The following figure (Figure 4.1) therefore demonstrates that, given a 'top-down' approach to teaching literacy, teachers are driven towards an objective driven means of planning and this has a direct impact upon their approaches to formative assessment. Indeed, as a consequence of this, teachers specify attainment to pupils using a broad range of strategies and provide them with feedback. The feedback types are recognised on the model as 'phatic', 'evaluative' and 'analytical'. What is of further interest, is that although they are immersed in this top-down approach to the teaching of literacy, teachers' values and beliefs exert direct influence upon their strategies for specifying attainment and providing feedback. (These aspects are all discussed in further sections of this chapter)

It had been my intention to use the research questions as a basis for organising the findings of the study; however, because of the inter-relatedness of some of the findings such an approach was too complex. A decision was therefore taken to use the 'Reflective

Assessment' model as a means of structuring the findings, nevertheless, before embarking upon the main findings, I feel that it is imperative to highlight the relationship between them and the questions that formed the basis of the study. To facilitate this, the figure below has adopted a colour coding principle to outline how, broadly speaking, the research questions map on to the Reflective Assessment model (see section 5.4).

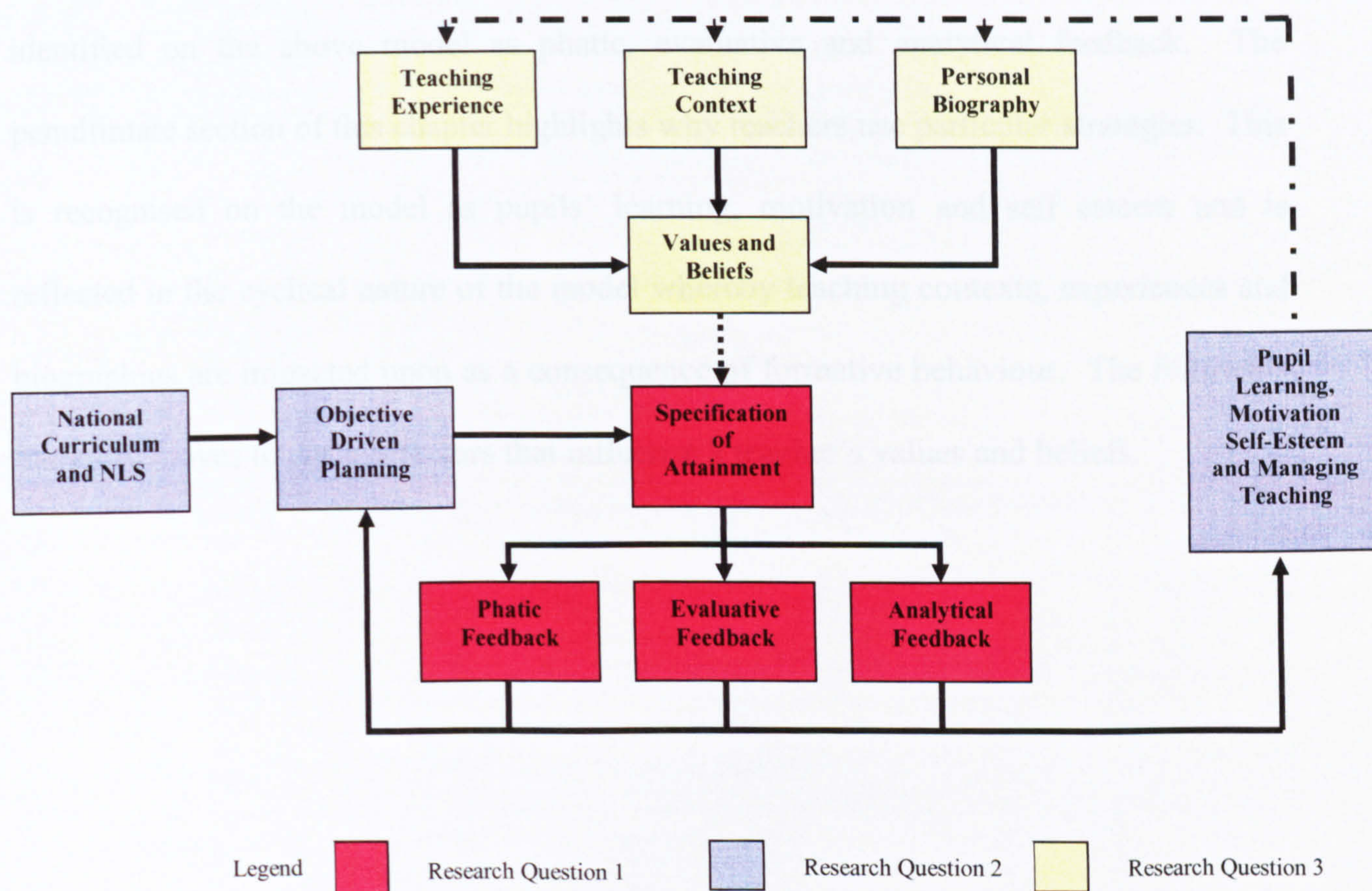
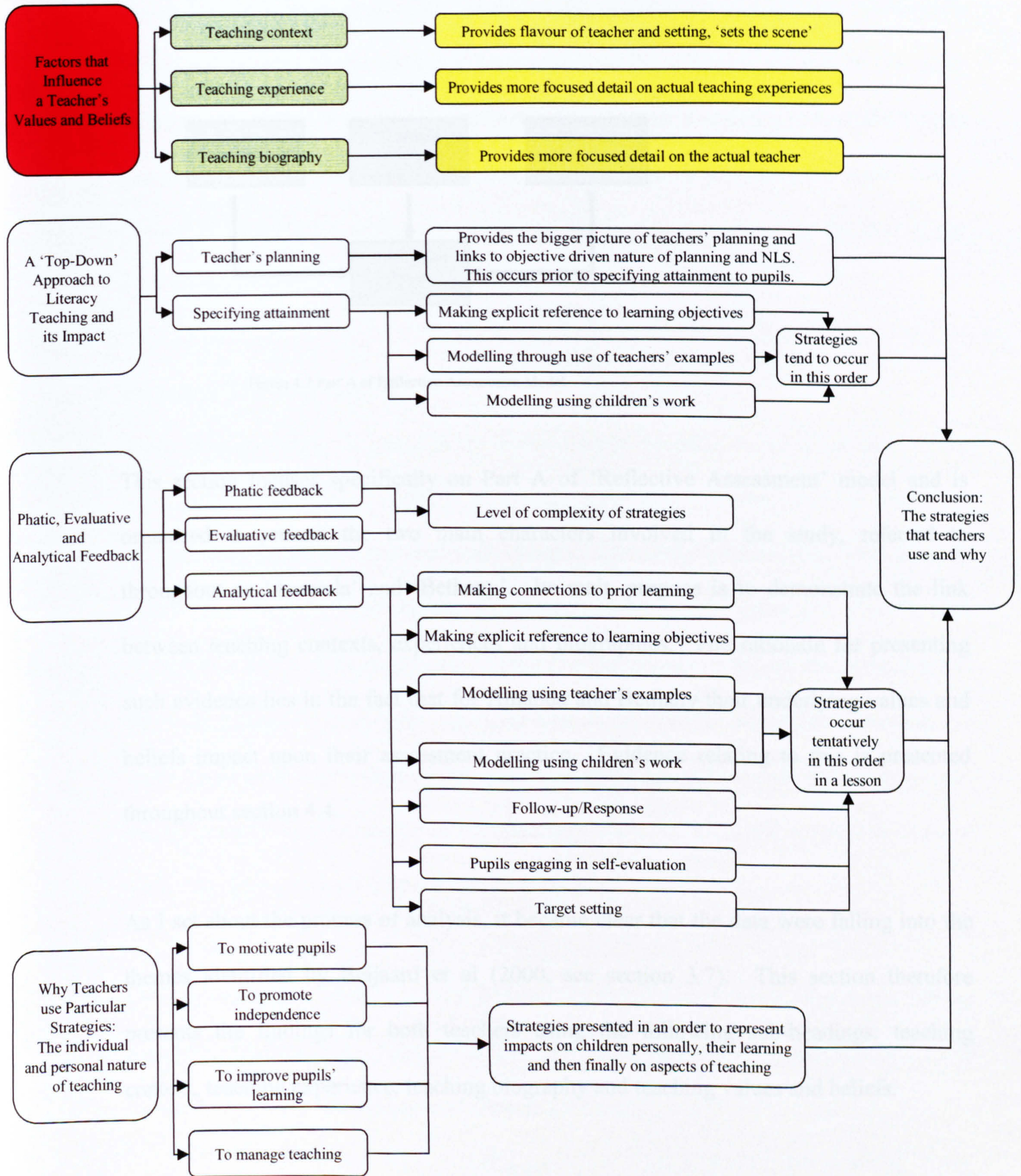


Figure 4.1 The Reflective Assessment Model and its Relationship with the Research Questions

In order to discuss the main findings using the Reflective Assessment model, the reader will note that I have presented different sections of the model in turn. The first section considers factors that influence a teacher's values and beliefs. The rationale for this is that teachers' values and beliefs are, as is illustrated in figure 4.1, shaped by context, experience and biography and in turn, these values and beliefs exert influence on teachers' approaches to formative assessment. The second section focuses on the notion

of a 'top-down' approach to literacy teaching, as the model demonstrates that the National Curriculum and National Literacy Strategy also serve to influence teachers' behaviour. Within this section, the notion of 'specification of attainment' is also considered, given that there is a direct relationship between the top down approach to literacy teaching and the manner in which teachers specify attainment to their pupils. The third section presents evidence relating to three feedback types, and these are identified on the above model as phatic, evaluative and analytical feedback. The penultimate section of this chapter highlights why teachers use particular strategies. This is recognised on the model as pupils' learning, motivation and self esteem and is reflected in the cyclical nature of the model whereby teaching contexts, experiences and biographies are impacted upon as a consequence of formative behaviour. The following therefore moves to discuss factors that influence a teacher's values and beliefs.

## The Main Findings of the Study



Legend: ■ Main Section ■ Sub-Sections ■ Further Sub-Sections ■ Rationale for Organisation

## 4.1 Factors that Influence a Teacher's Values and Beliefs

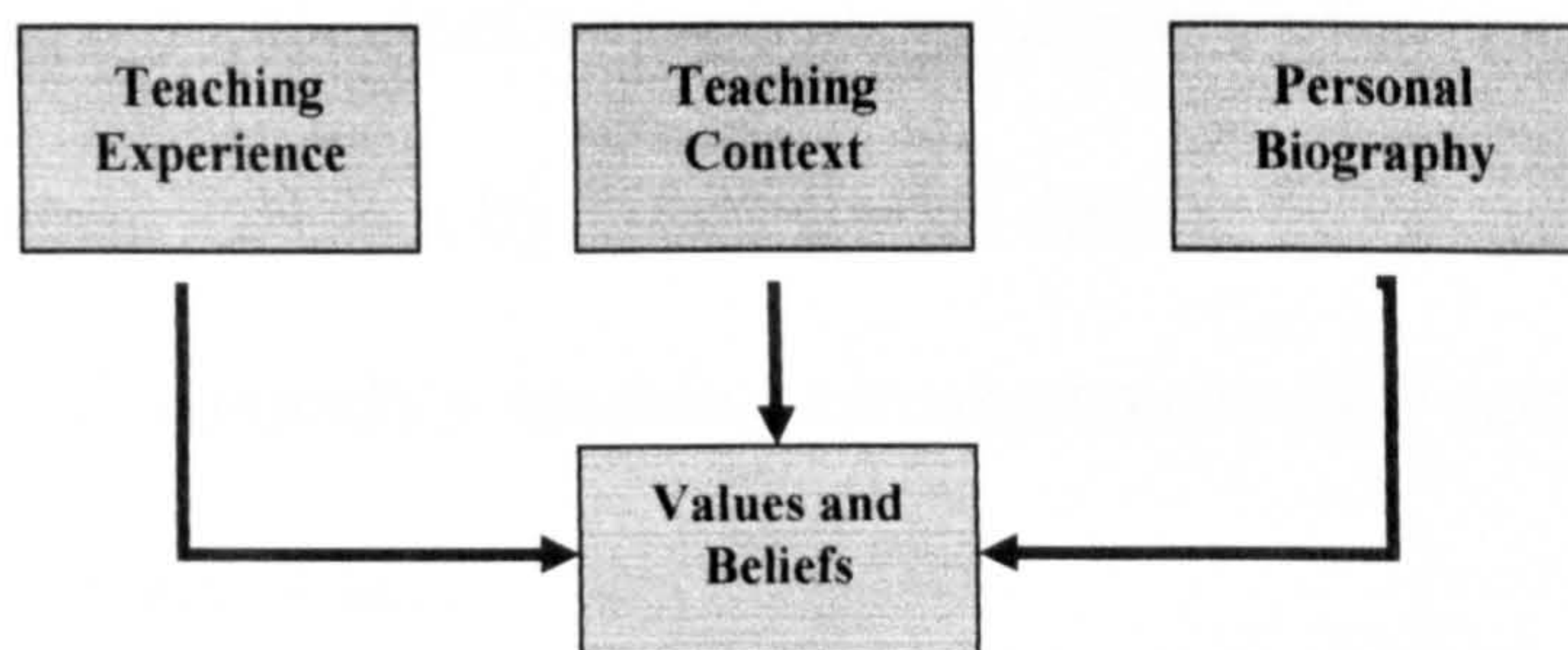


Figure 4.2 Part A of Reflective Assessment Model

This section focuses specifically on Part A of ‘Reflective Assessment’ model and is organised to present the two main characters involved in the study, referred to throughout as ‘Amanda’ and ‘Bethany’. Its main purpose is to demonstrate the link between teaching contexts, experiences and biographies. The rationale for presenting such evidence lies in the fact that for Amanda and Bethany their underlying values and beliefs impact upon their assessment practice. Evidence relating to this is presented throughout section 4.4.

As I set about the process of analysis, it became clear that the data were falling into the themes identified by Beijaard et al (2000, see section 3.7). This section therefore presents the findings for both teachers using the following sub-headings: teaching context, teaching experience, teaching biography and teaching values and beliefs.

## Case Study “Amanda”

The following sections present the findings regarding factors that influence Amanda’s values and beliefs. I have chosen to start with ‘context’. This is relevant to the study because, not only does context shape aspects of a teacher’s teaching values and beliefs (see section 2.3), but by offering such data at this stage I am providing the reader with a flavour of Amanda’s teaching circumstances and setting the scene for the rest of the discussion about her.

### *Amanda’s Teaching Context*

Alpha Primary School is based in the North East of England, in an urban area on the outskirts of an inner city. Alpha is an average sized primary school and the catchment area endures significant material and social disadvantage (School OFSTED Report, 1999). The school is organised into Key Stage phases, and the geography of the school is such that the Foundation and Key Stage One phases are based on the ground floor, whilst Key Stage Two is based upon the first floor. At the time of commencing the study, there were approximately 250 pupils on roll. The school was staffed by a head teacher, deputy head teacher, full time teachers for each class and a range of support staff, including voluntary helpers.

Clearly, working in such a context has had impacts upon Amanda, and when talking about the children in her class she made reference to this and spoke passionately about the need to provide consistency and support for them:

“Well, some children in my class have such difficult times at home. It can be so difficult for them, for us...It’s so important that there’s consistency for some, they need us so much. I suppose that’s what is so special about the job.” (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda)

In 1996 the school underwent an OFSTED inspection that highlighted serious weaknesses in its leadership and management, and organisation of some aspects of the curriculum. However, in 1999, following a further inspection, the school received an extremely favourable report and was described as having "...improved beyond recognition since its previous inspection." (OFSTED Report, 1999:6)

Since the inspection in 1996, a new head teacher has been appointed, together with several new staff, and the OFSTED report (1999) commented on the very good leadership of the school and the effective working relationships between the head teacher, staff, pupils, parents and governors.

Amanda explained how difficult it was during both OFSTED inspections. She described how staff morale was incredibly low, and that the new head teacher had to work hard to motivate a demoralised team. This undoubtedly had impacts upon practice and Amanda explained how challenging it was to work in such a context and remain 'upbeat' during lessons:

"You can imagine how awful it was, but we had to put on an act...The children and parents couldn't see how terrible it was...but every morning I went in that classroom with a smile on my face." (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda)

Amanda has been based in the same school for virtually all of her teaching career. She explained how through being in the same context for many years she has forged relationships with staff and parents and 'understands the children'. To Amanda, this is a crucial feature of her beliefs about teaching:

"It's so important that you know the children, really know them. I've been here for some time now and I love it! We've had our difficult times, but seeing the children progress, knowing what to do to help them, it's a wonderful part of my job!" (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda)

The Year Six classroom in which Amanda teaches is streamed by ability. Amanda teaches the 'more able' children for literacy, the 'bottom group' for maths, and her mixed ability registration class in the afternoons. Amanda enjoys teaching in this way and works closely with her colleagues to plan lessons. Again, there was specific evidence that this context impacts upon her values and beliefs:

“When we first streamed them, I wasn't sure, but now I find it really useful. The children work well in literacy and numeracy, and it makes planning easier!” (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda)

The context in which Amanda is based clearly exerts some influence on her practice and this is of particular importance because, in understanding that context has some bearing on practice, one can conclude, therefore, that it also has some influence on teachers' approaches to formative assessment (see sections 4.1 and 4.4). The following therefore moves to discuss Amanda's teaching experience. I have elected to discuss this here as it follows appropriately from the discussion about Amanda's current teaching context, focussing more specifically on her actual teaching experiences.

### *Amanda's Teaching Experience*

Amanda has been a qualified teacher for twenty-eight years and throughout this time she has taught in a range of year groups across Key Stages One, Two and the Foundation Stage. Amanda has remained a teacher within the same school since qualifying as a teacher, and although she was originally trained to teach junior children, she began her teaching career in a Reception class.

When teaching in the Reception class, Amanda 'team taught', working directly alongside a colleague, with shared responsibilities for planning and delivery of the whole curriculum. She valued this experience; however, she stated that after two and a half



years of teaching in this context, she felt that she was losing her confidence in her ability to teach a class of her own and subsequently moved to teach in a Year Two class.

Amanda then moved to teach in Key Stage Two, and over the years has moved throughout the age-ranges within the school to develop her skills and gain an understanding of children's learning. Following her Key Stage Two teaching, Amanda decided to teach for a year in the USA where she was based in a Kindergarten:

“I loved it and learnt an awful lot about children and teaching the younger ones...This developed my skills and built my confidence.” (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda)

Following this exchange she returned to the school, in the year of the introduction of the National Curriculum and taught in the Nursery. Here she remained for five years, longer than she had remained in any other area of the school, such was the impact of her experiences in the USA.

During the time of the study, Amanda was based in Year Six. She stated that she enjoys working with this age range despite what she described as a difficult start to her Year Six teaching. Amanda originally taught in Year Six, with a newly qualified teacher and another former Key Stage One colleague, and she described some of the difficulties she had:

“Our tails were on fire for a whole year! There was no planning, nothing, and we didn't know what resources we had or what we could use. That was hard, but I enjoy it here now.” (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda)

Amanda explained that having worked so hard and so closely with colleagues to put planning and resources in to place, she feels that she has some ownership of the Year Six

setting. She explained that strong working relationships had forged and that she values this greatly.

Amanda has responsibility for leading literacy across the school, and attended the literacy training that was put into place within the Local Education Authority (LEA) at the outset of the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS). As the leader of literacy, Amanda was responsible for the delivery of the in-house training for the NLS and her role has also involved the training of other colleagues and she has visited a number of other schools in the LEA to observe practice and provide feedback to staff. She believes that it is important to keep abreast of new initiatives, enjoys attending training and developing her skills and working with others, and stated:

“I think it’s important to keep up to date, that’s why I like having trainees! You’ve got to keep fresh yourself haven’t you? It’s a way of keeping enthusiastic about teaching...that’s so important!” (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda)

Amanda describes herself as ‘not ambitious’. She is extremely comfortable in the classroom, but has no aspirations to become a head teacher or deputy head teacher, as she is concerned that the additional demands that these roles would place on her time, would ‘lead her way from the classroom’ (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda).

However, in 1988, Amanda embarked upon a teaching degree. She chose to do a series of modules at Newcastle University and elected to continue with a dissertation. Amanda described how she values professional training and she was concerned that as a result of teaching outside the UK for a year, she had missed some opportunities:

“I felt I was a bit out of touch and applied to the university, just to do a module in Early Years, just to keep up to date.” (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda)

As a result of her studies, Amanda introduced a new Early Years assessment programme into the school and this was highly acclaimed during the 1999 OFSTED inspection.

Amanda contributes to the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course at Newcastle University. She was recommended by her head teacher given her experiences in teaching literacy. Her role at the university involves contributing to the delivery of a range of English workshops to train teacher trainees and her other key role is that of School Experience Tutor. This role involves Amanda working closely with a number of individual trainees, whereby she provides support and advice during teaching placements, observes the trainees teaching and provides feedback to them. She is responsible for monitoring their progress and works alongside their Personal Tutor. Amanda values this role greatly and 'Loves being with the students' (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda). Amanda has since been approached by the university to take a greater role in the PGCE course. She is excited about the prospect of being involved as both a School Experience Tutor and a Personal Tutor, responsible for a group of approximately fifteen students, despite the inherent time commitments. Amanda believes that it is a privilege to work with trainee teachers and perceives the advantages as two-fold; in that she can contribute to the training of future teachers, and at the same time she herself is continuing to develop professionally (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda).

The above has highlighted the manner in which experience has an effect on Amanda's teaching. This is relevant to the study because, in seeking to understand a teacher's formative behaviour; reflecting on the current context and experiences that they have been subjected to not only provides the reader with a clearer picture of the individual in

the study but demonstrates how practice and, therefore by association formative assessment, is influenced. Since there is a body of knowledge that demonstrates how these three factors; context, experience and biography, shape a teacher's values and beliefs (see section 2.3.1) considering Amanda's biography is also, therefore, imperative. It seems appropriate to place this discussion on biography following that of context and experience as this provides us with further detail of Amanda herself and her own education.

### *Amanda's Teaching Biography*

Amanda attended a mixed primary school and at the age of eleven progressed to an all girls' grammar school. Following this, she attended teacher-training college where she was successfully awarded a teaching certificate. Amanda claims that she 'fell into teaching' due to a range of circumstances (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda).

She would ideally have liked to have joined the RAF, but due to the physical nature of the work this refrained her from applying. Amanda also considered working in a bank, but again, the physical demands and the fact that she 'did not feel clever enough' hindered her from applying. She decided upon teaching as a career because she felt that she could cope with the physical aspects of the work, as well as having the appropriate 'academic ability'. "Teaching's a job that has to suit you!" (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda).

Amanda was appointed at Alpha Primary school immediately following the completion of her teaching certificate and she stated that she did not move schools because of a range of personal and family circumstances. However, she thoroughly enjoys working at

Alpha and because of the size of the school, has had a broad range of teaching experiences which she has valued.

As mentioned earlier, Alpha underwent an OFSTED inspection in 1996. Amanda describes the times shortly before and after the inspection as 'horrendous'. The school was deemed as being in 'Special Measures' and in light of this a number of changes occurred, and in particular, a new head teacher was appointed. Amanda spoke extremely highly of the head teacher, and views him as being influential on her both personally and professionally:

"He allows me to be what I want to be...Carl (the head teacher) allows me to be 'me' all of the time. With other people, I used to keep very quiet, I never said a word in staff meetings." (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda)

When discussing other people, who have had an impact upon her, Amanda talked about her current colleagues, whom she spoke of with much warmth. She has valued working with the Year Six team, whom she feels work extremely well together, share expertise and support each other. Amanda also described the value of working in a range of year groups throughout her career in terms of developing new skills and working with a variety of people, stating: "We can all learn from each other." (ibid).

Amanda also believes that having the opportunity to work with trainee teachers through her involvement with Initial Teacher Training (ITT) has been influential upon her. Her involvement, she stated, has encouraged her to approach her own teaching much more reflectively. This, she claimed, occurs for a number of reasons. Firstly, as she is observed so frequently by trainees, she has to ensure that she is teaching highly

effectively and can then describe and evaluate her teaching in greater depth in discussion with the trainees:

“When they observe you teach, you have to be very clear about what you were doing and why so you can talk about things with them. This makes me really think about my teaching...” (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda)

Amanda also described how, again because of observations, she herself is much more aware of what she is teaching and the strategies that she is using. Furthermore, because she is frequently engaged in observing trainees and providing them with feedback, she feels that she is more ‘on the ball’ and this impacts upon her professionally and permeates her own practice. An interesting point that Amanda voiced with regard to ITT lies in how she values the input of the trainees themselves:

“They come with fresh ideas and it makes me take a good look at my own teaching!” (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda)

She described how through working and learning in collaboration with trainees she herself is much more aware of her teaching and able to keep abreast of new initiatives.

Amanda described other factors that have influenced her practice. She made frequent comments with regard to her own academic ability, often claiming that she is ‘not clever enough’. For example she said:

“I fell into doing the degree...I never really thought I was clever enough to do one.” (Ref. Interview with Amanda)

She believes that her own experiences at grammar school led her to perceive herself as ‘lacking in intelligence’. Amanda talked in rather negative terms of her experiences at grammar school. She believes that grammar school was highly academic and that she was not as clever as some of the people within that group and although predicted to gain

nine GCEs, Amanda passed only five of them. This impacted upon her sixth form experiences. She was restricted from entering sixth form, including the sixth form common room, and instead was placed into 'Five Removed'. Amanda described this experience as negative and used the analogy of Harry Potter arriving at platform 16 3/4 - in between nothing! "I was never quite sure where I was". This, Amanda claimed, had a significant impact on her values and beliefs, and as a consequence she feels it is crucial that children have positive early educational experiences (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda).

Although the following Christmas, Amanda successfully passed her GCEs and progressed to sixth form, her negative experiences at grammar school have impacted upon Amanda as a teacher. She stated that much of the time she was 'in fear' of her teachers, and she decided that her philosophy would be one whereby she would be approachable. Some teachers at Amanda's grammar school were, as she described them, highly intelligent with Masters, Doctorates and degrees from Oxford and Cambridge, but despite this, Amanda felt that most of them found it difficult to actually teach their subjects and relate to children. She described the teachers as lacking in tolerance if children did not understand something and this continued right through to sixth form:

"We weren't 'thick' ...but the teacher said, "Do you understand, if you don't understand, anybody, please put your hand up". Well, I didn't understand, so I put my hand up. She was lovely, but she just repeated it the same...exactly the same. Then said "do you understand?" And I thought "What's the point in saying 'no' if she's just going to repeat it." (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda)

Amanda claimed that she learned a lot about how to teach by learning how 'not to teach'.

Clearly the context, experience and biography of Amanda have a complex relationship with her teaching practice and research evidence would also suggest therefore that these have significant roles in shaping her values and beliefs about teaching (see for example, Beijaard et. al, 2000, Eraut, 1994, Nias, 1989 and Lortie, 1975). It seems appropriate, therefore, to conclude this section about Amanda with a discussion of her teaching values and beliefs given the central role they play in moulding her daily practice.

### *Amanda's Teaching Values and Beliefs*

Amanda's teaching values and beliefs are grounded in her own experiences as a learner and her previous teaching experiences. She believes that it is important to develop firm relationships with children, ensuring that she herself is approachable.

Amanda feels that the teachers in her own learning career caused her to fear them and remain reticent in lessons:

“I was terrified of my teachers, absolutely terrified and I think that's the one thing I would hate - children to be frightened of me...That was the one thing, of anything that started my philosophy, it was I would hope that children would come and talk to me, I could never do that... So I learned a lot on how not to treat children. I can't remember not having any teacher I wasn't frightened of, who I could approach or who cared...” (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda).

Amanda therefore advocates pupil participation in her lessons and said that she actively encourages children to 'join in' and 'ask questions' (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda).

Amanda has had opportunities during her teaching career of teaching across the full primary age range, and described how at first she was anxious about transferring from Year Two to Year Six. However, she explained that, in many ways, the teaching



strategies that she uses are similar and that her experiences have served to impact on her understanding of how children learn. Amanda believes that having experienced the full age range, she is aware of the 'building blocks' of learning and feels that it is very useful as a teacher to have a secure understanding of 'where the children have come from' in terms of their learning (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda).

During interview, Amanda described how her basic teaching values and beliefs have remained static over the years despite the number of changes that have occurred throughout her teaching career, for example the introduction of the National Curriculum and OFSTED. However, she described how in certain situations she has had to adapt in order to maintain personal and professional fulfilment. This was particularly so when she moved from Key Stage One to Key Stage Two. She stated that at first she was anxious about this change in Key Stage, but drew on her experiences and values as a starting point:

"It was my subject knowledge that I needed to develop, but everything else was pretty much the same." (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda)

During the Incident Interview, Amanda described the importance of children being given opportunities to work together and she also believes that effective relationships impact on pupils and strives to forge excellent working relationships in the contexts of teacher-pupil, and pupil-pupil.

In summary, it seems that Amanda's teaching practice, and her values and beliefs are clearly defined by a number of influencing factors; by critical events, relevant others, her specific teaching context, experience and by her own personal teaching biography. The

following, therefore, moves to discuss the second case study, recognised throughout by the name 'Bethany'.

## **Case Study “Bethany”**

The following sections present the factors that influence Bethany’s teaching values and beliefs. I have chosen to follow the same format as was used for Amanda, and therefore, will start by discussing Bethany’s ‘context’. The rationale behind this is to not only present the data in an organised fashion, but to give the reader a sense of who Bethany is, including the context in which she is teaching.

### ***Bethany’s Teaching Context***

Beta Primary School is based in the North East of England, in an urban area on the outskirts of an inner city. Beta is a relatively large primary school situated in the middle of a residential area and pupils attending the school derive from a variety of social backgrounds. The school is organised into Key Stage phases with Foundation Stage, Key Stage One and Key Stage Two classes being based in specific areas of the modern, one-floor building. The accommodation provides good size classrooms and in the Year Six unit two large classrooms are divided by a shared Art area to achieve a semi-open planned feel (School OFSTED report, 1999).

At the time of commencing the study, there were approximately 350 pupils on roll. The school was staffed by a head teacher, deputy head teacher, full time teachers for each class and a range of support staff, special needs staff and a range of voluntary helpers.

In 1996 the school underwent an OFSTED inspection and a further one in 1999. The inspection of 1999 commented that there had been good improvement in the school since the previous inspection, with “...significant improvement in standards by the end of Key Stage 2 over the past two years from a very low baseline” (OFSTED report, 1999:6).

Since the previous inspection in 1996, pupils' attitude to work and their personal development had improved and the teaching in Key Stage 2 had improved significantly. The report also commented that planning and assessment had enhanced considerably, together with staff development and progress in monitoring.

Bethany began to work at the school following the successful second OFSTED inspection. She has found the experience of working in Beta Primary School very positive:

“Everyone here is great! I was made welcome straight away and this was fantastic - there are some challenging children in the school - and in my class!! It makes life much easier though when everyone is so supportive.”  
(Ref. Biographical Interview with Bethany)

The pupils at Beta Primary School work in mixed ability classes for all subjects, remaining with their registration class throughout the day. Bethany stated that she finds this means of working highly effective:

“We don't stream classes, and I'm glad of that on the whole. It means you really get to know the children, planning is then easier and relationships, good relationships, are vital. Some of our children come from really tough backgrounds and so being together all of the time, a bit like a family I suppose, is positive...though to be honest, sometimes it might make life easier if some of the more challenging ones disappeared for a bit...I'd have a break!” (Ref. Biographical Interview with Bethany)

Within each class pupils are placed into ability groups for literacy and numeracy lessons. In Bethany's class, the ability groups sit with each other throughout the morning. For foundation subjects, Bethany uses a range of strategies for grouping children, from ability to friendship groups.

The ability groups for literacy were determined from a range of information. At the beginning of the year, Bethany grouped the children in the same manner as they had

been grouped in Year Five. This had been established by reading and writing ability and sourced from SAT scores and teachers assessments. In addition, the previous teacher had grouped children according to their ability to work effectively in such a group context and considered the relationships (positive and negative) that individuals exerted upon each other. As the year in Bethany's class progressed, she exercised flexibility in the groupings and as children's academic ability changed, so too did the groupings:

“It's important to be flexible. At the end of the day sometimes they (children) get on with each other and sometimes they don't.” (Ref. Incident Interview with Bethany)

The context in which Bethany teaches evidently has some influence on her teaching and, like for Amanda, this is of particular relevance to the study because, in understanding that context it aids our understanding of some aspects of Bethany's formative behaviour (see section 4.4). The following moves to discuss the teaching experience of Bethany.

### *Bethany's Teaching Experiences*

Bethany successfully completed a Bachelor of Arts in PE with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in 1996. On completion of her degree she embarked upon a teaching career in London. Whilst teaching in London she was responsible for the co-ordination of PE across the school. This role involved her teaching PE across the full age range within the primary school and she thoroughly enjoyed this aspect of her role. She explained that she felt confident in her ability to teach pupils in these particular year groups and subjects and feels that confidence is a vital element in good teaching which provides children with a sense of security (Ref. Biographical Interview with Bethany).

During this time she was also responsible for the co-ordination of History and English. Bethany's teaching has been focused on Key Stage Two, and in her previous school she was responsible for leading the Key Stage Two team.

Bethany then moved to Beta Primary School in September 2000, where she is currently still teaching. She teaches in a Year Six, mixed ability class. Bethany works alongside another Year Six teacher in a semi open-planned environment. Both teachers plan lessons together to ensure continuity within the Year Six age range. Bethany explained that she finds working as part of a strong team a key factor in ensuring that she teaches to a good standard. She explained that working collaboratively facilitates open discussion about pupils and their needs and allows each of the teachers in the team the opportunity to reflect on their own practice in a secure context:

“Being able to talk about if lessons were good or not is useful to me. Carol and I do this all the time and it means we can sort things out and improve our teaching.” (Ref. Biographical Interview with Bethany)

She believes that it is important to have responsibility, and has welcomed the opportunity to take on leading roles (Ref. Biographical Interview with Bethany). Bethany sought opportunities to attend a range of appropriate training sessions within the LEA to impact upon her literacy subject knowledge. She explained that she believes it is important for teachers today to have good subject knowledge and highlighted the fact that virtually all of her teaching experience has been in Key Stage Two. She described how she valued the opportunity to develop her knowledge and understanding of the teaching of literacy within Foundation Stage and Key Stage One as it enhanced her understanding of “...where the children are coming from.” (Ref. Biographical Interview with Bethany)

Bethany has been involved in a large amount of in-house staff training within the school, and implemented a range of strategies to target writing across both Key Stages.

Bethany views herself as 'quite ambitious' and has recently been appointed as an Advanced Skills Teacher (AST). This role will involve her being involved with ITT and doing 'outreach' work for one day per week. She is looking forward to embarking upon this new role. She sees herself moving through the management structure of a school at 'some point', although is content to remain a class-based teacher, she stated:

"What really worries me is being someone who isn't in the classroom; I wouldn't want to lose touch with the classroom." (Ref. Biographical Interview with Bethany)

Since being appointed at Beta Primary School, Bethany has made a significant contribution to the PGCE course at the university, on the recommendation of her head teacher. She has lectured to trainee teachers on the English component of the course, and has welcomed the trainees into her classroom, to allow them to observe literacy lessons. This opportunity, Bethany claimed, has served to impact positively on her practice, not least because she has to keep up to date with new initiatives (Ref. Biographical Interview with Bethany).

The above has demonstrated the way that experience influences aspects of Bethany's practice and, as with Amanda, I felt that this was particularly relevant because as Eraut (1994) discusses, teaching experience relates directly to professional knowledge and it is this knowledge that teachers tap into in their daily teaching. It is necessary now, to discuss aspects of Bethany's teaching biography. The underlying rationale for this is because teaching is a composite of personal and professional knowledge and as Clandinnin and Connelly (1986) state, everything one knows, has studied or has done are

always present in one's thoughts and, therefore one can assume that the teacher's biography is thus drawn upon (see section 2.3.1).

### ***Bethany's Teaching Biography***

As a child, Bethany attended two local infant schools and a junior school, before moving to a middle and higher school. The middle school was organised into the first two years of secondary education and Bethany then moved to the high school where she remained for her GCSEs and A levels. In the high school Bethany was in streamed classes, and was in the top sets for most subjects and states that she was very aware of her own academic ability. This, she feels is important. She feels that children need to have an awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses to be able to move forward in their learning (Ref. Biographical Interview with Bethany).

Bethany discussed her time throughout her own educational career in highly positive terms and feels that children should enjoy their early educational experiences:

“I always loved school, I loved everything about it.” (Ref. Biographical Interview with Bethany)

Bethany completed two A levels at her high school, one in Biology and the other in Maths and attended a Further Education College to study Sports Science, she then attended Leeds university where she was awarded QTS. However, she states that she had not actually planned to become a teacher, rather she ‘fell into it’. She originally planned to study Sports Science but did not achieve the required A Level results. As a consequence, she “...went through university clearing and ended up at Leeds!” (Ref. Biographical Interview with Bethany). Yet Bethany believes that teachers should be



passionate about their jobs - even if it was not their original plan, "I did the right thing. I've never looked back. I love it!" (ibid)

When discussing people who have had an impact upon her as a teacher, Bethany commented on two teachers, one was an infant teacher and the other, a junior teacher. Bethany described the infant teacher as being 'very calm' and stated that she always felt extremely happy in this class. The junior teacher's teaching style was vastly different. Bethany described her as 'mad' and explained that the teacher was extremely enthusiastic and lively, and that her manner always engrossed the children. She described how she feels it is important for teachers to engage pupils, but also added:

"When I think back to what I actually learned...well I'm not really sure! But she was really interesting!" (Ref. Biographical Interview with Bethany)

Bethany reflected upon her teaching placements whilst at university when discussing others who have had an impact upon her:

"...I had the most amazing class teacher! He was just fantastic! I learned everything, I think on that practice...he (the class teacher), he let me have the class completely, and he was excellent. When he was teaching I used to just sit there, like the kids, open-mouthed, just staring at him! He was so animated all of the time. He was just brilliant!" (Ref. Biographical Interview with Bethany)

She commented that as a Newly Qualified Teacher, she received high quality support and during this time was involved in an OFSTED inspection. She commented that she was 'not particularly traumatised by it' because she was so used to being observed. Positive experiences as a pupil, trainee teacher and qualified teacher have, Bethany explained, served to impact on her values and beliefs. She believes that she strives to ensure that children have positive learning experiences. Her approach is one where she

strives to maintain a calm atmosphere whilst engaging and motivating pupils (Ref. Biographical Interview with Bethany).

Bethany's role with the PGCE course at university involves much observation, and Bethany comments that this has impacted upon her professionally. She comments that, because she has been observed whilst teaching so frequently, she is 'used to it' and that she always does exactly as she would 'normally':

“The AST assessor, when she came in, said ‘you are very different to all of the ASTs I’ve seen.. You’re not the ‘all singing, all dancing person’ that would normally apply. The children respond to you as ‘you’’. I was very pleased about that!” (Ref. Biographical Interview with Bethany)

She explained how through her AST role and being observed and sharing experiences with trainee teachers, she learns a lot about herself and about teaching and learning processes because of the mutual dialogues that occur. Being involved in ITT has influenced Bethany in several ways. Not only is she used to being observed, she believes that because of the large number of observations that occur, she has a greater awareness of her own practice. A key role that Bethany has in ITT is to spend time with trainees discussing lessons following observations, and as a consequence, she described how it is important that she herself is aware of what she is doing and why, such that she can engage in discussion of her lessons with trainees. She also enjoys seeing her class being taught by trainees because “...you really get an idea of the class.” (Ref. Biographical Interview with Bethany)

Bethany commented that her colleague within her current school, Carol, has impacted upon her positively. She stated that because there were two teachers working in a semi

open-planned context it was valuable to work closely together and that it was useful to work with someone whose teaching style was similar.

Bethany's experiences as both a learner and a teacher in an educational context have been largely positive, and she has been exposed to a range of teachers that she believes have been high quality and from whom she has learned a range of teaching strategies. However, she commented that some teachers, with whom she worked in her previous school, did not always display what Bethany would describe as 'professional qualities':

"I've seen people whose planning gets done on a Monday morning, or retrospectively! And books not marked and I would just never want to be like that, it's not fair on the kids and I would never want to be in a position where I wouldn't take the job seriously. It's kids lives isn't it?" (Ref. Incident Interview with Bethany)

Bethany also recalled a negative experience that she feels has influenced how she responds to adults and children:

"Our link inspector at my last school, you could do a blinding lesson and she'd always have something bad to say and I just hated it!...She'd never start with a positive...that's influenced how I give feedback." (Ref. Biographical Interview with Bethany)

Evidently, Bethany's teaching context, experience and biography have a sophisticated association with her teaching practice. The activity of teaching is highly personal and it seems appropriate, therefore, to conclude this section about Bethany with a discussion of her values and beliefs given that, like Amanda, they play a central role in shaping her daily practice.

### ***Bethany's Teaching Values and Beliefs***

Bethany believes that it is extremely important to have a great understanding of children's needs and is aware that her own understanding has grown and developed

throughout her teaching career. She feels that it is highly important to be aware of each individual, and that this should be reflected in weekly planning and evaluations of lessons, claiming that it is important that there is progression built in to lessons for all children. Bethany's teaching approach is extremely calm, as was noted in observations during the data collection period, and she strives to remain calm at all times. She claimed that this is influenced by her own up-bringing, that her family are calm and she cannot recall being told off without knowing why as her parents always reasoned with her. This is reflected in her approach to children and Bethany believes it is important to always build up children's self-esteem and make them feel valued:

“It is really important to reinforce the positive. I do really try to do that, because they have got to have their self-esteem built up. If they haven't, they're not going to learn and they'll lack confidence. It is a huge thing...trying to make all of the children feel valued.” (Ref. Incident Interview with Bethany)

Bethany's teaching has been confined to Key Stage Two. However, she commented that she feels that it is very important for teachers to have a clear understanding of how children learn and described an incident that has had a profound impact upon her:

“I was on a training day for Early Years and we were looking at children's writing. I really hadn't been aware of development skills in writing and learnt so much; about how children, for letters (writing letters of the alphabet), hold pencils...it really made me think about some of the children in my class. I'm much more aware of their needs, you need to know how they've got there. Nigel has made huge leaps in his work and when I now think about his starting point I'm even more impressed.” (Ref. Incident Interview with Bethany)

Bethany described how her teaching beliefs and values have 'more or less' stayed the same and that she has adapted to various contexts. For example, Bethany believes that it is important to plan effectively for lessons and, despite once being in a situation where other teachers behaved differently, she continued to plan lessons in advance. In addition,

she feels that her values and beliefs have helped her to cope with the demands of the NLS:

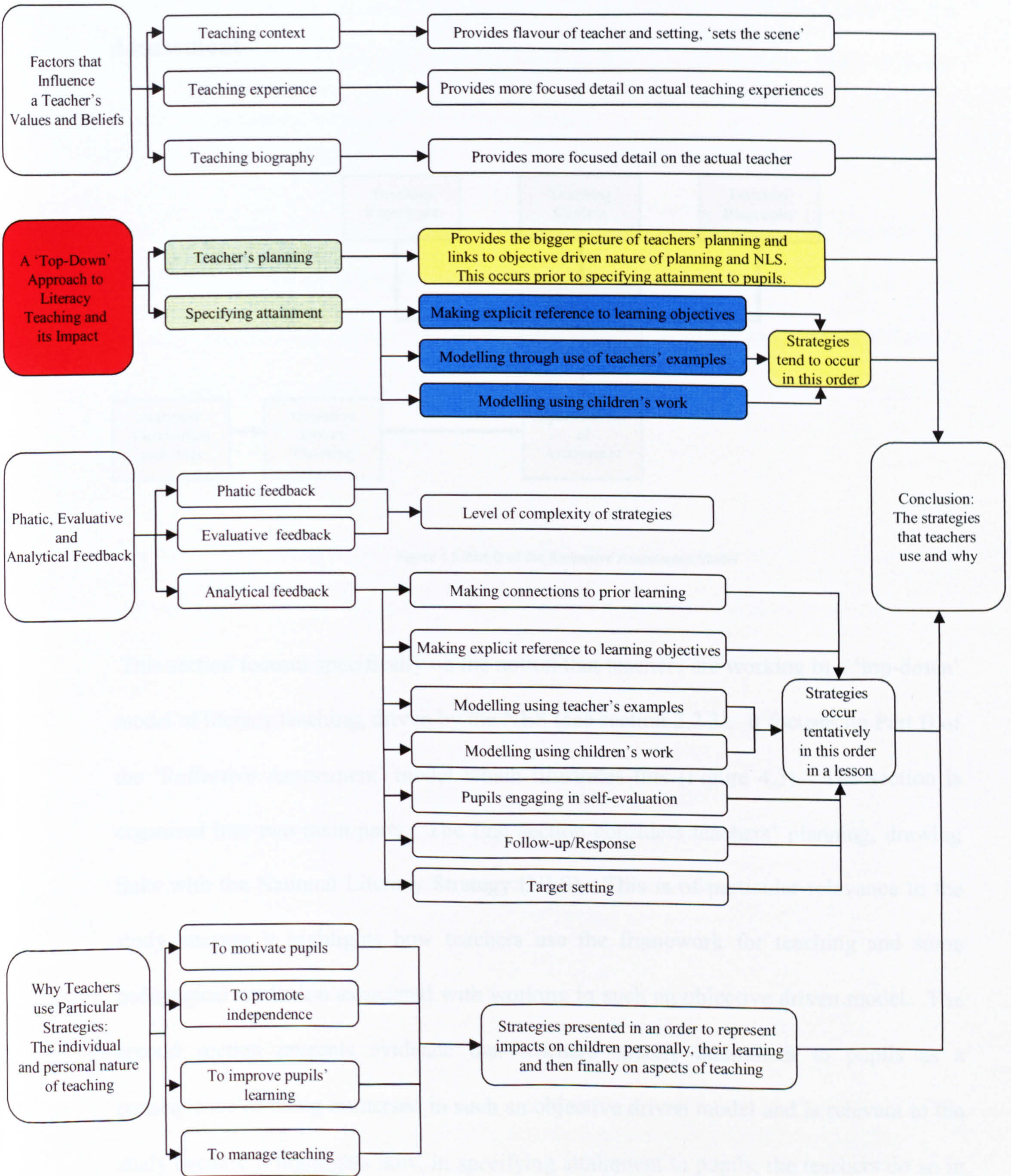
“I’ve always planned and so it hasn’t been much of a shock doing the NLS planning, I’ve made some changes, because of it though...but I’ve always planned in advance.” (Ref. Incident Interview with Bethany).

The construct elicitation exercise conducted with Bethany, provides further validation of her values and beliefs (Ref. Participatory Interview with Bethany). When presented with three different learning contexts, Bethany’s views on learning became very evident. She stated that children learn effectively when they are on-task and engrossed in learning, can share learning and are ‘guided’ by the teacher. When discussing whole class teaching activities, she highlighted her concerns that teaching ‘to the children’ does happen sometimes, but it is not ideal. During such situations she identified that children become bored, teaching becomes stilted and geared to the ‘average ability’ and it is difficult for children to collaborate and participate. Bethany stated that during her lessons she aspires to provide opportunities for children to communicate, be comfortable and collaborate.

In summary, it seems that Bethany’s teaching practice and values and beliefs are informed by a number of influencing factors. Indeed, both case studies have provided evidence that teachers’ contexts, experiences and teaching biographies have a close relationship with their teaching values and beliefs. Evidence as to how this impacts upon assessment is presented in section 4.4. The rationale for this is that later in the study it serves to reinforce the place of context, experience and biography on formative assessment explicitly.

The following section now considers 'Part B' of the Reflective Assessment model and presents evidence that teachers are working in a 'top down' model of education, and for literacy in particular, much practice seems to be driven by the NLS (see section 2.2.3). This section will also tease out the key strategies teachers use to 'specify attainment' to pupils.

## The Main Findings of the Study



Legend: ■ Main Section ■ Sub-Sections ■ Further Sub-Sections ■ Rationale for Organisation

## 4.2 A 'Top-Down' Approach to Literacy Teaching and its Impact on Assessment

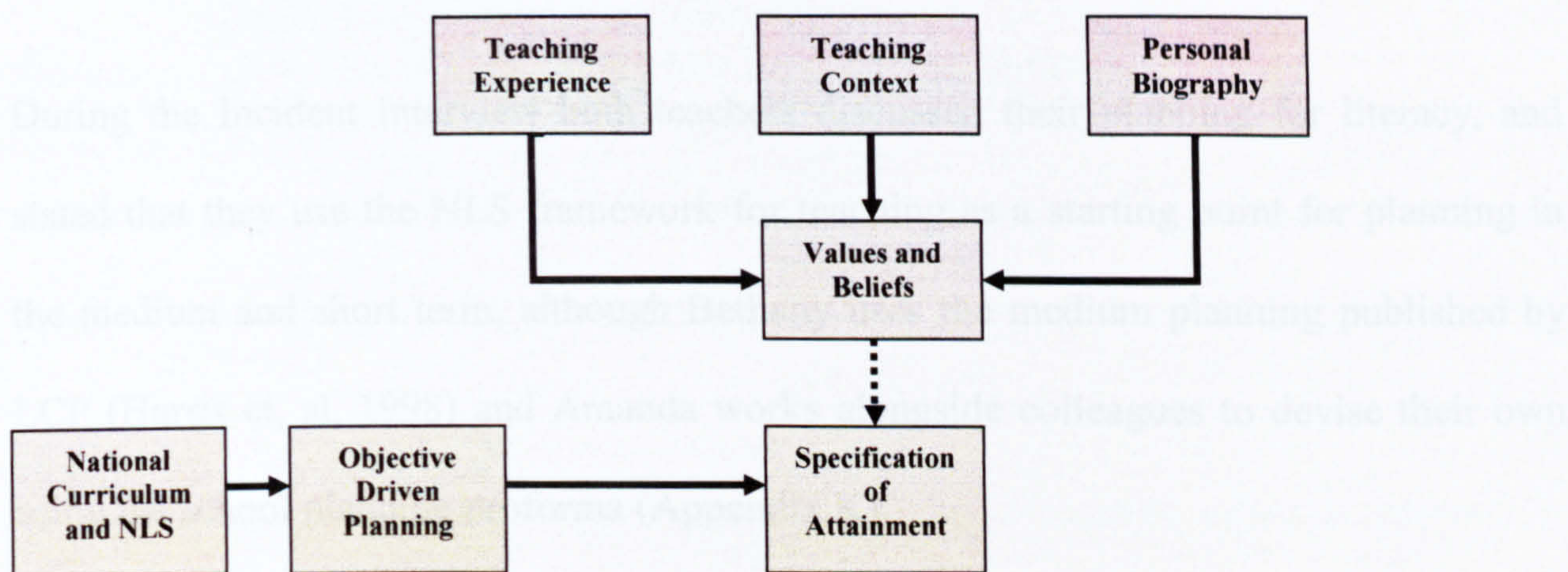


Figure 4.3 Part B of the Reflective Assessment Model

This section focuses specifically on the notion that teachers are working in a 'top-down' model of literacy teaching, driven by the NLS (see section 2.2.3). It focuses on Part B of the 'Reflective Assessment' model which illustrates this (Figure 4.3). The section is organised into two main parts. The first section considers teachers' planning, drawing links with the National Literacy Strategy (NLS). This is of particular relevance to the study because it highlights how teachers use the framework for teaching and some pedagogical confusion associated with working in such an objective driven model. The second section presents evidence that teachers specify attainment to pupils as a consequence of being immersed in such an objective driven model and is relevant to the study because it highlights how, in specifying attainment to pupils, the teachers do so in a variety of ways.



## **Teachers' Planning**

The following section describes the manner in which Amanda and Bethany plan for the teaching of literacy. I have elected to discuss this first in order to reflect the notion that teachers plan first then specify attainment to pupils.

During the Incident Interview both teachers discussed their planning for literacy, and stated that they use the NLS framework for teaching as a starting point for planning in the medium and short term, although Bethany uses the medium planning published by LCP (Harris et, al, 1998) and Amanda works alongside colleagues to devise their own using the school planning proforma (Appendix K).

The medium (termly) and short term (weekly) planning sheets of both teachers were collated and analysed. The medium term plans of both schools follow a similar format, in that they focus on the key areas of the NLS (Appendix K). The learning objectives on each sheet are explicit and directly 'imported' from the NLS framework for teaching.

The weekly planning of both teachers again follows a similar format (Appendix K). The planning is organised into whole class teaching, guided and independent work.

Amanda's weekly planning translates the objectives as highlighted on her medium term plans into activities designed to meet them, for example:

### **Whole Class Word/Sentence Level**

Word Level: Investigate the doubling up rule when a suffix is added

### **Whole Class Text Level**

Use words which have been investigated in. Hot seat. Give definition, count syllables.

(Ref. Amanda's weekly planning sheet, Appendix K)

Bethany's weekly planning sheet also provides activities devised to meet the learning objectives as outlined in the medium term planning, for example:

**Monday:**

Read *Sword in the Stone* Letts p. 38, check comprehension and discuss likeness to a boxing match.

Using Whiteboards, children to write one sentence to describe main event of para. Discuss that the writer uses a new par. For each event.

(Ref. Bethany's weekly planning sheet, Appendix K)

And as a prompt for the teacher, the main learning objectives for the unit of work are listed on the weekly planning proforma (Appendix K).

An interesting finding of the study, that will be discussed in further detail in chapter 5, is that neither teacher uses their weekly or medium term planning sheets for recording information on pupils' achievements following a lesson. This is particularly interesting given that Bethany discussed the value of evaluating lessons (see for example Bethany's *Teaching Values and Beliefs*, section 4.1). Amanda's weekly planning sheets occasionally contain additional information, although this is not a feature of all of her planning sheets and tends to be associated with domestic issues. For example, on her weekly planning sheet, for the week commencing 22nd January 2001 (Appendix K), she has commented that the sentence level and text level work for Thursday was not carried out due to alterations to football, and highlights that this will be covered the following week. However, the notes on her planning to highlight and explain changes do not relate to formative assessment.

Bethany's planning sheet has a box entitled, "Indicators for future learning"; however, she also rarely completes this box, and, when she handed me planning with empty boxes, she explained that:

“...she tends not to write on the planning sheets. She meets with Carol (a colleague) on Wednesdays. They talk about their planning then, about what worked and what didn't and about what individuals need. She stated that it's much easier this way, as they plan together. What they do has to be the same, so talking about things together and agreeing on what is the best thing to do next works well. Also, by Wednesday, they still have two days left and it is still early on in the week.” (Ref. Notes from discussion with Bethany following lesson 2)

To gain an understanding of this phenomenon, I asked the teachers during interview to explain how they use their medium term and weekly planning in their daily teaching. It became evident that there were a number of pedagogical dilemmas associated with this. Firstly, Amanda aired concerns about actually annotating planning sheets, particularly her medium term ones and indicated that this is because she re-uses them as a basis for planning year to year. Bethany also described how her medium term plans are used from year-to-year and as a consequence she does not annotate them. In practice, their weekly plans seem to be used as useful 'aide memoires' to lessons and they allow them to be clear about how they are translating the objectives from the medium term over the period of a week. Given that these plans seemed to be 'set in stone' as they are used yearly, I asked the teachers to explain how they impacted upon their daily lessons.

Amanda explained that the medium term planning was not altered but her weekly planning was useful as a 'prompt' and in reality her experiences as a teacher for twenty-eight years influence her task choices and she makes changes to lessons either as they are in progress or to future lessons in light of earlier lessons and evaluations. Although she does not always highlight this on her weekly planning, she adopts a flexible approach and when possible she considers the needs of the children:

“Some children learn differently and some lessons work better for others, but I try to meet their needs as much as possible.” (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda)

Bethany responded in a similar manner, stating that although she uses the medium term planning and inevitably, then, similar activities year-to-year, she tries to incorporate individuals' learning styles into her weekly planning. She particularly values her discussions with Carol during their weekly planning meetings, where they share ideas for activities and discuss the needs of the class and specific individuals (Ref. Incident Interview with Bethany). Like Amanda, this is not recorded on her planning sheet.

As can be seen there are a number of 'confusions' associated with planning that have emerged. Teachers seem to perceive that the framework for teaching is 'set in stone' and as a consequence do not make changes to medium term planning. However, planning in the shorter term seems to be crafted more to meet pupils' needs; weekly plans are completed, for both teachers, a week in advance and through discussion with colleagues. However, although both teachers meet part way through a week to consider teaching to date and plans for the following week, this is not recorded anywhere. To all intents and purposes the weekly plans, though altered and crafted through discussion, appear to remain the same, although this is, in practice, not the case. These issues will be discussed in further detail in Chapter five.

The following section moves to discuss how teachers specify attainment to pupils. The rationale for presenting this following the discussion about planning is that the teachers in the study are immersed in an objective driven model, use medium term plans derived from the objective driven framework of the NLS and then specify attainment to pupils.

## Specifying Attainment

The following section provides evidence that teachers specify attainment to pupils and do so through the use of a range of strategies and for particular purposes. Prior to discussing the particular strategies that teachers use, it is worth noting an interesting finding in relation to the specification of attainment, and that is the ‘nested’ approach to feedback during daily lessons (see figure 4.4).

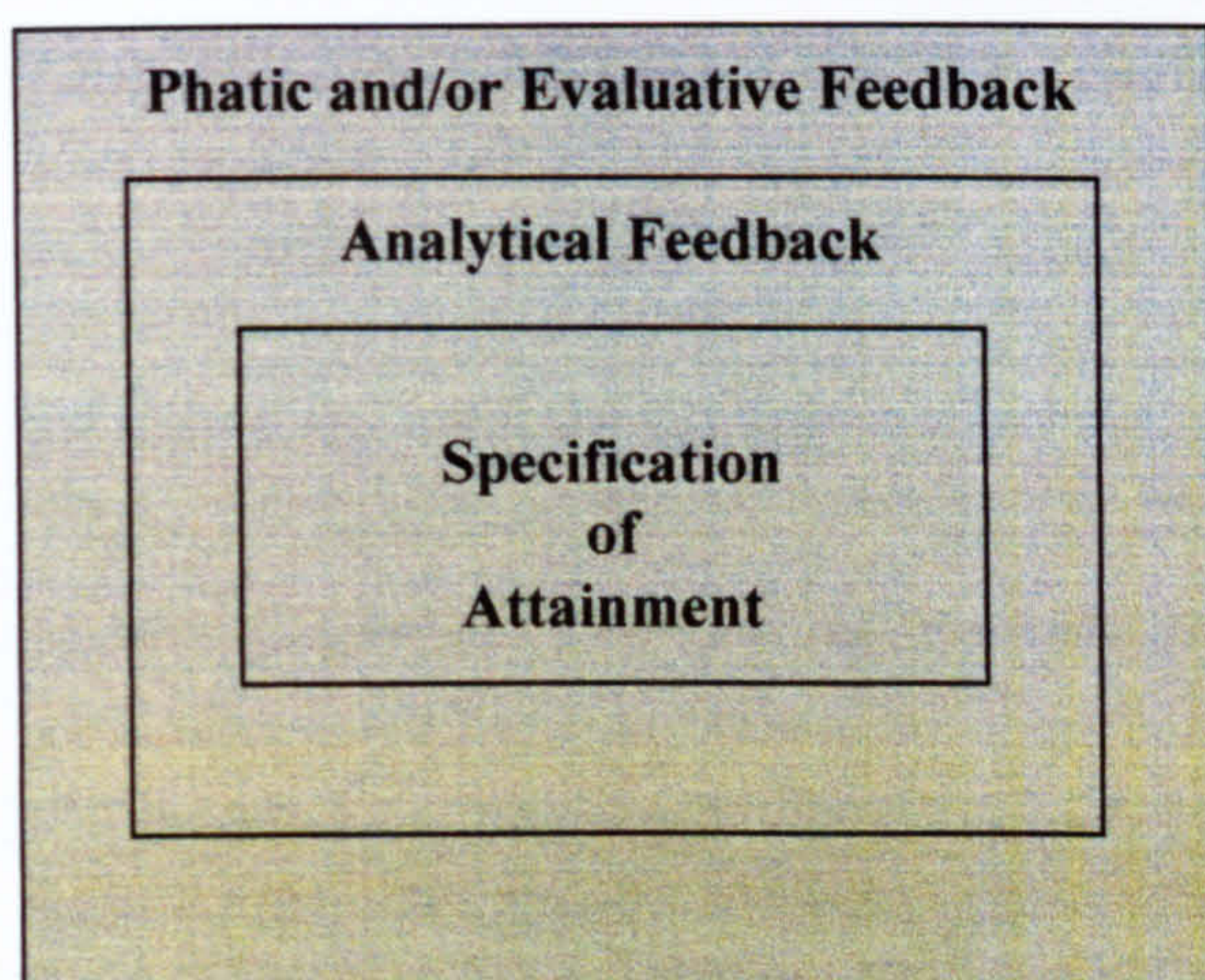


Figure 4.4 Nested Feedback Diagram for Daily Lessons

Figure 4.4 illustrates that the specification of attainment lies at the heart of both Amanda and Bethany’s day-to-day teaching and formative assessment. The above figure highlights that both teachers primarily specify attainment, and further analytical feedback takes place that relates to this (see section 4.3 for an explanation of the proportions of feedback types). This analytical feedback is rich feedback that occurs in the daily lesson interactions with pupils, and generally occurs following specification of attainment (see section 4.3). Phatic and evaluative feedback (see section 4.3) take place more ‘sporadically’ during lessons and when they occur, they are either followed by additional analytical feedback or used to conclude a detailed feedback exchange, for example:

She asked the children how they would go about editing a text, prompting them to ask them to reflect on what they had been doing in literacy in the past few weeks. The children then discussed this in pairs and then a boy

suggested looking at the nouns and adding either adjectives or clauses to improve the description. The teacher praised the boy (Good!) and asked him if he could give an example...The teacher then asked the rest of the class to have a look and see if they had any additional suggestions. Two girls...suggested that they could change a verb as well, by adding an adverb. The teacher praised the girls and again modelled their example. (Ref. Observation 6 of Bethany)

Interestingly, in written feedback the nested feedback figure (Figure 4.5) is reversed:

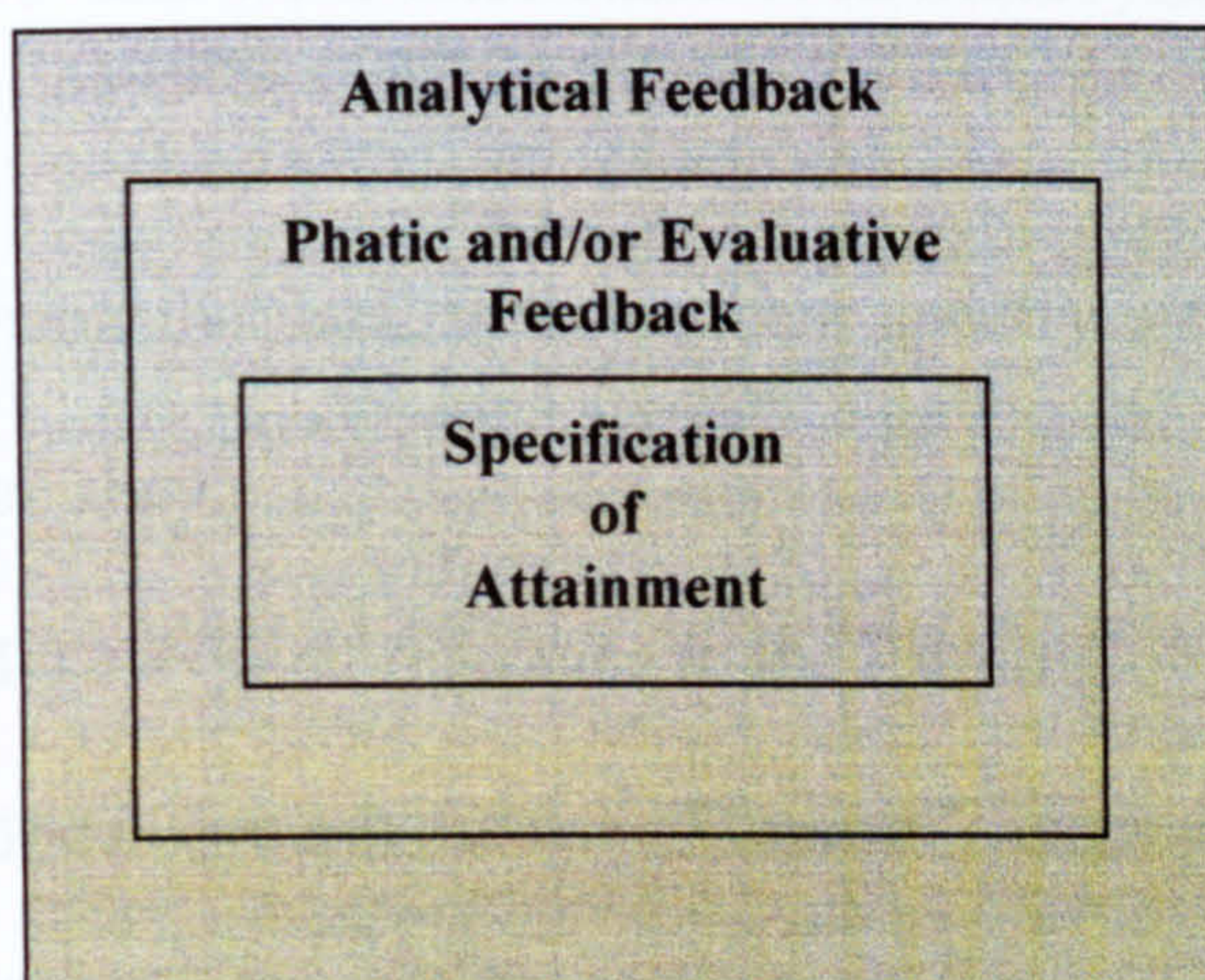


Figure 4.5 Nested Feedback Diagram for Written Work

The above figure highlights that teachers specify attainment but written feedback tends to be primarily phatic or evaluative, with limited evidence of analytical feedback (see section 4.3 for an explanation of the proportions of feedback types).

Nevertheless, evidence from the data suggests that specifying attainment is at the heart of both teachers' daily formative assessment strategies. This was endorsed by the pupils. During the group participatory activity there was a key finding that emerged in response to specifying attainment, and this was that, through negotiation, the pupils all placed statements related to specification of attainment at the top of the pyramid, highlighting it as their most important concern (Appendix L).

“That one (teacher explaining) goes at the top because it’s the most important. She shows you the good points as to what you need to do and everybody gets an explanation.” (Ref. Susan C, Group Interview, Amanda’s Class)

“You’ve got something to base it on. It’s really a framework but telling you how or giving you an idea as to what the teacher wants, what she’s expecting.” (Ref. Frances, Group Interview, Amanda’s Class)

“Explains is the most important! She needs to explain and we need to understand and modelling helps us to understand - if we don’t she’ll model and we’ll understand even more.” (Ref. Nina, Group Interview, Bethany’s Class)

On analysing the data, both teachers specify attainment through the use of three main techniques, they:

- Make explicit reference to the learning objectives
- Model through the use of teacher’s examples
- Model using children’s work.

The following discusses each of these three techniques, and the order of this discussion is relevant, in that it is largely chronological. I have elected to discuss how teachers make explicit reference to the learning objectives to start with, simply because in daily lessons this generally happens first.

### ***Make explicit reference to the learning objectives***

Evidence from observations highlights that both teachers make explicit reference to the learning objectives at the beginning of shared work. They do this in two ways. Each teacher has the objectives for the lesson written on their boards for the pupils to read and then shares these orally with the class:

She made the objective of the day’s session clear to the children, ‘to read aloud with expression’. (Ref. Observation 3 of Amanda)

She told the class that the objectives of the lesson today were to identify and correctly spell root words and words with the suffix 'ful'. (Ref. Observation 4 of Bethany)

In addition, during group work, both Amanda and Bethany re-iterate learning objectives to the pupils orally. They both recap on learning objectives to the whole class and then repeat this with the group that they are working with. For example:

Following the main activity, Bethany reminded the children of the main teaching points and objectives and directed them to work in their groups on an independent writing task - writing the end of the story. She explained to the children that although they were working independently, that she would like them at the end to read each others' work and make suggestions for improvements. The groups moved to their desks and began to write their story endings independently. A group of children worked with Bethany. She explained the purpose and recapped on LOs. (Ref. Observation 6 of Bethany)

The group working with the teacher worked collaboratively too. Amanda explained purpose and recapped on learning intention. They were doing limericks and to start the task, the teacher used a range of questions, provided examples of her own, and asked children to share and comment on each others' earlier examples. (Ref. Observation 7 of Amanda)

A further technique that Amanda and Bethany use during group and independent work is to encourage pupils to write down the lesson objective. For Bethany this is managed through the title of the work. For example, Nigel's work, dated Wednesday 15th November is titled "Directed and Reported Speech" (Appendix M). This title was directly related to the learning objective for the session. Amanda employs a different strategy in written work. Although not a feature of every piece of work, Amanda either writes the explicit purpose on the board and the children copy this out at the beginning of their written piece, or she asks the children to devise their own 'purpose' in relation to the particular learning objective. For example, Julie's work, dated 12th June is titled "A 5 day visit to Dukes House Wood with Year 5/6" and underneath the title Julie has



written: "Purpose: The purpose of this report is to report to Mr Kerr, because he wants to find out about the trip to Dukes House Wood" (Appendix N). And Susan's purpose is: "To tell the teachers who came to Dukes House Wood how good I think it was." These purposes link with the objective of the lesson.

The children discussed the strategy of teachers making explicit reference to objectives and criteria. Barry, for example, commented that:

"It's good if I know the criteria. We do this in editing and it's good if you know what to base your work on. Sometimes you need to keep looking back and checking it." (Ref. Barry, Group Interview, Amanda's Class)

Amanda and Bethany also make explicit reference to objectives in the plenary, and this is managed orally, for example:

At the end of the Literacy Hour, the teacher drew the attention of the class back to the learning objectives for the session and asked them to consider whether they, as individuals, had met them, and asked individuals to share this with the rest of the class. Those from the independent group, which included Frances and Susan, commented that they felt that they had done particularly well, that their written work contained powerful language and descriptions to ensure that they built up suspense in their stories. This group of children had also been reading each other's and Susan said that she thought Frances's work was excellent and that she had achieved the LO well. The individuals all said that they felt that they had been successful in the lesson and gave some examples why. (Ref. Observation 1 of Amanda)

In the plenary session Bethany re-iterated the LO and children gave examples of their word modifications and Bethany targeted more able learners and asked them further questioning - she encouraged them to model to their peers. (Ref. Observation 1 of Bethany)

Amanda and Bethany use a range of strategies to make learning objectives explicit, and the following describes how, in addition to these, teachers also use models with pupils. I have chosen to discuss how teachers use models of their own prior to discussing how

they use children's work because this follows on logically from the above; given that the locus of responsibility lies with the teacher.

### *Model through the use of examples*

There was evidence from lesson observations to demonstrate that both Amanda and Bethany model through the use of examples in order to specify attainment and provide children with a model of how to do a piece of work. They use this technique during shared work at the beginning of lessons and during plenaries. For example:

(The beginning of the lesson)

The teacher started the lesson by asking 'Can anyone remind us of persuasive language we looked at yesterday?' The teacher then told the class that she would be reading a piece of text, as a model example, and she wanted them to identify the genre.

The children then looked at the persuasive piece and recount to draw out how the author had cleverly misled the reader through choice of vocabulary and illustrations.

(The plenary)

A plenary took place at the end of the lesson and the children who had been looking at conditional clauses gave examples related to the summercamp experience. These examples were scribed by the classteacher on the whiteboard. The teacher asked the class to discuss these in pairs and use them as models for devising new sentences. The children talked to each other and the teacher then took feedback from those children who had not initially been looking at clauses. (Ref. Observation 7, Amanda's Class)

(The beginning of the lesson)

The teacher had given the class the SATs paper the previous week and some children had elected to do the story "Trapped".

The teacher put the model beginning on the board and asked the children to read it. The children read the beginning independently. The teacher then asked the children to discuss with each other another good opening sentence to start the story, using the example as a model

(The plenary)

Bethany then read Nigel's work to the rest of the class. She asked why they thought she had chosen Nigel's to share. The children turned to their partners and then feedback that it was because he had written a clear, exciting ending to the story and 'used excellent words'. Bethany praised the children and asked them if they had any pointers for Nigel. Several made some suggestions for him related to vocab. She then asked them to think about

how Nigel's story could help improve their own work. (Ref. Observation 6, Bethany's Class)

And they also use modelling as a strategy in group work, for example:

Working with a small group of children, the teacher wrote some sentences on the whiteboard. For example: "I was very disappointed by the quality of the rides at the fairground. Your advertisements showed high quality rides, but on arrival most of the rides were closed or broke. I was very disappointed..." She then asked the children to use the example as a model and suggest new sentences themselves. They gave a selection of sentences orally and the teacher scribed them on the whiteboard. (Ref. Observation 5 of Bethany)

What is interesting is that evidence from the pupil interviews suggests that this is a feature of most of their lessons, for example:

"Before we go and do our work, she (Bethany) will do it with us at the beginning of literacy. Sometimes in the middle of the literacy lesson she will do more explaining and it's good. When it comes to the end, you know what you've done. When supply teachers come in we go away and in the middle part they don't get us back together to show us things. That's not so good." (Ref. Michelle, Group Interview, Bethany's Class)

"When the teacher explains and gives you models it's very valuable. Gives you 'WOW' ideas, telling you this is what you're heading for. Miss A (Amanda) really does loads of this, more actually than talking to us about our work. She does it to the whole class loud and clear... You've now got an idea locked in your head!" (Ref. Susan C, Group Interview, Amanda's Class)

There is also some evidence from the data that the teachers provide examples of models for pupils in their marking (Appendix M), although the evidence that relates to this is rather limited, as can be seen in the overview of marking (Appendix O), and is associated with improving work as opposed to specifying attainment.

Teachers therefore provide pupils with a range of teacher driven models, however, they also use models generated by the pupils.

### *Model using children's work*

From the lesson observations, there was evidence that both Amanda and Bethany use children's work as a model and they use this strategy very frequently during literacy sessions in order to specify attainment to highlight how a piece of work meets the learning objective. This strategy was used at the beginning of the lesson, and other children in the class then took ideas forward into their own work, for example:

The teacher said that she wanted the class to continue writing their persuasive pieces for the lesson today during group work, but before going to do this she said that she wanted Barry and Julie to read some of the arguments that they had managed to start the previous day. The teacher said that she was pleased with their work, and wanted them to share this with the class. She highlighted that they had been successful in meeting the LOs yesterday and that the class were to listen and find out why. She illustrated how Brian and Jackie had not only completed their work but produced several persuasive pieces/statements of good quality and that they were forming their arguments well so far. (Ref. Observation 4 of Amanda)

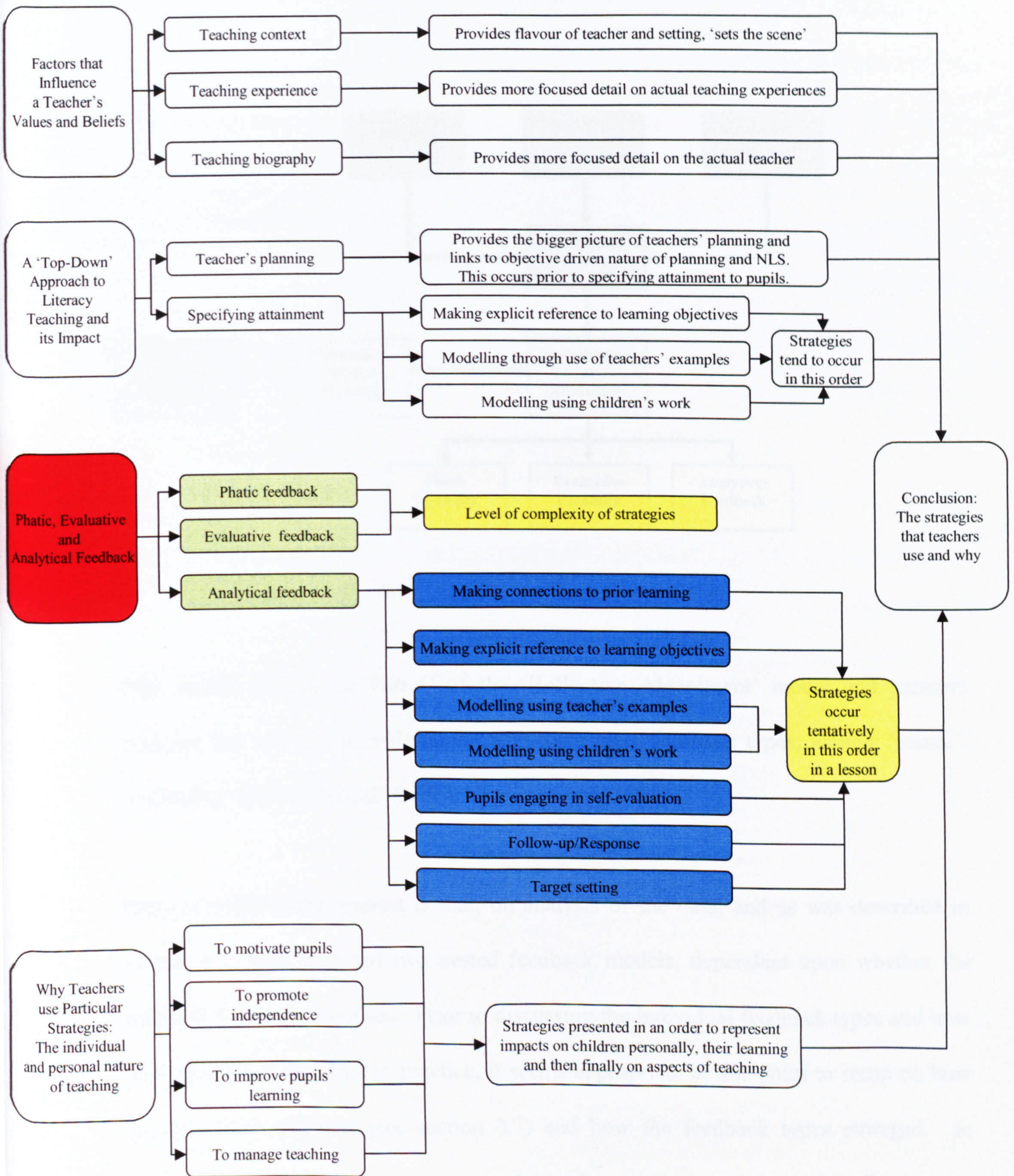
And the strategy was also used at the end of a lesson to highlight how the objectives had been met, for example:

In the plenary, Bethany explained to the children that she was very pleased with their work and that the LO had been achieved by all and to a high standard. She asked the children if they would like to share their work so far. Children from the independent group said yes and read their poem. Bethany explained how they had met LO to class. She asked them had they made many edits to it and both shared examples of how and why they had made improvements - based on their discussions with each other. (Ref. Observation 3 of Bethany)

The above section has highlighted that teachers working in a top down model of education, that is led by the National Curriculum and National Literacy Strategy, are directed towards an objective driven model of planning and therefore to specification of attainment (see section 2.2.3). Within such a prescriptive model teachers specify attainment in particular ways. The above section has not, however, explored why teachers use particular strategies. I have chosen to include this in section 4.4 as many of

the reasons why teachers specify attainment in particular ways are closely aligned to why they use particular strategies for giving feedback to pupils. The following section moves to discuss Part C of the Reflective Assessment model (Figure 4.6).

## The Main Findings of the Study



Legend: ■ Main Section ■ Sub-Sections ■ Further Sub-Sections ■ Rationale for Organisation

### 4.3 'Phatic', 'Evaluative' and 'Analytical' Feedback

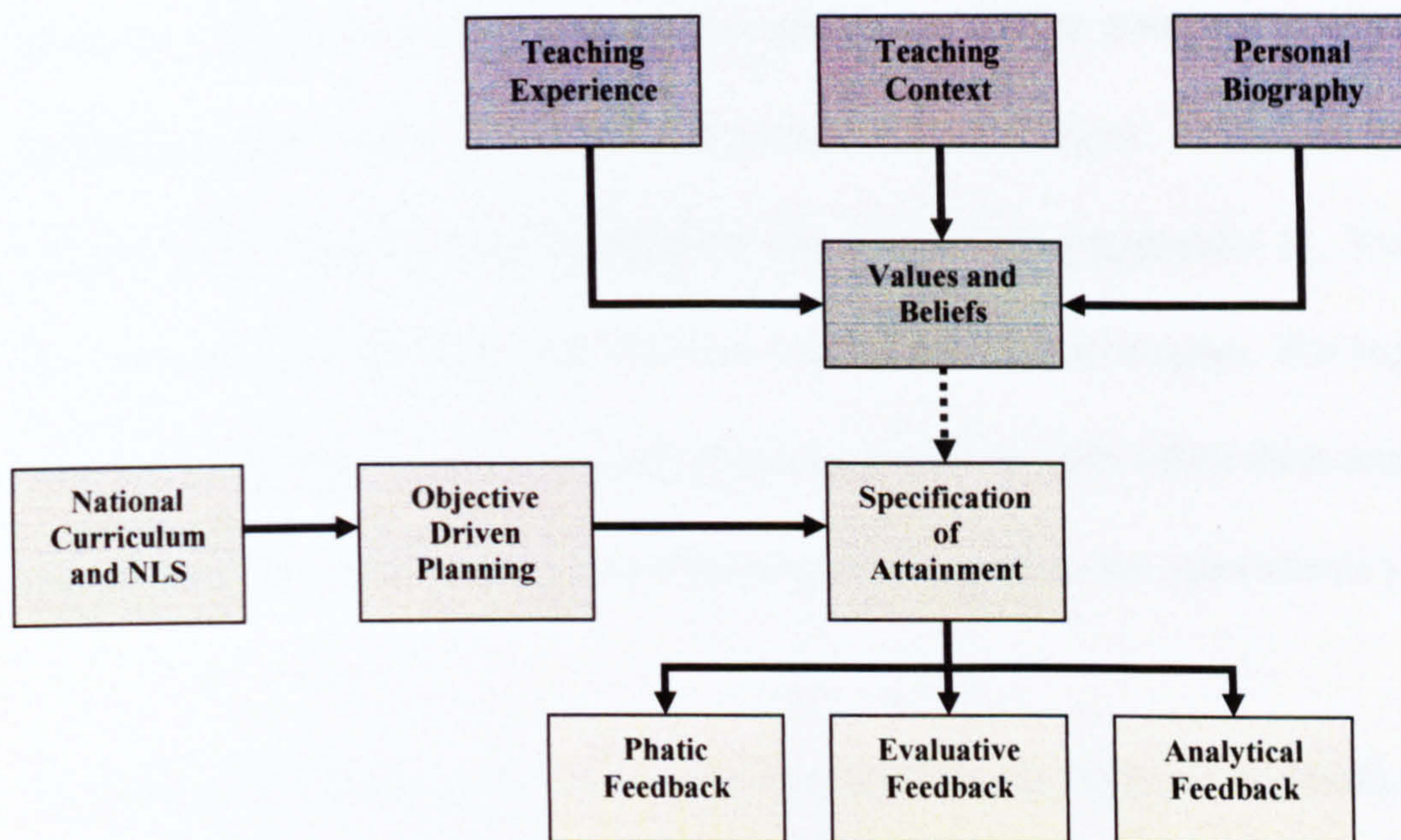


Figure 4.6 Part C of the Reflective Assessment Model

This section focuses on Part C of the 'Reflective Assessment' model and presents evidence that teachers provide pupils with three main feedback types, namely 'phatic', 'evaluative' and 'analytical' feedback.

What is of particular interest is that, on analysis of the data, and as was described in section 4.2, there emerged two nested feedback models, dependant upon whether the feedback was oral or written. Prior to discussing the individual feedback types and how they manifest themselves in practice, it seems appropriate at this point to recap on how the data were analysed (see section 3.7) and how the feedback types emerged. In addition, it also seems an appropriate point to discuss the proportions of feedback types in each context, be it written or oral.

### **The analysis of the data and emerging feedback types and their proportions**

As described in the methodology chapter, a content analysis was conducted (see section 3.7). In conducting this, I gathered the observations and conducted a colour coding exercise. What materialized from this analysis was the emergence of three discernible feedback types; namely phatic, evaluative and analytical. An example of one such colour coded observation is included in the appendices (Appendix J). Further scrutiny of the observations revealed that teachers used particular strategies. Having conducted this task with the observations, the process was repeated with other data and a colour coded summary of the distribution of evidence can be found in the appendices (Appendix P).

In terms of feedback types, it became evident that the balance of feedback type differed depending upon whether the feedback was oral or written. Although I have made a strong case for a qualitative approach to the study (see section 3.4), it seems useful to present the reader with an overview of the proportions of feedback types in both contexts.



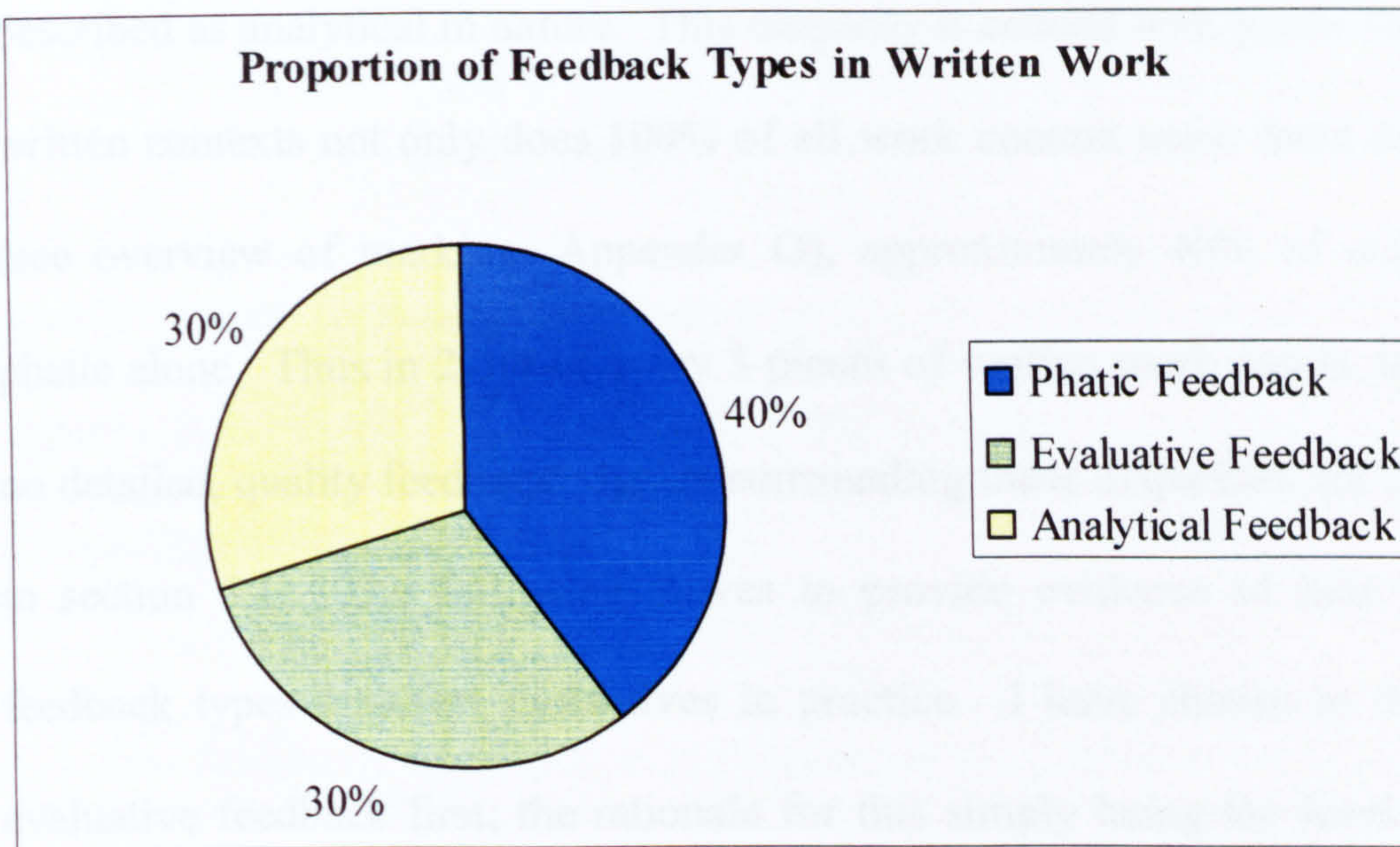


Table 3 : Proportion of Feedback Types in Written Work

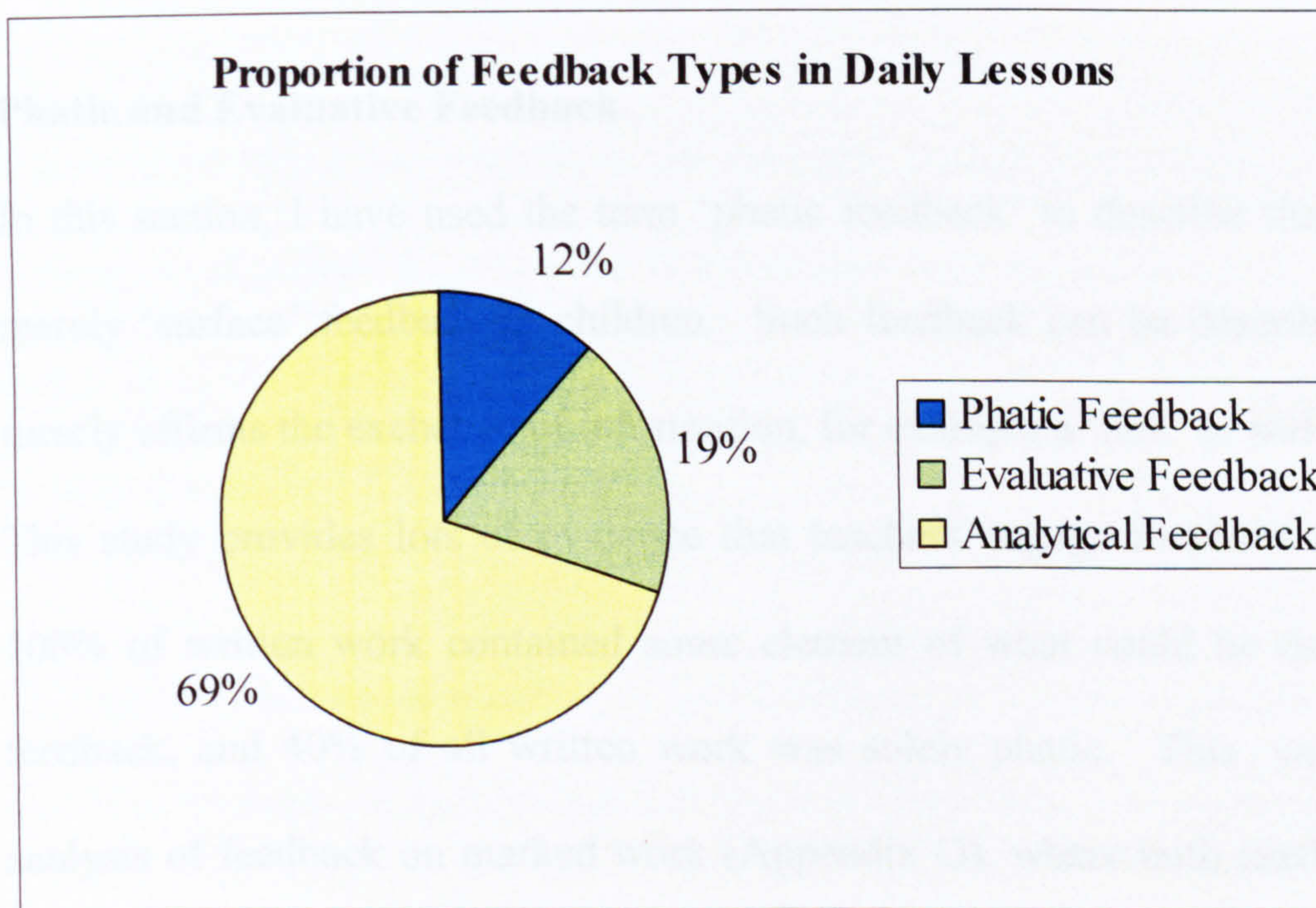


Table 4 : Proportion of Feedback Types in Daily Lessons

As the above two charts illustrate, the proportion of feedback in written work that is analytical constitutes only approximately 30% of all written feedback, this contrasts sharply with analytical feedback in daily lessons, where this comprises a significant proportion. As can be seen, during daily interactions with pupils 69% of feedback can be

described as analytical in nature. This disparity is echoed with phatic feedback, where in written contexts not only does 100% of all work contain some form of phatic feedback (see overview of marking, Appendix O), approximately 40% of written feedback is phatic alone. Thus in 2 out of every 5 pieces of written work pupils, in general, receive no detailed, quality feedback. Issues surrounding these disparities are discussed in detail in section 5.1. The following moves to provide evidence of how these discernible feedback types manifest themselves in practice. I have chosen to discuss phatic and evaluative feedback first; the rationale for this simply being the level of complexity of the feedback types. As will emerge, analytical feedback is more complex in nature than its counterparts.

### **Phatic and Evaluative Feedback**

In this section, I have used the term ‘phatic feedback’ to describe that which provides merely ‘surface’ feedback to children. Such feedback can be described as that which merely affirms the exchange of information, for example a ‘tick’ or nod from the teacher. This study provides lots of evidence that teachers engage in phatic feedback. Indeed 100% of written work contained some element of what could be described as phatic feedback, and 40% of all written work was solely phatic. This can be seen on the analysis of feedback on marked work (Appendix O), where both teachers regularly use ‘ticks’, ‘smiley faces’ and Bethany also awards ‘merits’ for what she describes as ‘good work’. With regard to non-written feedback, evidence from the data highlights that during a lesson comments such as ‘well done!’ and more subtle feedback such as body language and smiling at children are common types of phatic feedback, for example:

The teacher responded highly positively - saying well done! Smiling and nodding head. (Ref. Observation 3, Amanda’s Class)

Her eye contact with children was continual, she smiled frequently and children knew if their independent responses were right because of her tone of voice and phrasing. (Ref. Observation 1, Bethany's Class)

As can be seen from the above examples and the overview (Appendix O), these phatic gestures do little other than either affirm that work has been marked or is correct, or that information has been exchanged.

A further finding of this study, as highlighted in the feedback overview (Appendix O), is that on analysis of pupils' marked, written work, the written assessments from the teachers are overwhelmingly phatic, with work being 'ticked' or comments such as 'good' or 'well done' being written at the end of a piece of writing (Appendix Q).

I have used the term 'evaluative' to describe feedback that provides some form of evaluation of pupils' work. What is interesting with regard to 'evaluative feedback' is that it is almost inevitably related to either the objective of the lesson or, what I have termed 'the hidden objective'.

Evaluative feedback in relation to lesson objectives occurs when the teacher specifies that the learning objective has or has not been met, but provides no additional information. This feedback type occurs most frequently in written feedback. For example, Amanda comments on Susan's piece of work:

"This is a good attempt at a summary Susan" (Appendix R)

And similarly Bethany comments:

"Stephen, you had a very good understanding of how a non-chronological book works. Have a Merit. (smiley face)" (Appendix R)

On analysis of the data, it became evident that there are also 'hidden objectives'. These objectives overwhelmingly manifest themselves in written feedback, where, for example, teachers evaluate the work in terms of spelling, grammar and/or punctuation, even if these were not part of the intended objectives. For example, Bethany comments on a piece of work that was a comprehension activity:

“Remember proper nouns, like names, need capital letters.” (Appendix S)

This interesting phenomenon was also endorsed by the pupils who, in discussions stated, for example:

“We need to know about the objectives, like where to put commas and things.” (Ref. Nina, Group Interview, Bethany's Class)

The above has illustrated two of the main feedback types that occur in written and oral interactions. The following now moves to discuss the third type of feedback that has been identified in the analysis of the data; namely 'analytical' feedback.

### **Analytical Feedback**

As described in Chapter 3, to conduct the data analysis, I used observer identified categories that emerged from the data. This was a useful technique and provided me with a starting point for further analysis and shifting (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Having completed the process, an analytical feedback typology began to emerge (Figure 4.7). The typology demonstrates a range of strategies that teachers use to provide pupils with analytical feedback and highlights that some strategies are used for different purposes. For example, teachers make connections to prior learning in order to motivate pupils, promote independence and manage teaching more effectively. The following section therefore considers each of the main strategies used by the teachers.

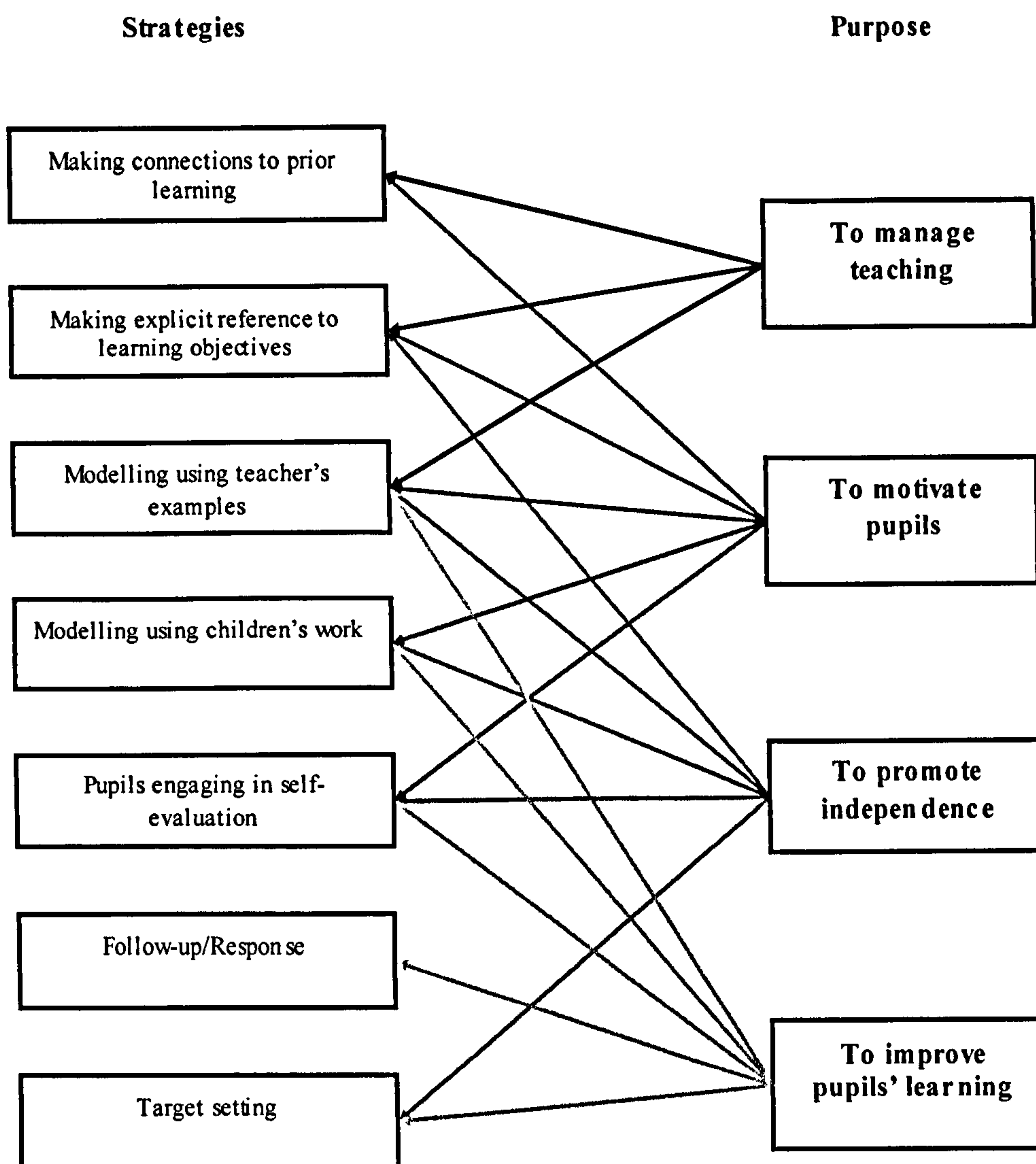


Figure 4.7 Analytical Feedback Typology

The following is organised to discuss each of the above mentioned analytical feedback strategies and it is also important to note that the ascribed 'purposes' identified in the above figure form the basis of the discussion in section 4.4.

This section is organised, quite simply to discuss each in turn. I have elected to commence with 'making connections to prior learning' and conclude with 'target setting'

because these strategies tend to take place chronologically, and, although this is not 'set in stone', it provides a structure for this section.

However, prior to moving to discuss each of the feedback strategies, I felt that it was useful to provide the reader with a visual representation of the proportions of each type that occurs throughout daily lessons.

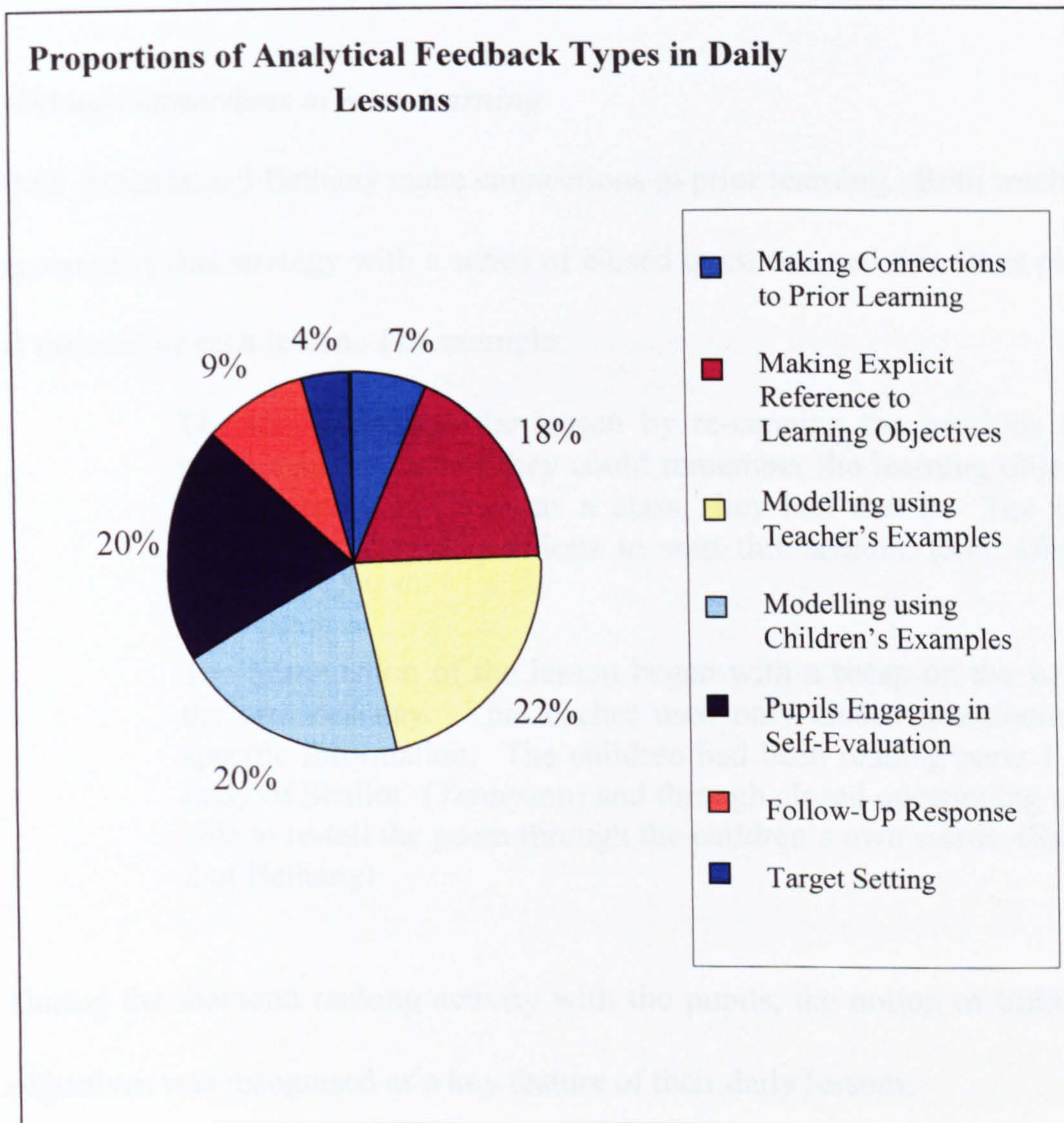


Table 5 : Proportion of Analytical Feedback Types in Daily Lessons

The above demonstrates that there is a relative balance between a teacher's use of four main feedback types; namely making reference to learning objectives; modelling using teacher or children's examples and pupils engaging in self-evaluation. The above also demonstrates that although target setting occurs, this is the least frequently used technique. Interestingly, although 'making connections to prior learning' is a strategy that appears to be used infrequently this can be attributed to the fact that it happens primarily at the outset of a lesson to recap on earlier work.

### *Making connections to prior learning*

Both Amanda and Bethany make connections to prior learning. Both teachers frequently accompany this strategy with a series of closed questions and this takes place invariably at the start of each lesson. For example:

The teacher started the lesson by re-capping the previous lesson, asking pupils whether or not they could remember the learning objective from the previous day and how, as a class, they had met it. The teacher used a selection of closed questions to start this session. (Ref. Observation 1 of Amanda)

The introduction of the lesson began with a recap on the work carried out the previous day. The teacher used only closed questioning, to generate specific information. The children had been reading parts 1 and 2 of 'The Lady of Shalott' (Tennyson) and through closed questioning the teacher was able to re-tell the poem through the children's own words. (Ref. Observation 2 of Bethany)

During the diamond ranking activity with the pupils, the notion of linking to previous objectives was recognised as a key feature of their daily lessons:

"We always know what we're doing and she'll (Amanda) tell us that we are learning something and that it is a bit like what we did yesterday." (Ref. Julie, Group Interview, Amanda's Class)

Teachers also use this strategy during guided work with pupils, for example:

The teacher worked with green group for a guided writing task. Bethany asked them if they were clear about what they had been doing earlier and if LO was clear and asked questions regarding their word choices.” (Ref. Observation 2 of Bethany)

### *Make explicit reference to learning objectives*

A key strategy that both teachers use is that they make explicit reference to learning objectives. As stated earlier (see section 4.2.2), this is a useful strategy for specifying attainment to pupils; however, teachers use this strategy for further analytical feedback purposes.

To provide analytical feedback through the specification of attainment, both teachers use plenaries. For example:

A plenary took place where the teacher referred back to the main teaching objectives and asked for examples of justified arguments.

She took the examples and asked the class to work in pairs to discuss these-asking had they met the LO and how? (Ref. Observation 5 of Amanda)

The plenary was given, children were asked to work in pairs to check and change each other’s prior to re-drafting focusing on the LO, which teacher restated had been were to identify and correctly spell root words and word with the suffix ending ‘ful’ and the teacher supported individuals on a one-one basis during plenary. (Ref. Observation 4 of Bethany)

In addition to this, during her marking Bethany explained that she tries to provide pupils with information regarding how they have been successful, and I asked her to discuss this. She stated that it is important that she frequently makes it explicit to the children that they know what they have not achieved in relation to their own learning, and the learning objectives of the activity and at the same time highlighting what they need to do to be successful. Bethany also said that when giving such feedback, it is also important to highlight the children’s successes:



“I let them know what they have done, what they’ve achieved, this is important, but they also need to know what they have not achieved and how to get there.

I tend to tell pupils what they have not achieved in relation to their own learning and say what they have achieved and how to get better.

It is useful to describe why an answer is right, it reinforces what they have done. It reinforces, for example, where a comma needs to be.” (Ref. Assessment Interview with Bethany)

The value of written feedback related specifically to learning objectives was discussed by the children who described how the teacher does this:

“The teacher writes on your work telling you that you need to improve it to meet the learning objectives. You might not get immediate feedback, so sometimes you can’t do anything, but you’re learning in your book, well, if it’s in your book it’s always there to remind you!” (Ref. Ryan, Group Interview, Amanda’s Class)

What is of interest here is that on analysis of the pupils’ marked written work, as described earlier (see section 4.3), much analytical written feedback is often associated with spelling and grammar; for Amanda this constitutes approximately 38% of her analytical feedback, and for Bethany, 56%. And as can be seen by the examples above, this is reflected in the pupils’ comments. This was discussed with the teachers, when we looked at the overview of written feedback (Appendix O) both of whom were initially somewhat surprised by this:

“This is interesting!...I didn’t spot that! (feedback related to punctuation and spelling) ...I didn’t know I did that, but I suppose it’s not surprising really, you get hooked in to looking at certain things when you’re marking and punctuation’s mine!” (Ref. Amanda, Group Teacher Interview, Alpha Primary School)

Bethany’s comments were very similar, and she also went on to discuss how it is possibly due to time constraints and ‘habit’ that she focuses on ‘the basics’. This prompted her to discuss her ‘check and change’ cards (Appendix T), which although she values greatly, she stated focused on editorial aspects of writing:

“These are so useful for getting the children to mark their own work and I think they’re useful - I never thought though about the focus - It’s all about editing!” (Ref. Bethany, Group Teacher Interview, Beta Primary School)

Interestingly, the pupils had picked up on this, as is illustrated in the above examples (the pupil interviews) they discuss learning objectives and ‘punctuation’ simultaneously. In terms of written feedback, then, there seems to be a ‘hidden’ learning objective associated with written work.

### *Model using teacher’s examples*

Evidence from the data highlights that teachers use models as a technique for providing analytical feedback to children, and this was acknowledged by the children, for example:

“Well she (the teacher) explains and models first, then she talks to us about it. She then usually ticks it if we’ve met the criteria and says what we’ve done well.” (Ref. Simon, Group Interview, Bethany’s Class)

Amanda and Bethany provide models to the whole class to provide analytical feedback and this takes place during all parts of the literacy hour. What is of particular interest is that essentially, during taught sessions, it is not the actual model itself that provides analytical feedback, but the manner in which it is used. For example, teachers ask children to discuss in pairs either why particular models are effective or to make suggestions for improvements:

The teacher then modelled to the class examples of how to use asides in stories. She wrote some examples of her own on the whiteboard and asked the children to talk to each other in pairs about how she had done this. (Ref. Observation 4 of Bethany)

When discussing openings and endings a girl volunteered the answer ‘question’, the teacher responded positively, and said that the girl was correct, explaining why to the rest of the class. The teacher then provided a model from a text to illustrate this. Amanda encouraged children to think about her example, and another girl said that she disagreed with the positioning of the word ‘question’ and said that she felt it would be better placed under ‘language’, as the story would likely involve questioning

language. The teacher responded positively, and threw this open to discussion. Children discussed this issue with their partners, and they agreed with the second girl, (including girl 1). The teacher then moved the word, praising both girls highly positively for their contribution. (Ref. Observation 2 of Amanda)

In addition to providing models to the whole class, teachers provide models to individual children and they tend to do this through written feedback. Both Amanda and Bethany described how they provide written models for pupils as a means of scaffolding learning and do this in two ways, either whilst a lesson is in progress or as feedback on completion of an activity. Whilst a lesson is in progress, models with individuals are used similarly to those with the whole class.

For example:

Wednesday the 15th November, Bethany was working with a group of pupils and Emily was amongst this group. On Emily's work, titled 'Directed and Reported Speech,' Emily has written an example of reported speech and Bethany has provided her with a model for direct speech during the lesson:

"I hate him," she whispered. Emily then continues through the activity providing correct examples of each type of speech. (Appendix N)

However, models that teachers provide pupils with when they are 'distance marking' are different in nature, and serve the purpose of providing exemplars to pupils, and interestingly, although teachers state that they provide models in written marked feedback, evidence of this was very rare. Nevertheless, there were some instances. For example:

Simon's independent work dated 16th November. Simon has written: She asked did you find the tunnel. Bethany has modelled this correctly above it: She asked whether she had found the tunnel. (Appendix M)

What is of particular interest with regard to the above and similar models is that on the pages that contain them, there is no evidence that pupils have practised using them.

However, the pupils did discuss teacher modelling and claimed that they do use it. For example:

“It’s good when the teacher explains to us and gives us models about our work. She can give you the answers and explain why it’s that. She tells you what you’ve got right or wrong. You’re learning from your own mistakes, no-one else’s. You’re learning about your strong points and your weak points. You get used to your mistakes and can improve and learn from them.” (Ref. Julie, Group Interview, Amanda’s Class)

“If it’s just ticks, you don’t know what you’ve done wrong. Like, the connective could be in the wrong place, but you wouldn’t know. If she just ticks, you don’t know how to make it better. It’s much better if she shows you, if she writes it in your book for you and it’s there for next time.” (Ref. Michelle, Group Interview, Bethany’s Class)

### *Model using children’s work*

Although Amanda and Bethany generate their own examples to model to children, there is evidence that they also extend this further by using examples of the children’s work.

Teachers use this strategy in all elements of the literacy hour, for example during whole class shared work, the following was observed:

The teacher then asked the children to look at the class plan (story plan) and asked the children to vote on what they thought would be the best way forward for the story. About three-quarters of the class elected for the child in the story to ‘fall unconscious’.

The teacher then asked the children to discuss with each other a good opening sentence for the middle section of the story. A consensus was made and the rest of the lesson continued in this format, with the teacher scribing, checking and encouraging children to ‘check and change’. Throughout this, the teacher continually asked the children to improve each other’s work, by considering the choice of verbs and adjectives. (Ref. Observation 6 of Bethany)

However, the use of children’s work was noted most frequently when teachers worked with groups, and was particularly evident during plenaries. The teachers used children’s models to encourage the rest of the class to assess if lesson objectives had been met, for example, Bethany stated:

“I show pupils a range of other pupils’ work. When I shared Nigel’s story, I read it so that the children couldn’t see the spelling errors, well that wasn’t part of the criteria and Nigel had done really well. This was to celebrate his work, the rest of the class shared in his success and could see what had made it a good piece of work.” (Ref. Assessment Interview with Bethany)

In addition, Bethany and Amanda were observed using children’s work as models in plenaries, for example:

In the plenary, Bethany shared some of the examples from the group she had been working with, with rest of class. She read parts of their work aloud and asked the class to evaluate this in terms of LO in pairs. The children gave positive feedback to the children about their achievements, stating how LO had been met. (Ref. Observation 2 of Bethany)

The teacher then used two examples of persuasive writing from Frances and Susan. She read each one in turn. Having finished, she asked the rest of the children to discuss, in pairs, the strengths of each argument, and the differences in style. The children discussed these and each pair suggested that both were powerful arguments. Each argument was supported by justifications; however, the style of each was different. The class felt that Frances’ was more ‘formal’ in nature, whereas Susan’s was more “...as if she was talking.” The teacher then referred back to the key point of appropriateness and asked the children to consider whether each was appropriate or not. Frances suggested that hers was because it was written for a specific audience. The teacher took Frances’s point as a main point for the rest of the class..” Exactly, appropriateness means ‘fit for purpose’. She explained that you need to think when you are writing, who is it for, who will be reading this? She clarified that there was nothing wrong with Susan’s, her arguments are very strong, but her audience would have been different. (Ref. Observation 5 of Amanda)

A plenary took place at the end of the lesson and the children who had been looking at conditional clauses gave examples related to the summer camp experience. The rest of the class judged them and said whether or not they had met the Learning Objective. (Ref. Observation 6 of Amanda)

### *Pupil self-evaluation*

Evidence from the data highlights that both Amanda and Bethany value the use of pupils identifying their own errors and making suggestions regarding improvement. Amanda and Bethany use three main techniques for this that have been identified as: pupils working collaboratively; peer evaluation and self-evaluation.

Although the categories of ‘pupils working collaboratively’ and ‘peer evaluation’ have similar features, in that pupils are not working independently, they have been identified separately because of the difference in their nature. When pupils are working collaboratively, this implies they are working on the same activity and scaffolding each others’ learning in a mutually beneficial manner. It is formative and analytical in nature because of the critical discussions that take place to improve work, and ‘self-evaluative’ because it is independent of the teacher. Peer evaluation serves a different purpose and although analytical in nature, can be recognised as pupils evaluating individuals’ work. The following provides evidence to demonstrate the above and also how pupils engage in independent self-evaluation.

Peer collaboration is generally organised by the class teacher who encourages pupils to work together in pairs. This occurs during whole class, independent and guided work, for example:

She encouraged children to discuss this first in pairs. Children shared their ideas and Bethany scribed them on the whiteboard. Following this, the teacher asked the children to look at all the scenarios and in the pairs discuss which was the best. After this approx 75% of the class elected for the children in the story to fall unconscious. (Ref. Observation 6 of Bethany)

“Also, I try to set up activities for children to work by themselves, but it depends on the context. You need to get the balance right - they can be too dependant on one another, but I feel it’s helpful for them to have the chance to talk about each other’s work and check it, especially in writing and drafting to work in pairs... In independent and guided time I get them to work together, because they feed off each other. Adults do, don’t they? They bounce off each other, the quality of their work can be so much better, and they can make improvements, and then when they are working independently, really independently, they are going to remember the processes.” (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda)

They also encourage pupils to work in pairs to peer- evaluate work during group and independent tasks, for example:

During the whole class part of the lesson the children all had their own work with them. The children were asked to read independently their recent persuasive pieces, and asked to identify whether or not they were writing in first person or not. The teacher asked the children to work in pairs to discuss and evaluate their work. (Ref. Observation 5 of Amanda)

The teacher asked the children to work independently on their letters, using the ideas on the whiteboard for support. She asked them to work with response partners to check each others' work. (Ref. Observation 5 of Bethany)

And during plenaries, both Amanda and Bethany encourage pupils to evaluate work at class, group and individual level. They were observed on a number of occasions encouraging pupils to use plenaries to evaluate group work and there were several instances of teachers using the plenary to encourage pupils to evaluate each others' individual work, for example:

A plenary took place where the teacher referred back to the main teaching objectives and asked for examples of justified arguments. She took the examples and asked the class to work in pairs to discuss these-asking had they met the LO and how? (Ref. Observation 5 of Amanda)

Amanda and Bethany also encourage mutual articulation of achievement (Tunstall and Gipps, 1996), during plenaries, for example:

The class were looking at a piece of work, completed by Barry and Julie, that the teacher had said was particularly good.

The teacher asked the children why the piece of work was so strong.

Susan commented that: 'they haven't just put the connectives in after every bullet point, they've mixed them up'.

The teacher pointed out that this was correct and was making the argument more powerful and asked the class was there anything else.

Helen commented: 'Well yes! It's balanced, isn't it!?' the teacher praised the children and said: 'Well done Helen! Barry and Julie have made a well balanced, powerful argument'." (Ref. Observation 5 of Amanda)

In the plenary, Bethany explained to the children that she was very pleased with their work and that the LO had been achieved by all and to a high standard. She asked the children if they would like to share their work so far. Children from the independent group said yes and read their poem. Bethany asked the others to evaluate these - did they agree LOs had been met? Would this help with their poems? Had they made many edits to it?

Both girls shared examples of how and why they had made improvements - based on their discussions with each other. (Ref. Observation 3 of Bethany)

In addition, Amanda and Bethany encourage individual pupils to self evaluate, for example, Bethany stated:

“It is so valuable to get pupils to suggest ways forward themselves. On an individual level it’s really important that they can look at their own work and suggest things themselves.” (Ref. Assessment Interview with Bethany)

What is of particular interest with regard to individual pupil self evaluation is that the observation data revealed that pupils evaluating themselves is rare; indeed most pupil self-evaluation occurs within the context of paired work, through collaboration, be this planned or unplanned, for example:

Independent group worked independently to write a mystery ending, using pre-written beg and middle...Although this was an independent task, children were seen talking to each other, asking questions of each other and before returning to whole class, had read each others’ endings (Amanda later explained that although she didn’t say this in lesson, she was delighted that they were doing this as it had been something she had recently been encouraging them to do she hoped it is now an expectation that children support each other - she feels this is beneficial and allows them to improve work together) (Ref. Observation 2 of Amanda)

Of further interest is that pupils discussed working together in pairs to evaluate work and this highlighted some interesting issues. For example, during individual pupil interviews, one child from Amanda’s class stated that he sometimes compares himself with others in his group, although he commented that he does so to provide support for both himself and others in the group:

“I compare myself with the others in my group to see if we’ve made mistakes and how we can help each other.” (Ref. Interview with Barry, Amanda’s Class)

Yet the rest of the children in Amanda’s class stated that they do not compare themselves with anyone else because:



“I just keep my head down, there’s just no need for it.” (Ref. Interview with Julie, Amanda’s Class)

“I only look at my own work.” (Ref. Interview with Susan C, Amanda’s Class)

“I don’t really think about what other people are doing. I don’t like people to know what I’ve done.” (Ref. Interview with Frances, Amanda’s Class)

The children from Bethany’s class commented similarly, with four of the six children stating that they do not compare their work with others because, for example:

“There’s no point. I only need to know how well I’m doing.” (Ref. Interview with Nina, Bethany’s Class)

### *Follow-up response*

In this section I am using the term ‘follow-up response’ to highlight the exchanges that take place during a lesson. There is evidence from the data that Amanda and Bethany’s ‘follow-up response’ to questions provides rich formative information to pupils.

Evidence from the study highlights that having asked a question, teachers provide pupils with support by providing further examples or prompts, for example:

At one point the teacher asked a question, relating to the term predicament. Nobody could answer, so the teacher used this as a teaching point, and gave the children examples of ‘predicaments’ and explained what the term meant, subsequently, children were asked to work in pairs to think of the children to share these with other pairs . Children then gave examples to the teacher, who then asked others if this met criteria of a ‘predicament’

The teacher moved through the list, (Features of a mystery - theme, plot, predicament, setting, language and vocabulary, openings, endings).” (Ref. Observation 2 of Amanda)

The teacher introduced the lesson by referring back to work that was carried out the previous day asking the children to recall the purpose of the letter. A boy explained that it had been about a trip to the fair and that people had been disappointed...The teacher encouraged further detail with a leading sentence...”Yes. So the letter was to...” and a different boy explained that it had been to ‘complain’...She asked if they would be using informal or formal language today. Christopher said, “Informal.” Bethany asked him to explain this further...Bethany then expanded further on this...acknowledged that he’d be mad, but reiterated that you write informal letters to friends, and asked if that was appropriate here. Christopher turned to his friend for

support and the teacher encouraged this. The two boys discussed this and suggested that the tone of the letter should be angry, but in a formal way. (Ref. Observation 5 of Bethany)

A further strategy that teachers use to follow-up on responses is to 'take a statement further'. The teachers do this in two ways, either by enhancing a response themselves, or asking the class to do this, for example:

The teacher asked "Who can explain what pace means?" about 3/4 of the class raised their hands to answer the question and one child answered "It's how fast you read it and you use the punctuation." The teacher praised the child and reminded the children that pace did not mean reading too fast - not gabbling!" (Ref. Observation 3 of Amanda)

Teacher reminded class they were looking at asides and about how they can improve a story and how we can do them. She asked for a good example of an aside. Kelly said 'Brackets'...The teacher asked the class to think of how they had seen brackets used in a story. (Ref. Observation 4 of Bethany)

Teachers also use follow-up responses with the children as a means of specifying attainment, for example:

The teacher asked the children to identify the most important features of the persuasive language used. She then explained to them that we need to let the reader know that we are arguing for and against something, but we must justify our arguments. Jason and his partner had identified the connective, 'however'. The teacher asked why this word was so powerful in Jason's work and the class discussed this in pairs, 'To let us know he is arguing?' Suggested Anthony 'To justify his argument,' said Frances. The teacher praised the children. (Ref. Observation 5 of Amanda)

### *Target setting*

Data from the study highlights that teachers and pupils are engaged in target setting. They target set in three key ways. Firstly, the teachers set long term targets for literacy for the class. These are displayed on classroom walls (Appendix U). Long term targets are those that the teacher has identified for an extended period of time for the whole class.

Secondly, although evidence for this in written work was scarce, (given that there were only 3 examples of written targets from a total of 100 pieces of work, Appendix O) pupils discussed that teachers do set targets for individuals:

“The teacher sets me targets after most pieces of work and looks back and tells me if I’ve done them.” (Ref. Interview with Ryan, Amanda’s Class)

“She might write something, a target, and she expects you to look at the targets and do something.” (Ref. Interview with Susan C, Amanda’s Class)

“She sometimes sets targets at the end of work, they’re not really targets though, they’re instructions!” (Ref Interview with Julie, Amanda’s Class)

I therefore cross-checked this with Amanda and Bethany, who explained that although they do set some targets in written feedback to children, targets tend to be oral, when they get the opportunity to talk to pupils about their work. They described how the guided elements of literacy lessons facilitate this.

Thirdly there is evidence, though again this is somewhat limited (there were no examples in written work, Appendix O) that pupils engage in setting their own targets. For example, Amanda stated that:

“For some children, marking their own work and setting their own targets is fine, they know what they want to achieve and can suggest how to get there.” (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda)

And, evidence from the pupil interviews suggests that some pupils engage in target-setting themselves, for example:

“I sometimes set myself a target to get better at something, and I’m pleased if I can do it, I don’t always tell the teacher, but if I feel that I’ve done something well, like used some powerful language and that was what I wanted to achieve, then I’ll tell her.” (Ref. Interview with Susan C, Amanda’s Class)

“I set my own targets though, like if I know I’m not good at commas, I’ll look back and check my work when I’ve finished it.” (Ref. Interview with Nigel, Bethany’s Class)

However, although pupils and teachers discussed target setting, there was no evidence of this type of target setting in written work.

The above has highlighted that teachers use a broad range of assessment strategies during both their day-to-day interactions with pupils and in their 'distance' marking. The assessment strategies are termed 'phatic', 'evaluative' and 'analytical'. Tables 3 and 4 highlight the proportions of these feedback types during daily lessons and written work and demonstrate disparities between the amount of phatic and analytical feedback dependant upon context. In addition, the above has demonstrated the diverse range of analytical strategies that teachers use, and again, proportions of feedback types have been presented in table 5. However, before moving to discuss perceived purpose of feedback types, it is worth noting at this point, that the study presents a further interesting finding in relation to the nature of feedback given there was extremely limited evidence of negative feedback. Teachers were observed on very few occasions giving pupils negative feedback, and such examples during lessons tended to be associated with lack of participation on the part of the pupils, for example:

“Only a couple of children raised their hands. The teacher said, “I’m sure more of you know what we’ve been doing...come on!” (Ref. Observation 2 Bethany’s Class)

“Amanda said ‘Now come on everyone, some people are letting others do all the work! You have all done really well so far, so focus and join in.’”(Ref. Observation 3 of Amanda)

Or examples tended to be subtle negative feedback such as the teacher shaking her head when the children gave an incorrect response. For example:

“During this activity some children got the answers to her questions wrong. When this happened she would shake her head and sometimes say no...”(Ref. Observation 4 of Amanda)

“Each child had an individual copy of the text (The Lady of Shallott) and the teacher read the remainder of the poem to the class as the children followed. During the reading of the text the teacher asked a selection of questions. Some children were unable to answer...when this happened the teacher shook her head or frowned at the individual.” (Ref. Observation 2 of Bethany)

What is of interest is that only one child out of all of the children interviewed commented negatively:

“If you see a comment you sometimes get scared to get wronged if you don’t understand.” (Ref. Interview with Katy, Bethany’s Class).

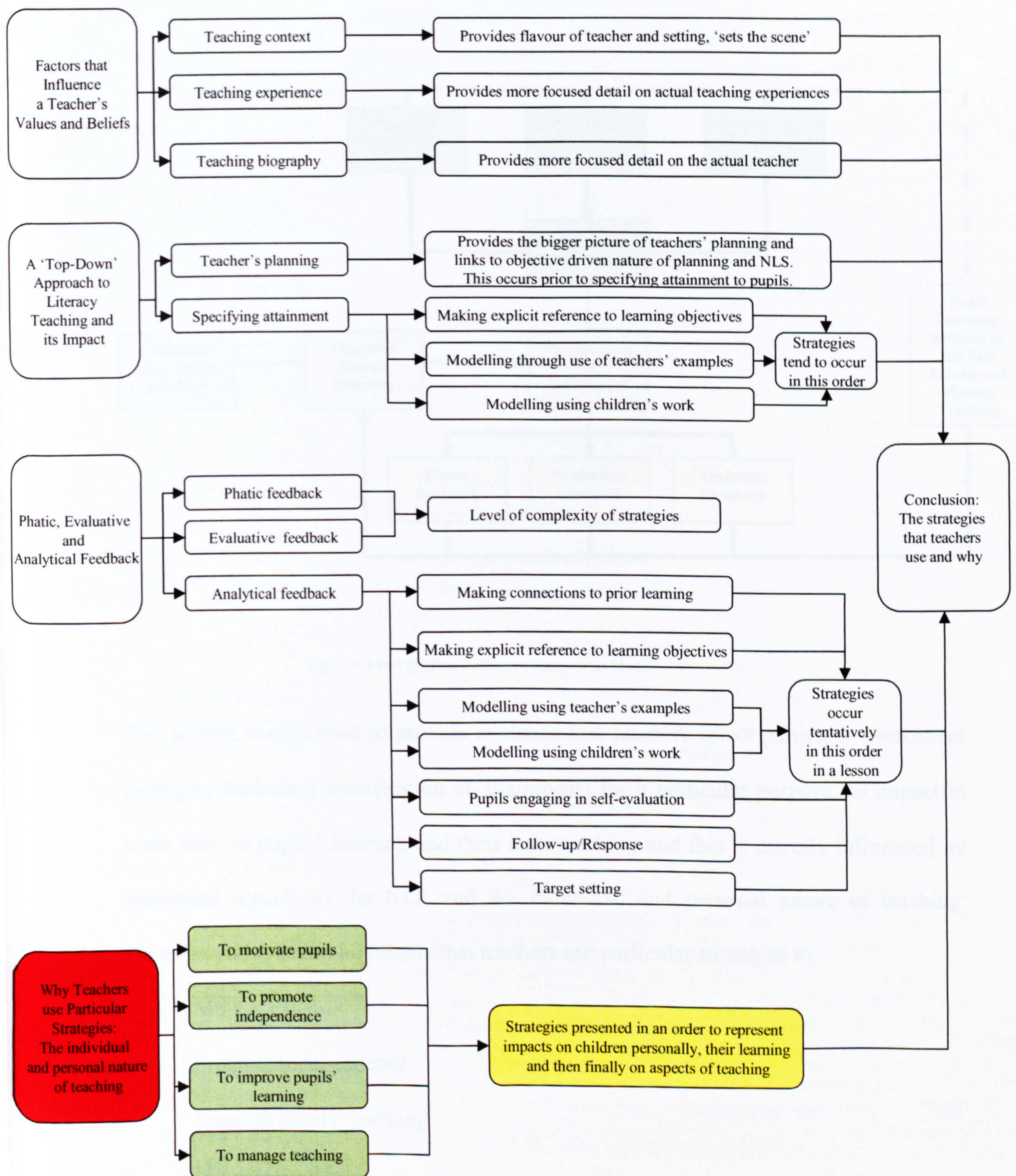
On no occasion was the actual ‘punishing’ of pupils observed, nor discussed in interviews and indeed, this was endorsed by the pupils who said, for example:

“She’d (Amanda) would never do anything to upset you.” (Ref. Interview with Julie, Amanda’s Class)

“She wouldn’t embarrass you, but she’d tell you.” (Ref. Interview with Simon, Bethany’s Class)

This section has demonstrated that teachers use a diverse range of particular feedback types. Having identified these strategies and provided evidence that not only do they use particular feedback types, but also particular techniques for specifying attainment (see section 4.2) the following section moves to discuss why teachers use particular forms, highlighting the impact which the NLS and teachers’ individual values and beliefs have on formative assessment choices.

## The Main Findings of the Study



Legend: ■ Main Section ■ Sub-Sections ■ Further Sub-Sections ■ Rationale for Organisation

## 4.4 Why Teachers Use Particular Strategies

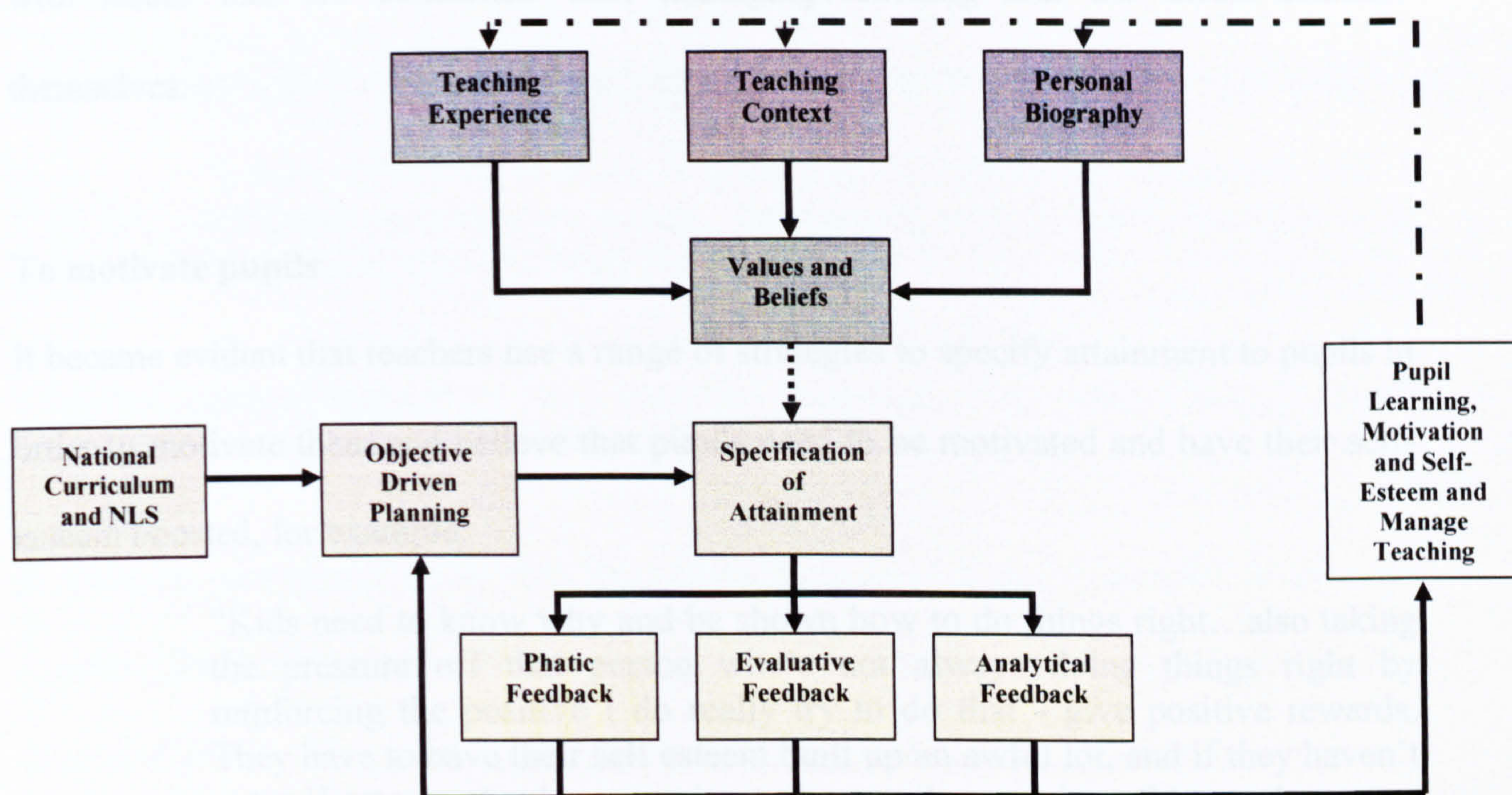


Figure 4.8 Part D of the Reflective Assessment Model

This section is organised to provide evidence that teachers select particular assessment strategies (including specification of attainment) for a particular purpose; to impact in some way on pupils' learning and their own teaching and this is directly influenced by contextual aspects of the NLS and the individual and personal nature of teaching. Therefore, this section highlights that teachers use particular strategies to:

- Motivate pupils
- Promote independence
- Improve pupils' learning
- Manage teaching.

The following is organised to firstly reflect the impact on pupils themselves and therefore considers motivation, promotion of independence and learning; concluding with issues that are concerned with managing teaching and the actual teachers themselves.

### **To motivate pupils**

It became evident that teachers use a range of strategies to specify attainment to pupils in order to motivate them and believe that pupils need to be motivated and have their self-esteem boosted, for example:

“Kids need to know why and be shown how to do things right...also taking the pressure off that person who’s not always doing things right by reinforcing the positive I do really try to do that - give positive rewards. They have to have their self esteem built up an awful lot, and if they haven’t got self-esteem, they’re not going to learn...they need confidence, I suppose that is a huge thing, making those people feel valued.” (Ref. Biographical interview with Bethany)

Amanda and Bethany both claimed that the introduction of the NLS has placed them in an objective driven framework which leads them to specify attainment to pupils. They believe that through specifying attainment the pupils know what is expected and are therefore more motivated. For example:

“I always try to make it clear to the children what they are doing. I start each lesson with a description of the learning objectives and explain to the children what this means to them. I think this is so important as it lets them know exactly what they have got to do and how they can get there. This motivates them.” (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda)

“I think it helps the children to have the criteria, they can use it and get to know what the aims are. I think it can really motivate them.” (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda)

“It is so valuable to get pupils to suggest ways forward themselves when they know the criteria. It can really motivate them. On an individual level it’s really important that they can look at their own work...They need training to do this and sometimes it can take up so much time - you really



need to build it in to your lessons.” (Ref. Assessment Interview with Bethany)

The notion was verified by the pupils, who commented that they were always clear about activities, because of the learning objectives and they described how this is motivating:

“I think this piece of work is good, I’m describing my arguments well. I think the arguments are strong. I’m pleased with it.” (Ref. Interview with Michelle, Bethany’s Class)

“It was pretty good! We had to make our verbs better. I did that well...I know because of the powerful language...I’m really happy!” (Ref. Interview with Nina, Bethany’s Class)

In addition, the pupils stated that they know how good a piece of work is prior to receiving feedback from the teacher. They described how this is motivating and ‘makes them feel good’. They also related their answers to the quality of the teacher’s lesson objectives and perceive this as useful because they have a clear understanding of what they themselves can do. For example:

“I usually know what things the teacher will say and if it’s very descriptive or good, I know! Sometimes I look at the criteria to check. You feel good when you know what she’s going to say about it!” (Ref. Interview with Susan M, Amanda’s Class)

“I normally know what my teacher will say about my work coz of other pieces of work, the learning objectives are good at the end. I can check if I’ve done what I’m supposed to do.” (Ref. Interview with Frances, Amanda’s Class)

In addition to specification of attainment being used as a tool for motivation, there is evidence from the data which suggests that, what appears to be an over-emphasis on phatic assessments in written work occurs for a number of reasons. Firstly, during the teacher interviews, Amanda and Bethany spoke about the importance of providing pupils with some form of feedback such that pupils are ‘motivated’ and their self-esteem is boosted. Secondly, both teachers described how it is important for pupils to know that

their work has been marked by the teacher and as a consequence they employ manageable strategies, such as ticking work, awarding 'merits' and commenting on written work with brief statements, such as 'good' or 'well done!'

"Feedback to children is so valuable; if I mark their work or tick it, it's good for self-esteem." (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda)

"The class need to know I've marked their work and ticks or merits do this...and motivate them." (Ref. Assessment Interview with Bethany)

This therefore explains why for Amanda and Bethany there is a significant difference between the nested feedback models (Figures 4.4 and 4.5). In written work, it appears that teachers are overtly phatic or evaluative with their feedback due to time constraints and the notion of impacting on pupils' self-esteem.

What is of particular interest is when cross-checking the data from the teacher interviews and the pupil interviews, it became clear that a conflict of perception existed. During the diamond ranking activity, for example, the pupils discussed assessment techniques amongst themselves. The children in both Amanda and Bethany's classes made a number of interesting comments in relation to this. They commented on the need for further information, arguing that a brief phatic signal or comment alone provides insufficient information for them and can be perceived as an indicator that the teacher has no time or has rushed her marking. For example, Julie stated:

"Teacher ticks are really boring! Good - you know what's right but it's never going to help you - all you're thinking about is the ticks - the teacher's in a hurry, all she's done is one lousy tick that means nothing. Usually if she's in a hurry she'll just rush." (Ref. Interview with Julie, Amanda's Class)

This negative view of ticks and brief phatic comments was endorsed by other pupils:

"When the teacher writes a comment like 'good' it can be encouraging if it's positive, but there are no clues or inspiration as to how to improve it. You get a comment to boost you but you are getting no explanation as to what

you have done. It isn't telling you about the fantastic points. It's not really giving you any information it's just telling you what you've done 'all out'." (Ref. Susan C, Group Interview Amanda's Class)

"When the teacher ticks it only tells you it's right. I like getting ticks, but they're not very helpful. Even if it's right, you might not know why." (Ref. Interview with Michelle, Bethany's Class)

The pupils seem to value positive phatic feedback as a means of boosting self-esteem to a certain extent, but this extrinsic motivator is, in itself, insufficient. When I cross-checked this with the teachers, it became evident that they each had difficulties associated with providing the more evaluative and analytical feedback that the pupils desire. Firstly, they both expressed concerns that such an activity is frequently unmanageable, largely because of time constraints and the complexities of managing the progressive requirements of the NLS. As a consequence of working in an objective driven model, the teachers feel that, from a negative perspective, they have to move through the curriculum at a specific pace and although they strive to be flexible, feel at times burdened by the restrictions this can cause and this is reflected in their perception that planning is 'set in stone'. For example, Bethany commented:

"I've always planned, but it can be difficult sometimes with the NLS...sometimes I feel I'm racing through things and need to keep so focused, giving feedback and adapting lessons can be hard to keep up with." (Ref. Assessment interview with Bethany)

In addition, they both expressed concerns about managing the length and detail of such feedback, for example:

"Keeping it focused is hard - I'm making a concerted effort to do this, but it can be a struggle. It is a really useful strategy and I am trying to keep my marking focused on the learning objective for the lesson." (Ref. Assessment Interview with Bethany)

"Written feedback is something I think is extremely important! Particularly with writing...it's so difficult to manage though, because of time, I'm trying to make my marking more concise, but it can be hard and takes a lot of time." (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda)

However, on analysis of the data it became clear that evaluative feedback is also used to highlight strengths and weaknesses in relation to learning objectives and to motivate pupils. For example, Amanda commented that relating children's feedback to the learning objectives makes it clear what they can and cannot do and impacts positively on self-esteem and Bethany echoed this:

“This is important for their motivation, but they also need to know what they have not achieved... it reinforces what they have done to meet the objective.” (Ref. Assessment Interview with Bethany)

Interestingly, this was endorsed by the pupils who also stated that when the teacher does comment in their books with specific reference to the objective, they perceive this as positive:

“Saying it's connected to a learning objective is good. If it's wrong you know what to do and if it's right you know what you are doing. Like ‘This shows good understanding of explanatory texts’, you would feel happy and good that you can do something.” (Ref. Susan C, Group Interview, Amanda's Class)

“If it's about the learning objectives it's much better, coz you know exactly what you can do and are good at. But if you are just told to improve it, it kind of gives you a try, but it can make you think, ‘well I'm not very good' but you don't know what at!” (Ref. Ryan, Group Interview, Amanda's Class)

Four of the six children in Bethany's class also stated that they usually get the comments that they expect, although two commented that they often do better than they expected, and on such occasions this is motivating, for example:

“Sometimes I'll do a piece of work and I think it's wrong, but usually it's right! I think ‘wow!’, you know...I normally get a couple of comments on it that let me know what's right or wrong, like ‘well done Katy, you've met the objective’.” (Ref. Interview with Katy, Bethany's Class)

“Well usually I think it just looks Okay. But then I get it back and I think at first, ‘Oh, it's not that good,’ because she's put comments on it about what I need to do better, like, ‘next time make sure you put all the commas in the

right place' but then at the end she'll say I've done really well and achieved the objective. When you know you've got the objective it's good and I usually do well, better than I think!" (Ref. Interview with Michelle, Bethany's Class)

The teachers perceived the notion of motivation and self-esteem as crucial and expressed their desire to provide feedback at all times that would impact positively upon these. For example, Amanda stated:

"What I've tried to do with the plenary is to sum the lesson up and check against the criteria to see whether or not they have achieved it let them think about how they have met the objectives themselves and then as a class. This is a really good way of motivating them." (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda)

Indeed, this notion was endorsed by the children. For example, Simon stated:

"I feel chuffed if she says it's 'a merit' or 'excellent' and she's used good comments." (Ref. Interview with Simon, Bethany's Class)

And Julie and Susan C also described how particular strategies are motivating:

"Originally I was pretty appalled with it (the piece of work), I knew I'd rushed it and mixed things up. The teacher (Amanda) looked at it and told me where it was good, she said "Julie you've achieved these objectives, well done!"...I'm pretty pleased with it now!" (Ref. Interview with Julie, Amanda's Class)

"If it's a good comment I'm usually happy with it ...She writes comments that are helpful and that are nice." (Ref. Interview with Susan C, Amanda's Class)

Amanda and Bethany also believe that focused written feedback is highly important; however, they described how they struggle to maintain regular focused, written feedback due to time constraints. Furthermore, both teachers believe that specifying improvement in relation to learning objectives is a useful formative strategy but feel concerned that this does not happen with every single piece of work. They are concerned that if

children are told too frequently that they need to improve then this will be de-motivating and lead to poor self-esteem, for example:

“It’s so difficult to manage though, because of time and sometimes I worry that if we tell them they’ve not met the objectives too often and they need to improve, it can be bad for some of them, you have to be sensitive to their needs.” (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda)

### **To promote independence**

Evidence from the data highlights that teachers specify attainment to promote independence. Amanda discussed the use of learning objectives as a key tool that she uses to impact upon learning and to encourage autonomy in independent work. This has had particular impact upon her plenaries which she has introduced as a direct result of the NLS, and she stated that:

“It works well because it allows the children to work at something independently. When they are focused, their work is better, because they are clearer. It’s useful in plenaries because I am clear, and they are clear about what it is they’ve learned, how they’ve got there and what they need to do next.” (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda)

And Bethany agreed with this, stating:

“Involving pupils in their own learning is something I really value, spelling out what the objectives are and giving them models is perhaps what I do most. It gives them a sense of independence.” (Ref. Assessment Interview with Bethany)

I cross-checked this with the pupils, and it was evident that through sharing learning objectives pupils are clear about the activity and also able to work independently. For example:

“I had to write a report. I had to plan paragraphs 1 and 2, and paragraph 3 was about the journey to Ibiza for Mam’s honeymoon. The teacher explained everything you had to do and all the different language you could use. I read it through and checked it myself!” (Ref. Interview with Susan M, Amanda’s Class)

“We were asked to write a report, an explanation text. We were given a worksheet with a structure to it and the teacher asked us what we thought the piece was about. She then explained the structure of a report. We then worked on our own to finish the reports.” (Ref. Interview with Julie, Amanda’s Class)

“We were told to decide if you should kill animals, you had to give your views. We were given a plan to start with...It’s better than most cos I did it by myself!” (Ref. Interview with Kelly, Bethany’s Class)

“We were told to do an argument about whether or not we should kill animals. We were told we had to use persuasive language...We had to sit for a couple of minutes to think about it and plan it on the frame and then we continued it on our own.” (Ref. Interview with Emily, Bethany’s Class)

Amanda and Bethany both also claim that it is important for children to be able to have some expectation of feedback to encourage independence and therefore specifying attainment is crucial. When asked why she values this strategy, Amanda stated that she believes that it:

“Gives the children a good idea of what they should be looking for when they are working independently and it makes it easier when I talk to them about their work. We are all focused on the same thing and my teaching is much clearer.” (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda)

Bethany discussed the use of learning objectives in a similar vein, stating that she strives to make learning objectives clear such that both she and the children are clear of the expectations of activities and pupils can work effectively either independently or in groups (Ref. Assessment Interview with Bethany).

In addition, Bethany uses ‘check and change’ cards (Appendix T) to support children in the self-evaluation of their work and when asked why she values the use of this strategy, she stated that she believes that children need to have a sense of independence and of what she will say to them about their work. The strategy that she uses, Bethany stated:

“...is useful because it allows the children to have a go at looking at their work in a more critical way on their own or with a friend, but there’s a

structure to it and they know what I am expecting. They are more independent and this builds their confidence.” (Ref. Incident Interview with Bethany)

Both teachers believe that it is important for pupils to be involved in self-evaluation to encourage them to be more critical about their work and anticipate what the teacher will say. Although they find it difficult at times, particularly finding the time to allow children the opportunity to self-assess, they both claim that this serves to motivate children because it encourages independence (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda and Bethany).

### **To improve pupils' learning**

Amanda and Bethany use the technique of modelling to children and one of the key reasons for doing so is to specify improvement to pupils. Bethany believes that modelling gives the children ‘an idea of how to tackle a piece of work’ and values the importance of modelling at both individual and whole class levels, claiming that:

“Modelling is very valuable, they can relate to it, it’s personal to them and they can see why something is good. They can see how their work can be so much better. If it’s not their work, if I’ve started a piece of writing, they can still help to improve it. They might not come up with the original idea, but they can give some input and this gives them a feeling of ownership, even if they have just thought of a good adjective, they have contributed. It usually happens in writing and I do it in most lessons.” (Ref. Assessment Interview with Bethany)

Amanda also values this technique, claiming that:

“Giving them an idea of how to improve it (their work) is very important. It’s important that they are given a model or example. For example, they need to be shown where an adverb has been used. I use modelling a lot. It is useful for all abilities and they can see where they need to go to improve their own work. When you analyse their work at the end it is obvious to me where there are problems. But it’s more valuable if I show them before their work is actually completed. If I can do it with them, they can then go back and continue. They know there and then how to improve their work and are then more likely to succeed. They need to know how to improve work and



if I can actually show them, then that's great. Sometimes, though I have to write in their books, but I try to give them suggestions and model answers for them to refer to.”(Ref. Assessment Interview with Bethany)

During interview, I asked Amanda and Bethany to discuss strategies they use for modelling, citing examples that I had noted during observations. Amanda commented that sharing success is important and that it also provides others with a model or framework and she commented that the provision of formats and structures is a particular strategy that she uses for children of all abilities:

“As a person I love structures! For a child who is not particularly fluent, it is their crutch, because they know they can retain the structures. For more mature learners, take Frances, she can alter the frame herself for her work to flow more naturally.” (Ref. Incident Interview with Amanda)

Bethany also uses the specification of improvement in order to encourage pupils to improve their work, but also to resolve misconceptions:

“It is important if the children come up with what they think needs improving. They've thought of something and then they're more inclined to do it if they've spotted it. It's very valuable to use and build on their contributions for sorting out misconceptions and reinforcing points. They can see that it is something they can and have used.” (Ref. Assessment Interview with Bethany)

During the whole class shared work, the teacher asked for individuals to give examples of asides in the story. Katy gave an incorrect example. The teacher used the example as a teaching point for the rest of the class, illustrating why the example was not an aside.  
(Ref. Observation 4 of Bethany)

Both teachers stated that they also use examples of individuals' work to model 'quality' to impact on the future work of the individuals involved and the class as a whole. For example, Amanda commented, following a lesson where she shared the success of two children in the class, that Barry and Julie both needed to share their success with the rest

of the class and in doing so she was reinforcing to Barry, Julie and the rest of the class why they had been successful and how this could be used by all parties in future work (Ref. Discussion with Amanda following lesson).

This was endorsed by the pupils, who commented that the teachers use examples of 'good work' to show them how they are doing, and perceive this as positive. For example:

"Sometimes she reads peoples' work and picks out work to share good or bad things. She does it in a nice way though, so as not to hurt your feelings, but to help everyone get on well." (Ref. Interview with Julie, Amanda's Class)

"She compares our work but only does it to show us a good example, and it's in a good way. She gives a balance to everyone so you can all improve when she tells you things." (Ref. Interview with Emily, Bethany's Class)

But what is of interest is that despite claiming that modelling using children's work is a useful strategy, both teachers raised some key issues with this. Firstly, they described how it is important that children's work is used constructively, and Bethany in particular highlighted her concern that work should not be 'picked apart' such that it is demoralising for individuals and, secondly, how if models are being used, they have to be chosen appropriately:

"The rest of the class shared in his success and could see what had made it a good piece of work. Modelling is very valuable, they can relate to it, it's personal to them and they can see why something is good. I often show them good work to show them a good example of how someone has met the criteria. I don't use it to pick them apart." (Ref. Assessment Interview with Bethany)

In addition, some pupils are embarrassed about sharing their work with the class:

"Some children don't like having their work shared-some do. I'd never force a child but I'd try to persuade them. I often step in though and do it for them so the class get an idea of why the work was good, so it's less embarrassing for the children." (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda)

And furthermore, it can be difficult ensuring that it is not always the same children. To combat some of these difficulties, Amanda and Bethany sometimes use the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) exemplification materials to model criteria and to show the children a 'level five', believing that it is important that the children know what the expectations are:

"Modelling quality to children is very important. I think it's highly valuable for children to have something to see. I've photocopied work from mark schemes to show children. Showing each others' work's useful too. I do this, but to my shame, not often enough." (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda)

"This lets them see what a 'level 5' looks like. It gets them to really think about their work and is useful for giving feedback. And they're anonymous and we use them to get the children to say. 'Hey, I can do better than that!'" (Ref. Assessment Interview with Bethany)

In addition to modelling, I also observed that in every literacy lesson in both classes, paired work, in terms of both peer collaboration and peer evaluation, was encouraged. It became clear that a key purpose of these strategies, from the point of view of the teacher, was to improve pupils' learning:

"This is something I do a lot, especially since the NLS (children sharing work with each other in pairs). It's really valuable. They respond to each other and can show each other the good aspects of their work and improve each others' work. I learn best like that, and try to encourage them to do this. I think it's important for them to share success. I do it in the plenary. They need to see what makes something 'quality'. I have also photocopied work from the marking schemes and we've discussed it. I'd like to do more of this and include their work, I think it would be really useful for them to, together, make some judgements about progress." (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda)

"Pupils working together to talk about their learning is very useful, but it must be done with someone who they can work with. The gaps can be broad and so they need to work with someone of similar ability. It can be a chance for the less able to see a good piece of writing, but they might not want to do it." (Ref. Assessment Interview with Bethany)

During the ranking activity, the pupils discussed this strategy and children in both classes had mixed opinions of working with each other to share work. Although the children valued elements of collaborative working, to scaffold each others' work, they aired concerns about the quality of the feedback they receive from each other, and actual concerns about 'peer-evaluation' for example:

"Sharing with a friend can give you a rough idea of what people will think, like other audiences, but there'd have to be a clear purpose, you know, with the learning objectives so clear then your friend can get a good idea for you if it is good or not. You'd have to be good at communicating though and have some connection with each other. You need to trust each other. Sometimes friends mark it right even if it's wrong so you look good to your other friends. I like to know the teacher's going to check it. You can talk about the work, but you might think it's right and your friend might think it's wrong. It causes arguments if you don't agree." (Ref. Susan C, Amanda's Class)

"It's good if you share your work, like when you are doing stories. Marking cards are useful because they give you some ideas of what to look for. But it's not always good because a friend could show you how to put in an adjective, but your friends could be wrong. A friend might just think he knows it but doesn't really. You don't know whether to believe your friends. It's okay, but only if they don't cheat. They mark you higher and expect you to do it for them and you feel under pressure. The teacher needs to mark them or walk about and talk to you." (Ref. Simon, Group Interview, Bethany's Class)

A further finding is that the strategies that teachers use serve to aid pupils' understanding of their own progress. The children from Bethany's class, for example, referred to the clarity of learning objectives, with all of the children commenting that the teacher always makes expectations of the lesson clear and they feel that this is useful for all of them:

"Lucy and me work together. I know she likes to work like I do, but not everyone does, but so long as you know what you've got to do and she (the teacher) explains the objectives, I don't think it matters how you get there." (Ref. Interview with Nina, Bethany's Class)

The children from both classes also feel that written feedback is a useful reminder to them of their achievements and allows them to track their progress more easily than oral feedback, for example:

“You can turn the page and it’s always there to remind you of how you did it so you can do the same again.” (Ref. Interview with Susan C, Amanda’s Class)

“After it (has been marked) you look through it.” (Ref. Interview with Nigel, Bethany’s Class)

‘You don’t forget what you need to do, so you can use it again. You can turn back the page and it’s always there’. (Ref. Emily, Group Interview, Bethany’s Class)

Interestingly, the children from both classes feel that the feedback from the teacher is useful if written down at the end of their work rather than given orally, yet evidence of written feedback in this study is extremely limited. They stated that they make reference to it and are therefore able to identify progress and their own strengths.

An additional strategy used by both Amanda and Bethany is the manner in which they engage in dialogue with pupils throughout a lesson and ‘follow-up’ on responses. As was described earlier, Amanda and Bethany tend to facilitate this in several ways, through providing further examples, prompts or taking a statement further. This notion of follow-up response was discussed by both teachers as a critical feature of their formative interaction with pupils:

“I start each lesson with a description of the learning objectives and explain to the children what this means to them. I think it is important for us all to be clear about the lesson, I try and keep my closed questioning at the start to give it a pacey start, but then as the lesson progresses it’s important to respond to individuals and I try to use a broader range of things, like more open questions, examples. I think this is so important as it lets them know exactly what they have got to do and how they can get there, and they can learn so much.” (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda)

In addition, when discussing their interactions, it became clear that the teachers were strategic in their choices, for example:

After the lesson, Bethany talked about how she felt that at the start the children needed lots of prompts - she said that she really wanted them to be secure in their understanding and even though they were giving her some examples, she felt the quality of their responses needed improving. She explained that some of the children from the middle group needed to be extended more, and that was why she had targeted them and prompted them to improve their answers. (Ref. Discussion with Bethany following observation 5)

And Amanda explained how in some lessons you have to take statements that children make further. During the Incident Interview, she talked about how sometimes lessons 'change direction' because she has to respond to the needs of the children:

"Often they may take you somewhere else and I was thinking about that today, you know when we were talking about completing a form and you identify male or female, we side-tracked to the name 'Lesley' because the children asked about why you'd put male or female...It just happened and it was important...it was important to the children and they were quizzing me about that, yesterday we'd been talking about filling in the form and it was relevant, nowadays girls and boys have the same names. That's the kind of thing that the children bring in when they ask questions." (Ref. Incident Interview with Amanda)

Of interest, when the pupils were talking about the feedback they received from the teachers, they acknowledged the way the teachers interacted with them throughout a lesson, and perceived this as positive. For example, Katy stated:

"We were told we had to decide if you should kill animals. To start with the teacher split the board and she wrote sentences...then she wrote down the first one or two sentences as an example and you had to put it into your own words. If we got stuck, like Nigel did, she'd show us again or she'd say if we can explain more." (Ref. Interview with Katy, Bethany's Class)

And Frances from Amanda's class commented that:

"When the teacher talks with us it's good, because you hear what it is, sometimes she'll talk and it might get written down, people like to get information in different ways. The teacher also models and explains, you see this in the plenary, or if you get stuck. Miss A does lots of things in the

lesson to make sure we all know what we're doing and to help us all." (Ref. France, Group Interview with Amanda's Class)

A further interesting finding of this study lies in target setting and its perceived purpose.

When in interview with Amanda and Bethany, I asked them to talk about the displayed long-term targets, both Amanda and Bethany commented that they set termly targets for the class that they use as a reference point for providing feedback to the class as a whole and ensuring pupils know where they are in terms of their own learning and how to improve throughout the term. The targets tend to be generic and relate to punctuation and sentence structure that is applicable to most of their literacy lessons. What is of interest with regard to this was that at no point whatsoever when children were discussing targets were these long term ones discussed.

In addition, both Amanda and Bethany described individual target setting as a useful technique for improving pupils' learning. For example, Bethany stated:

"Target setting is something else. I think it's really useful to help children move forward." (Ref. Assessment Interview with Bethany)

And Amanda commented that she uses the guided time in the literacy hour to focus on individuals and provide opportunities for them to set targets:

"It is important to get pupils to suggest ways forward, to negotiate a route to improve things. I use questioning techniques to negotiate, I can lead them this way and it is usually a part of my guided work." (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda)

However, they did air some issues. For example, Amanda commented that she encourages some children to set their own targets, both personal and academic, although believes that for this to be most effective depends upon the individual child:

"For some children, setting their own targets is fine, they know what they want to achieve and can suggest how to get there. For others, though, it's

more difficult. They need much more guidance and structure, they sometimes don't know that they don't know something. You have to be sensitive to their needs as individuals." (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda)

Bethany also believes that individual target setting is useful for all children, although asserts that for it to be effective they need to be trained how to do it:

"They need training to do it properly." (Ref. Assessment Interview with Bethany)

The above sections have highlighted that particular strategies are used as they are perceived to have an impact on pupils; for motivational purposes, to develop independence and to improve learning. The following presents evidence that particular strategies also serve the purpose of impacting upon elements of teaching.

### **To manage teaching**

This study highlights that teachers use specification of attainment as a strategy to impact upon their management of teaching. For example, Amanda and Bethany feel that this is a useful means of ensuring that their lessons are focused. The NLS, Amanda explained, has pre-specified objectives, and as a consequence it is 'natural' to share these with children. She described how specification of attainment serves to aid her evaluations of pupil success throughout lessons and then impacts upon future planning. Bethany discussed this in a similar vein, and sees the purpose of specifying attainment as a powerful means of clarity in planning. For example:

"I've been thinking about my daily lessons and when I look back, I always tell them what the objectives are, my planning is clear because I've planned the objectives with Carol in advance. We all do this in school, but I think it's something I'd do anyway." (Ref. Assessment Interview with Bethany)



This is particularly important to both teachers, although for different purposes. Amanda plans the literacy work for the Year Six cohort and feels that clarity is very important such that all colleagues are aware of lesson objectives (Ref. Incident Interview with Amanda). Bethany plans for literacy alongside her colleague and parity between the two classes is paramount, for example:

“When we (Carol and Bethany) meet on Wednesday’s, we talk about how things have gone ...we plan the same things...we have to, to make sure all the children get the same in both classes.” (Ref. Biographical Interview with Bethany)

The specification of learning objectives therefore plays a key role in ensuring equality of provision in both classes. In addition, both teachers described how, when pupils are clear about a task, there are fewer interruptions and lessons run more smoothly (Ref. Incident Interviews with Amanda and Bethany). For example:

“When you’ve got the structure things run far more smoothly...I know what I’m doing in the lesson and so do the children...this helps with the behaviour.” (Ref. Incident Interview with Amanda)

Following the first lesson, Bethany and I were discussing how she shared LOs. She said that she felt it was really useful to help lesson flow with a focus - Interestingly said that behaviour management was easier-she said she thought she’d had fewer incidents of bad behaviour - she wondered if this was because lessons were focused? We discussed this and she said she’d always planned with LOs but more focused now on sharing them effectively and providing cues (models etc). (Research Diary Entry, 19th Jan 2001)

In terms of feedback, both teachers see it as crucial to impacting upon children’s learning and something that they perceive as being not only essential to teaching, but integral to teaching:

“Feedback to children is so valuable, if I write it on their work or speak to them. It’s part of my day to day teaching, I just do it.” (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda)

However, an issue for both teachers was made in terms of written feedback and time. I asked the teachers how they 'manage' quality feedback. Both Amanda and Bethany believe that quality feedback is invaluable but inevitably difficult to do. Amanda stated that she sometimes feels that it is time consuming to provide quality written feedback and stated that a large majority of her feedback tends to be oral:

"I'm trying to make my marking more concise, but it can be hard and time consuming. I'm thinking of asking the children to decide themselves whether or not they feel that they have met the learning objective in their books and then I can comment on this. I do this in maths and it works well, I'm just a little concerned though that I'm asking them to do more written work when they've just finished doing a lot of writing." (Ref. Assessment Interview with Amanda)

However, Bethany has employed a strategy to provide quality feedback with 'minimum impact upon marking time'. Bethany stated that she tends to restrict her written feedback to the learning objectives, and the overview of written feedback does indicate that, despite some limitations to her strategies, Bethany does engage in this (Appendix O). She also asks the children to use the 'check and change' cards to self-assess and correct their work. However, Bethany also described how there is an issue of 'perceived fairness' and strives to give similar 'length' feedback to pupils.

Amanda and Bethany also feel that through encouraging success and motivating pupils, their day-to-day teaching is more easily managed. For example, Bethany described how important it was for Nigel to achieve success, because when he is motivated and enthusiastic, he is easier to teach (Ref. Observation 6 of Bethany). This sentiment was echoed by Amanda who, when discussing the incident as described earlier, regarding Julie and Barry, described how a positive attitude to learning facilitates effective teaching.

Amanda and Bethany described how both peer collaboration and peer evaluation support their day-to-day teaching and:

- 1) encourage pupil autonomy and therefore impact positively on their class management as they can focus their teaching with one particular group with minimum disruption
- 2) make 'distance' marking easier as children have already engaged in self-evaluation.

Both Amanda and Bethany also perceive the purpose of peer working as having a good impact on pupil relationships as pupils are encouraged to work together (Ref. Assessment Interviews with Amanda and Bethany).

The above has presented evidence that teachers use particular strategies for particular purposes and throughout has provided evidence as to how context and individual teachers' values and beliefs impact upon assessment practice. The views of learning held by Amanda and Bethany, and the way in which these impact upon the formative assessment strategies that they use, are influenced by a number of factors as illustrated in figure 4.1. However, prior to concluding the chapter, I feel that it is appropriate to return to the Reflective Assessment model (Figure 2.9). So far I have presented segments of the model with supporting data, and as can be seen from the model, I am suggesting that it is cyclical in nature. Evidence that leads to this is grounded in observations of teaching, follow-up discussions and interviews with Amanda and Bethany.

### **A cyclical model of assessment**

The Reflective Assessment model (Figure 2.9) illustrates that teaching values and the 'top-down' approach to the teaching of literacy lead teachers to behave in particular ways. For example, the NLS is objective driven and this leads teachers to specify

attainment to pupils. In doing this, teachers reflect on their context, experience and biographies to decide which strategy to use. Having specified attainment in some way, say, by modelling to pupils, then some form of feedback takes place (see section 4.3). This could be phatic, evaluative or analytical, and again the choice of particular strategy is influenced by a range of factors and serves a particular purpose (see section 4.4).

What I am therefore suggesting is that, having engaged in a particular assessment activity with pupils; teaching biography, experience and context are impacted upon. For instance, evidence from the study highlights that much oral feedback is analytical in nature and can serve to motivate pupils and promote independence (see sections 4.3 and 4.4). It seems to follow that in motivating the pupils and promoting independence, the teachers are in some way changing their teaching context. The implication of this therefore, is that it will impact upon subsequent formative behaviour, hence the cyclical model of the conceptual framework. To demonstrate this, the following presents some examples from the data.

Firstly, in terms of teaching biography, a particular incident and discussion provides some insight into how biographies are impacted upon by a teacher's formative behaviour.

For example, following a lesson that I observed Amanda teaching, we were discussing a particular pupil. The incident that led to the discussion was as follows:

The class teacher was working with a guided writing group. She frequently referred to the objectives of the session...Her feedback was oral throughout and highly positive - phrases such as 'well done, clever boy'. When children made errors, her support was still positive - she highlighted the strengths of their work 'well done, you are reading this well, but why do you think this adds suspense?' Jack was finding this particularly difficult and

became frustrated. Amanda continued on and approached him calmly, re-wording the question. In spite of this he became frustrated and angry and began holding his pencil in the air as if to flick the arm of his neighbour. Amanda remained calm throughout and moved Jack nearer to her and explained his behaviour was unfair to the others, but that also she had been 'in suspense' - not sure what he was going to do. He grinned and the atmosphere changed altogether - much more pleasant. (Ref. Observation 1 of Amanda)

In our discussion of this incident it became apparent that Jack's prior behaviour and response to feedback had impacted upon Amanda personally, indeed Jack could be described as a 'critical person' to Amanda (Beijaard et al, 2000).

Amanda and I were chatting about lesson...She described Jack warmly, as a 'special boy' who 'is lovely and kind' but finds it difficult to relate to people because he has difficulties at home. She stated that of all the children she has come across he is one of the most challenging. Every day she has to tackle new problems with him, but generally things work out okay. She said she'd experienced only days before a similar incident and using gentle humour whilst remaining on task has been a key for her. He had 'got under her skin' and made her really think about her own needs too. This was a fascinating discussion-we were both amazed by how one child can have such an impact on you personally. (Discussion with Amanda following Observation 1)

In addition, there is some evidence that teaching experiences impact upon assessment strategy choices in a cyclical manner. For example, in interview, both Amanda and Bethany discussed the role of ITT. What is of interest here is that they both discussed situations where they had observed trainees working with their class, using a particular strategy and having observed this, had learned from it, thus impacting upon their own knowledge base. For example:

"I saw some doing traffic lights and 3 stars and a wish-you get some really good new ideas and you've seen them work...I hope it makes me a better teacher!!" (Ref. Biographical Interview with Bethany)

The context of both teachers involved in the study was different, but what is of interest is that there is evidence that classroom incidents impact upon the ecology of the classroom and therefore on future assessment choices. For example:

Independent group worked independently to write a mystery ending, using pre-written beg and middle. Although this was an independent task, children were seen talking to each other, asking questions of each other and before returning to whole class, had read each others' endings (Amanda later explained that although she didn't say this in lesson, she was delighted that they were doing this as it had been something she had recently been encouraging them to do- she hoped it is now an expectation that children support each other-she feels this is beneficial and allows them to improve work together) (Ref. Observation 2 of Amanda)

She explained to the children that although they were working independently, that she would like them at the end to read each others' work and make suggestions for improvements. All of the children working independently completed the ending of the story and before returning for a plenary, ability pairs worked together to read and discuss each others' work. During the plenary, Bethany asked pairs to discuss each others' work and highlight key features that were good and to talk about changes they had made following paired discussion. (After lesson Bethany explained about how she had organised the paired work and said that she was trying to encourage pupils to work together critically. She values paired work, but said she felt children need clear focus as recently this had not been as successful, with children being off task and in friendship pairs. Asking to suggest improvements and put in ability groups was something she was trying.) (Ref. Observation 6 of Bethany)

The above examples highlight how particular incidents impact upon the nature of the classroom and as a consequence on future teaching and assessment. Having presented the main findings of the study, the following provides the reader with a conclusion and summary of the chapter.

## 4.5 Conclusion of the Chapter

This chapter has presented the main findings of the study and has teased out some interesting issues regarding the formative strategies that a teacher uses and their perceived purpose. In the subsequent chapter these findings are discussed in relation to relevant literature. However, prior to moving to this the following provides a summary of the main findings.

The study has drawn out a number of findings in relation to formative assessment. The findings are numerous; however, for the purpose of clarity, the following focuses on summarising those that seem to have further implications for policy and practice.

The first main finding relates to the 'top-down' model of education in which teachers are currently immersed. The study highlights some pedagogical confusions with regard to aspects of the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy and particularly in connection with planning.

The second main finding relates to the role of specification of attainment. Evidence has been presented that, given the current model of education, the specification of attainment lies at the heart of the assessment strategies of both teachers and nested models have been offered to illustrate this.

The third main finding relates to types of feedback. This study presents evidence that teachers engage in phatic, evaluative and analytical feedback. Teachers engage in phatic and evaluative feedback for the purposes of pupil motivation and self esteem and to ensure pupils' work has been marked. They also employ these manageable strategies

because of issues associated time. In terms of analytical feedback, the study presents evidence that teachers provide much of this to pupils throughout their day to day teaching and the study has also identified a typology of assessment strategies and their purposes.

The fourth main finding of the study relates to the factors that influence teachers' use of particular strategies. The study demonstrates that the NLS, the individual nature of teaching and teachers' values and beliefs are closely aligned to formative assessment.

The final main finding of the study relates specifically to the notion that suggests that teachers are engaged in an assessment cycle in which many factors are involved.

In order to represent this visually, I have made use of the Reflective Assessment model used throughout this study. The reader will note, however, that I have amended the original model to present a colour-coded model to demonstrate the relationship between the framework and the main findings (Figure 4.9).



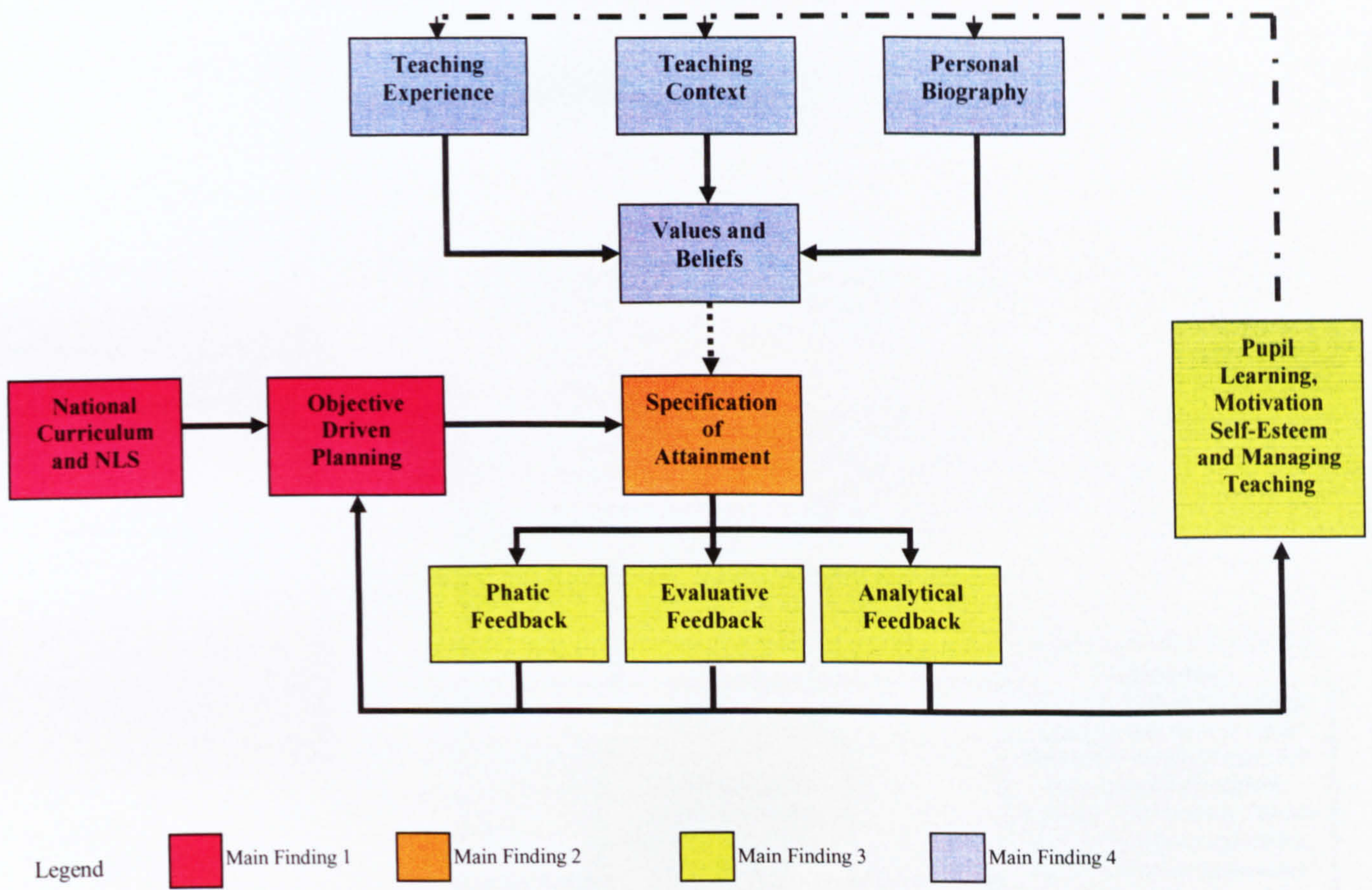
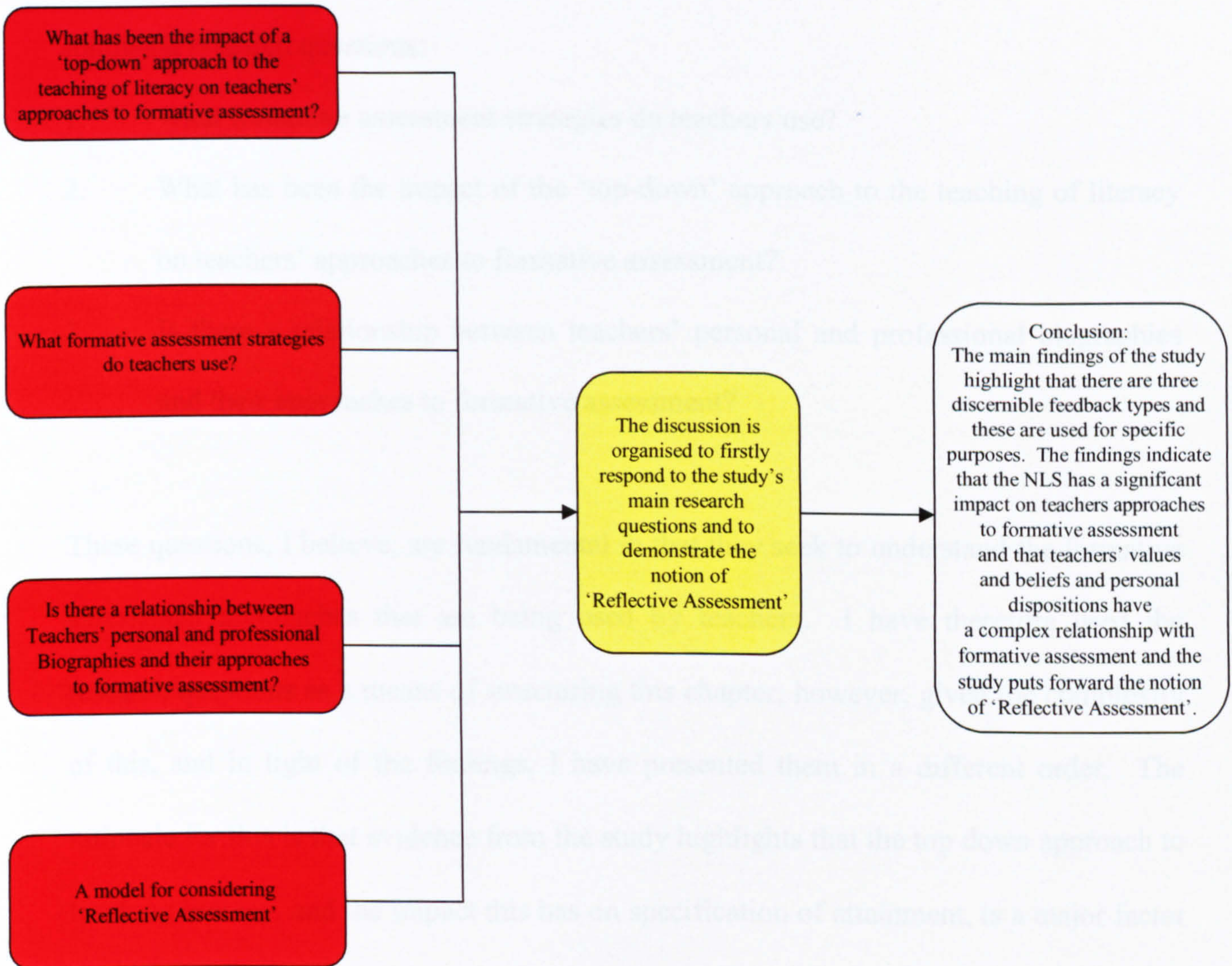


Figure 4.9 The Reflective Assessment Model and the Main Findings

## Discussion of the Findings



Legend: ■ Main Section ■ Sub-Sections ■ Rationale for Organisation

## Chapter 5: Discussion of the Findings

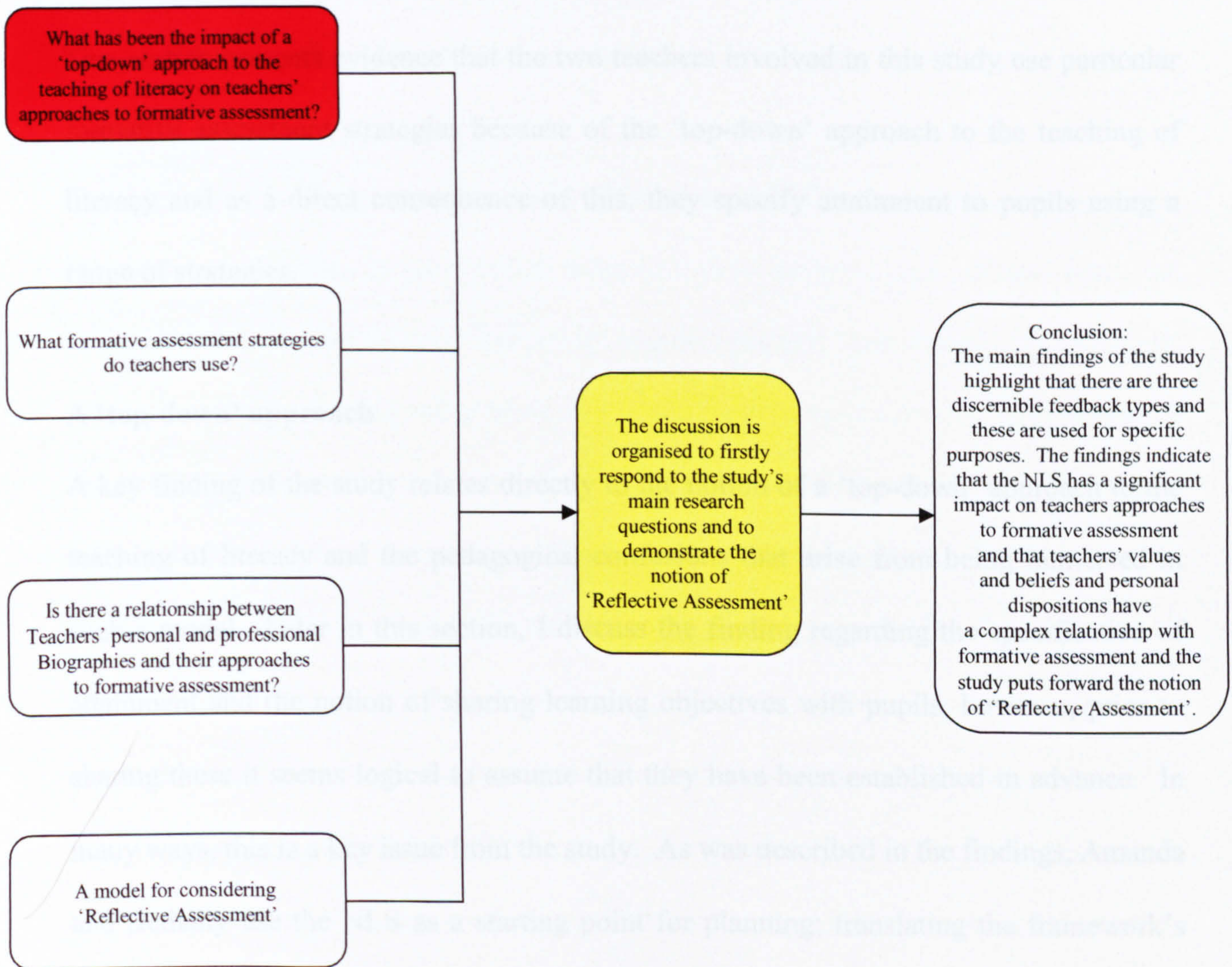
This chapter discusses the main findings of the study which sought to respond to the following research questions:

1. What formative assessment strategies do teachers use?
2. What has been the impact of the 'top-down' approach to the teaching of literacy on teachers' approaches to formative assessment?
3. Is there a relationship between teachers' personal and professional biographies and their approaches to formative assessment?

These questions, I believe, are fundamental in that they seek to understand the formative assessment approaches that are being used by teachers. I have therefore used the research questions as a means of structuring this chapter; however, given the complexity of this, and in light of the findings, I have presented them in a different order. The rationale for this is that evidence from the study highlights that the top down approach to teaching literacy, and the impact this has on specification of attainment, is a major factor in terms of why the two teachers, Amanda and Bethany, adopt particular approaches to formative assessment. It is also worth noting that this chapter also includes a discussion regarding the 'Reflective Assessment' model. As will emerge, there are a number of links throughout this chapter to other work regarding assessment; however, this chapter also presents some further findings that are particular to this study.

The following therefore presents the discussion of the main findings and is organised to discuss each research question in turn.

## Discussion of the Findings



Legend: ■ Main Section ■ Sub-Sections ■ Rationale for Organisation

## **5.1 What has been the Impact of a ‘Top-Down’ Approach to the Teaching of Literacy on Teachers’ Approaches to Formative Assessment?**

This section presents evidence that the two teachers involved in this study use particular formative assessment strategies because of the ‘top-down’ approach to the teaching of literacy and as a direct consequence of this, they specify attainment to pupils using a range of strategies.

### **A ‘top-down’ approach**

A key finding of the study relates directly to the notion of a ‘top-down’ approach to the teaching of literacy and the pedagogical confusions that arise from being immersed in such a model. Later in this section, I discuss the finding regarding the specification of attainment and the notion of sharing learning objectives with pupils, however, prior to sharing these it seems logical to assume that they have been established in advance. In many ways, this is a key issue from the study. As was described in the findings, Amanda and Bethany use the NLS as a starting point for planning; translating the framework’s objectives onto their medium term plans but because these plans are ‘set in stone’ and re-used year by year, they are not annotated and plans do not appear to be amended in light of evaluations. This implies that learning objectives are non-changeable, despite whether or not children have achieved them. Indeed, John (1993) claims that too often, learning objectives are perceived as being used artificially and as static instruments and this would appear to endorse the finding from the study. This, however, seems to be contrary to the beliefs of Amanda and Bethany, both of whom claim that lessons are tailored to meet the needs of individuals. One could, therefore, question the validity of

their claims given that they have no evaluations to support this, and their medium term plans are not open to change. In seeking to understand why their plans appear to be as such, it is possible to suggest that it could be attributed to the introduction of the NLS, which, as Neesom (2000) claims, has sent the unintended message that planning cannot be adjusted in response to formative assessment.

However, what is of interest with regard to the planning of Amanda and Bethany is that their shorter term plans (weekly) seem to be crafted to meet the needs of the class. This is facilitated through teachers discussing pupils' progress with respective colleagues when planning for the following week and matching subsequent lessons to the needs of their class. These weekly meetings, for both Amanda and Bethany, consist of dialogues with colleagues based on their understanding of the pupils' within their setting. Interestingly, neither teacher takes written notes to these meetings; rather information regarding pupils' progress during a week is 'stored in the teachers' memory'. One could argue that this may mean that teachers attend weekly planning meetings without the required information to hand. That is, if they have not recorded their evaluations, how can they be certain that they are tailoring lessons appropriately? However, the teachers claimed that these meetings are effective and one could suggest that this may be attributed to their professional knowledge and teaching experiences. As Eraut (1994) and Beijaard et al (2000) assert, these lead teachers to have developed rich; well organised knowledge bases that allow them to draw on their past experiences, and therefore these teachers may feel that their professional experiences and knowledge of the children are such that they do not need to record their evaluations. What appears to be the main issue then is not that lessons are not tailored to meet class and individual needs, but evidence for where this tailoring comes from is scant.

A further pedagogical confusion that has arisen in this study relates to the notion of target setting. The role of target setting in schools has seen a marked increase, particularly since the government announced national targets (Clarke, 2001). The teachers in this study are involved in school target setting processes and are engaged in setting class targets for pupils. The teachers in the study set targets for the whole class for long-term periods, such as a term, and these are displayed outside their classrooms. However, the study would question the use of these, given that the children did not refer to them at all and the teachers made very little reference to them in interviews and certainly made no reference to them at all during observed lessons. This supports John's (1993) observation that learning objectives can be artificial, given that it appears that these were tokenistic in form, that is, they were there for people to 'see' but not used to impact upon either teaching or learning.

What is of further interest, with regard to the notion of individual target setting, is that there was extremely limited evidence of it actually taking place in practice; in either an oral or a written context, yet the teachers claimed that they do engage in such a process. The question seems to be, why? The two teachers are immersed in a target driven culture of education (Richards, 2000) and it could be argued that by admitting that one is not committed to this particular educational strategy, then one is not fully committed to education. Furthermore, as Richards (2000: 6) states, teachers may opt out of national initiatives, "...but at their peril given policing by OFSTED and LEA officials" (2000:6). Therefore, one could suggest that the teachers involved in the study appear to be using the rhetoric but this may merely be as a means of keeping external bodies at bay.

The focus of target setting in this study does, however, highlight the importance of personal targets from the perspective of the pupils. There was evidence that the pupils engage in the setting of personal mental targets following the marking of written work and a particularly interesting finding of the study relates to the notion of non-recorded targets as described by Clarke (2001). Clarke describes how this usually occurs as a result of focused marking, but evidence from the study demonstrates some anomalies. Teachers, as is described later (see section 5.1), tend to use phatic assessment in written feedback as opposed to evaluative and/or analytical, therefore this study would suggest that Clarke's notion of 'focused marking' needs to be clarified. In addition, I would argue that the focus of pupils' mental target setting revolves around the learning objectives for a particular lesson. Both teachers, as described later (see section 5.1), place great emphasis on the use of learning objectives throughout lessons. Pupils are very familiar with this, being able to talk about their work in terms of objectives and able to make judgements about how well they have met them. This highlights how, through working in an objective-driven model, where objectives are used as part of the lesson discourse, the teachers and pupils in particular are more able to engage in focused target setting that serves to have a direct impact upon teaching and learning.

### **Specification of attainment**

A further finding of the study relates specifically to the role of specification of attainment, with the notion being that it is the driving force of formative assessment. This, I believe, implies a shift in thinking, given that the literature regarding formative assessment overwhelmingly describes means of specification of attainment, such as the sharing of learning objectives with pupils, as a 'feature' or 'component' of formative assessment (see for example, Black and Wiliam, 1998 a and b, Clarke, 2001).



The study highlights how, for both teachers, specification of attainment lies at the heart of their formative behaviour, and this can be attributed largely to the objective driven model in which they work. Both Amanda and Bethany use the NLS as a starting point for their lesson planning; using the NLS framework's objectives in their medium and short term planning, and this directly relates to how they then behave within their individual contexts (Figure 5.1). For example, evidence from the study highlights that having set learning objectives, both teachers specify them in some manner to the children. In many ways this is unsurprising, and indeed, during the group teacher interview conducted with Amanda and her colleagues, Amanda actually stated this herself (see section 4.2).

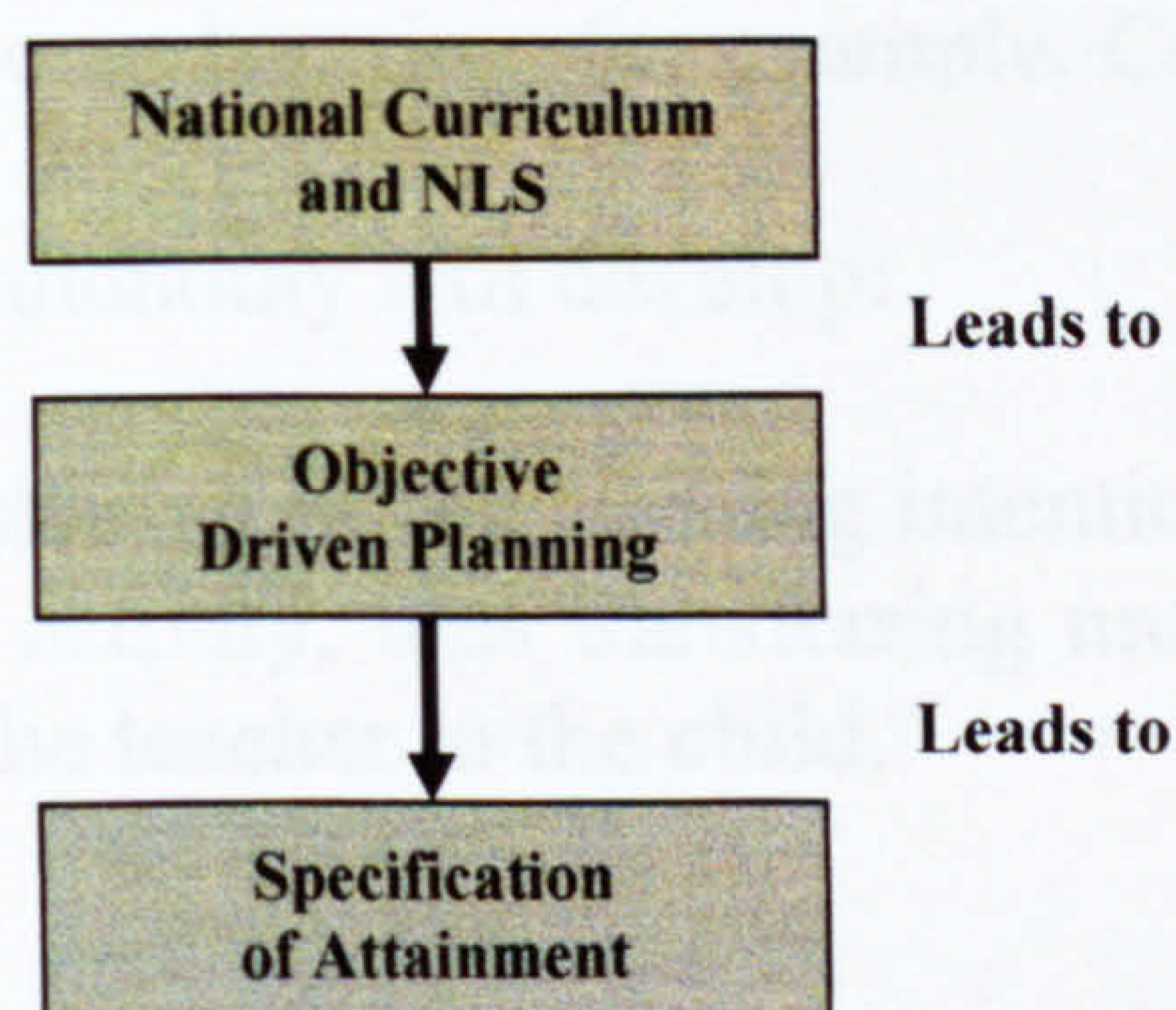


Figure 5.1 An Objective Driven Model of Specification of Attainment

However, what is of particular interest to this study, in relation to the specification of attainment, is the manner in which these teachers facilitate this in their day-to-day teaching. There is abundant evidence in the study that both teachers employ a range of techniques in order to specify attainment to pupils and they do so to impact upon both teaching and learning; in many ways using the broad repertoire of techniques as described by Tunstall and Gipps (1996), whereby pupils are given specific knowledge of

attainment, teachers use criteria in relation to work or behaviour and teachers model and provide pupils with specific praise.

As acknowledged by most literature regarding assessment for learning (see for example Clarke, 1998, and 2001 and Black and Wiliam 1998a and 1998b) a key facet of formative assessment is the specification of attainment to pupils through the sharing of learning objectives.

With regard to specification of attainment, what is of further interest is that the sharing of learning objectives is perceived by many researchers, as being a powerful means of motivating children to learn as it ensures that they are task orientated and have ownership of their own learning; for example, Clarke (1998:8) states that through shared knowledge, pupil autonomy will develop:

“The sharing of the learning intention enables the child to know the purpose of the activity, thus transferring much of the responsibility for the learning from the teacher to the child.”

This view is also supported by other proponents of formative assessment, such as Black and Wiliam, (1998a and 1998b) and Torrance and Pryor (1998 and 2001). Evidence from the study would endorse these notions, given that not only did the teachers claim pupils were more task orientated and autonomous, but so too did the pupils themselves. I believe that a major reason for this is that both teachers employ a range of strategies for sharing learning objectives. For both teachers, the notion of sharing learning objectives is far broader than merely stating them at the beginning of a lesson. The teachers use a variety of techniques, from verbalising objectives throughout a lesson, to demonstrating or modelling them, and like Ames (1992) one could contest that it is this variety that serves to motivate the pupils. And, returning to the earlier citation of John (1993), and

considering the manner in which the teachers specify attainment, there is evidence from the study that serves to highlight that for both of these teachers the actual use of learning objectives is far removed from being artificial.

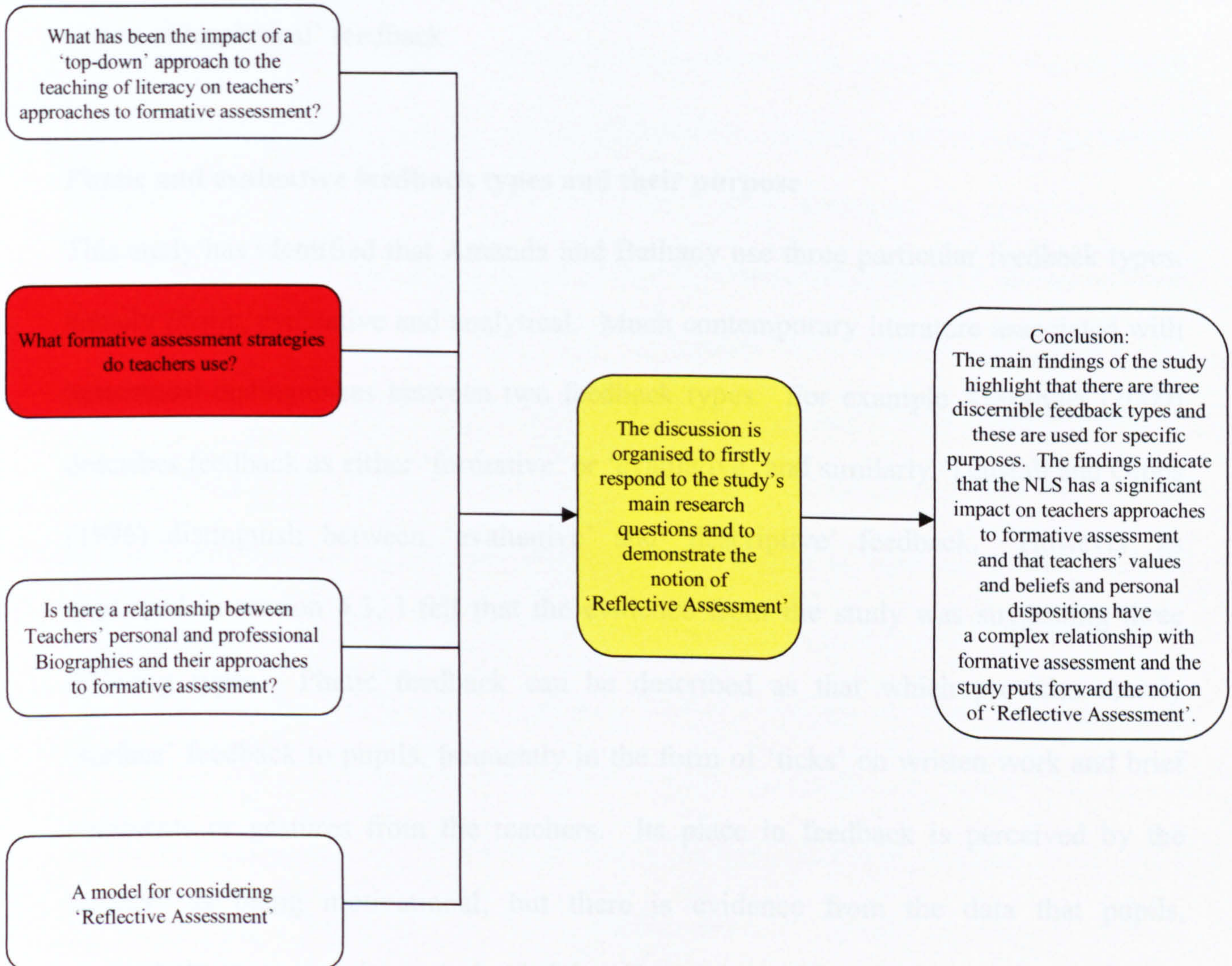
Through provision of a range of methods for specifying attainment, teachers in the study are essentially providing opportunities for pupils to see the 'meaningfulness' of the learning objectives and are scaffolding the learning (Ames, 1992, Blumenfield, 1992). Furthermore, by specifying attainment through strategies such as 'modelling', the teachers in the study are providing valuable opportunities for pupils to see that the learning objectives of a lesson are achievable. This is imperative if pupils are then expected to work autonomously, particularly given that goal theory indicates that challenging and achievable classroom tasks that are used to promote mastery orientation, create an intrinsic purpose to learning (see section 2.4.4). Dweck and Elliott (1983, cited in Dweck, 2000) claim that it is important to create an emphasis on learning goals and personally challenging tasks, such that pupils are intrinsically motivated and evidence from the study supports this notion. The pupils involved in the study invariably spoke about learning as being personal to them and perceived learning objectives and tools used for the specification of attainment as powerful strategies for themselves as individuals (see section 4.2).

Clarke (2001) extends the notion of sharing learning objectives with pupils to the sharing of success criteria. The notion of sharing success criteria with pupils has recently, from my own experiences, seen an increase. Trainees at Newcastle University are presently educated in setting learning objectives and success criteria, and both of the teachers involved in the study have been involved in aspects of this. However, at the time of

gathering the empirical data for this study, the phrase 'success criteria' was unfamiliar to the teachers. Despite this, there is substantial evidence that both teachers engage in sharing criteria for success with children through the use a range of techniques, such as modelling and demonstrating, for example, to provide the children with scaffolds (see section 5.1), and it is this feature that transforms learning objectives from the remote to the accessible (John, 1993). The pupils and teachers alike are concerned with the deployment of a range of techniques to ensure that not only are learning objectives clear and shared, but interactive.

From a 'teaching' perspective, this study supports Clarke's (2001) observation, that, having shared learning objectives with pupils, the teachers are more focused on them when they are teaching; they make links to prior learning and they deliver focused plenaries. In addition, because lessons are more tightly focused and pupils can then engage in activities more autonomously, this impacts upon general class management, whereby lessons are less frequently disrupted and pupils are on task.

## Discussion of the Findings



Legend: ■ Main Section ■ Sub-Sections ■ Rationale for Organisation

## **5.2 What Formative Assessment Strategies do Teachers Use?**

This section is organised into two parts. Section one discusses ‘phatic’ and ‘evaluative’ feedback strategies that teachers use, whilst section two focuses on the more complex notion of ‘analytical’ feedback.

### **Phatic and evaluative feedback types and their purpose**

This study has identified that Amanda and Bethany use three particular feedback types: namely phatic, evaluative and analytical. Much contemporary literature associated with assessment distinguishes between two feedback types. For example Alexander (2000) describes feedback as either ‘formative’ or ‘evaluative’ and similarly, Tunstall and Gipps (1996) distinguish between ‘evaluative’ and ‘descriptive’ feedback. However, as explained in section 4.3, I felt that the evidence from the study was suggesting three differing types. Phatic feedback can be described as that which provides merely ‘surface’ feedback to pupils, frequently in the form of ‘ticks’ on written work and brief comments or gestures from the teachers. Its place in feedback is perceived by the teachers as being motivational, but there is evidence from the data that pupils, particularly, perceive it as ‘tokenistic’. Evaluative feedback is similar to that as identified by Tunstall and Gipps (1996), whereby teachers pass an evaluative judgement on pupils’ performance, either orally or in written form. Such feedback is perceived as positive by all parties, as it generally highlights how objectives have been met. Analytical feedback is that which provides pupils with rich information about their work and occurs largely in oral interactions. Its purpose is multifaceted, and it is perceived as a tool for not only motivating pupils, but also as a means of improving learning.

What is of particular interest to this study is that although specification of attainment is the driving force of assessment, the nature of feedback following this varies depending upon whether the feedback is written or oral. In much written feedback there is significant evidence that Amanda and Bethany are overwhelmingly phatic, sometimes evaluative and rarely analytical, whereas in oral contexts this is reversed. Yet, although the model is reversed in an oral context, the teachers continue to offer much praise and positive feedback to accompany their more analytical strategies. In many ways this concurs with the findings of Alexander (2000) who concluded that in England teachers tend to judge positively rather than negatively for fear that it might harm a child's self-esteem. For both teachers, motivation and self-esteem of pupils play a key role in such day-to-day teaching and interactions. The study presents evidence that both Amanda and Bethany frequently praise children throughout the course of their day-to-day teaching through the use of written or verbal praise, positive body language and actual rewards, as they perceive these strategies as serving to impact positively on pupil motivation and self-esteem; the notion being that through provision of rewards, achievement striving can be stimulated (Brophy, 1994). In both schools reward systems are in place, each school celebrates pupil successes and has a similar process whereby pupils are publicly acknowledged during assemblies for their efforts. Furthermore, Bethany awards merits as an extrinsic motivator for children. This links with Skinner's (1968) notion of reinforcement; whereby teachers use extrinsic rewards in the hope of increasing the likelihood of the behaviour re-occurring, and it is the specific notion of individual extrinsic rewarding that is of particular interest to the study. Despite both teachers asserting the importance of extrinsic rewards in terms of their impact on motivation and self-esteem, they have a number of well-grounded anxieties about such systems. In common with Brophy (1994), Bethany is concerned with striking a balance between

extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors in her daily teaching. She expressed concerns over the perceived fairness of her merit system, and her ability to be consistent in awarding merits. This notion was endorsed by Bethany's colleagues during the group interview, where they confirmed that Bethany had put into place a new reward system since the data collection period, in order to try to redress some of her concerns, and they too expressed their apprehension about extrinsic rewards:

Denise: "There are some children in my class that just want 'goals' (like a merit) If they have done really well and I don't put on 'One Goal', you can see them being really disappointed and you hear them saying 'Aw, you got a goal, I didn't get a goal'"

Carol: "They're undermining their satisfaction of having worked well...It's very difficult to be consistent with all of the children all of the time..." (Ref. Group Teacher Interview)

Bethany's system (initial Merit system) rewards both behaviour and academic achievement and she feels worried that this is causing issues, as some children are both unclear of the purpose of the system and some are being 'missed out' in the awarding of merits. Bethany is troubled that this is causing them to feel that they are unsuccessful. This notion strikes a chord with Dweck et al's (1978) notion of 'learned helplessness', whereby some pupils simply give up because they perceive themselves as incapable of success. The notion of learned helplessness highlights the importance of how teachers give feedback to pupils and the parallels between this and Bethany's fears are clear. If pupils are not awarded merits for success as frequently as others, then they may perceive themselves as failures and thus this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Bethany described how she is reviewing her merit system, as she believes some form of extrinsic motivational factor is necessary, together with intrinsic factors. Furthermore, Amanda explained during the data collection period how she was also reviewing her evaluative feedback strategies and considering some kind of extrinsic reward system. This I find particularly interesting. Both teachers perceive extrinsic rewards as a means of



motivating individuals and impacting upon self-esteem and confidence. The question seems to be then, why do these teachers feel so inclined to use reward systems with pupils? Dweck (2000:51) goes some way to respond to this:

“One of the reasons we have become so lavish, and perhaps indiscriminate, with our praise of students is that as a society we have come to believe that this will raise students’ confidence. And confidence, we believe, is the panacea.”

Dweck claims that we believe that if students have confidence in their ability, then they will feel less daunted by challenges, never doubt themselves and persist effectively. However, research (see for example: Henderson and Dweck, 1990) exposes this notion as a misconception, and the confidence that students bring to a situation often does not help them in overcoming challenges. Dweck (2000:57) goes on to state that:

“...so much of our child-rearing and educational efforts are aimed at providing success and boosting confidence...but there are better messages we can give our children, better messages about what it means to be smart and how to get smarter.”

What is of particular interest with regard to the study is that the notion of providing pupils with phatic or evaluative feedback for motivational purposes was voiced far more strongly by the teachers than by the pupils. Indeed, pupils seem far more concerned with the quality of analytical feedback than phatic or evaluative feedback and despite enjoying being told that they have ‘done well’ or receiving a ‘merit’ or a series of ticks on written work, they feel that this alone is insufficient. Pupils in the study overwhelmingly associated a range of analytical feedback types with motivation and self esteem and this highlights a number of paradoxes. Firstly, the perceptions of the pupils regarding phatic and evaluative feedback are somewhat contrary to those of their teachers and secondly this seems to challenge the conclusions of the study carried out by Tunstall and Gipps (1996) who concluded that the evaluative dimension of formative

assessment was strongly represented in children's perceptions of types of feedback. Although their study was carried out with Key Stage One children the contrast is of particular interest. The findings of this study depict a very different picture of feedback from the perspective of the pupils. Overwhelmingly pupils in this study perceived phatic and evaluative feedback as only to be useful for learning if accompanied by some form of analytical feedback.

In chapter 2, the notions of entity and incremental theories were discussed in relation to pupil motivation and self-esteem (see section 2.4.4) and this study highlights an interesting finding regarding the pupils involved. As described above, evidence from the study highlights that pupils are more concerned with analytical feedback as opposed to phatic and evaluative feedback, and therefore, in many ways the pupils involved in this study could be described as demonstrating some of the characteristics associated with 'incrementalists', given that for them intelligence is deemed as something that they can cultivate (Dweck, 2000). However, it is also clear that the children in the study display characteristics associated with entity theory, given that they enjoy being rewarded in some form for their successes and some children clearly stated that they worry about how they compare with others and want to appear clever. In the context of this study, I would argue that there are a number of reasons for this.

Firstly, and probably most notably, the two teachers actively reward pupils extrinsically, and there was much evidence of this in terms of written feedback to pupils which was largely phatic or evaluative in nature, and thus the teachers foster an entity theory. The rewarding of pupils for effort, academic achievement and good behaviour is not innovative and is associated with behaviourism and embedded in the cultures of schools

(Pollard, 1997). Secondly, as Dweck (2000) argues, today's society is one whereby children are frequently rewarded, and indeed expect to be rewarded and schools are organisations that foster this. Thirdly, both teachers use a broad range of analytical feedback strategies that are integral in their daily teaching, thus promoting an incremental theory. Herein lies the difficulty. The teachers are battling with two contrasting theories, striving to motivate pupils both extrinsically and intrinsically, and this may go some way to explain why Amanda and Bethany are involved in re-evaluating their reward systems. The reward systems, for these particular pupils, quite simply, may be superfluous. The implication here then, is that time and effort on the part of the teachers could be better spent in establishing strategies for providing pupils with good quality, analytical feedback as opposed to devising new and exciting extrinsic reward systems. Indeed, Brophy (1994) recommends practitioners accept both the positive and negative aspects of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation factors and exploit the range of strategies that motivate students to learn by engaging their interest and developing their appreciation that the value of accomplishment brings. Implying, it seems, a 'balance'.

Furthermore, it appears that the teachers need to consider what factors motivate a learner: to what do they attribute their success or failure, given that this study highlights that in terms of Weiner's (1984) attribution theory, pupils' need for achievement is influenced by their own expectations as learners.

## **Analytical feedback**

The role of assessment for learning has become recognised by a number of researchers as contributing significantly to the raising of academic standards (see for example: Black and Wiliam 1998a and b, Torrance and Pryor 1998 and Clarke , 2001). Such researchers have been influential in promoting the use of a range of formative assessment strategies within classrooms. Indeed, Black and Wiliam (1998b:19) claim that:

“There is a firm body of evidence that formative assessment is an essential feature of classroom work and that development of it can raise standards.”

What I propose is that there is evidence that the teachers involved in the study use a broad range of formative assessment strategies and they are perceived by both teachers and pupils alike as an essential feature of their classroom work, serving to impact positively upon both teaching and learning. Although specification of attainment is, in the context of the study, the main thrust of formative assessment, there is evidence that the teachers engage in the use of a range of strategies to provide pupils with analytical feedback, supporting Clarke’s (2001:55) conviction that:

“...research shows that children should be given information about where they have achieved success against the learning intention and where they could improve against the learning intention – both at the same time.”

The teachers involved in the study use a range of techniques to provide children with analytical feedback, ranging from oral to written comments. What is of particular interest is that pupils in particular feel that they benefit from written comments by the teacher in their books. There was overwhelming consensus from the pupils that written comments are used to reflect on work and that they use them in future work.

However, evidence from this study suggests that despite this, the two teachers have difficulties with the practicalities of providing written, analytical, feedback to pupils.

The study highlights that a majority of the written feedback to pupils in literacy is phatic or evaluative, consisting of ticks or brief evaluative comments, and when comments are analytical, these overwhelmingly relate to the 'mechanics' of writing, focussing on spelling or grammar, even though these were not the identified learning objective of the session. This was endorsed on several occasions by the teachers and the pupils, and highlights a major issue in terms of providing quality analytical feedback that relates to the actual objective of the lesson as opposed to the 'hidden objective' (this is discussed further in this section).

In seeking to understand why teachers struggle with written analytical feedback, Weeden et al (2002) point out that if every piece of work done or task undertaken has to be marked then it can be far too time-consuming. This can lead to a 'flick and tick' approach that simply indicates that work has been completed. The anomaly here is that, although analytical feedback is desirable, it can be a lengthy process for teachers to engage in and as a consequence may not always occur. Evidence from the study would endorse this, given that both Amanda and Bethany and their respective colleagues described how time management impacts upon their ability to provide detailed, analytical feedback. Furthermore, Denise, a colleague of Bethany's explained how, when engaged in discussing the findings of the study, that in addition to finding it difficult to find time to write quality feedback, there can be a feeling of 'guilt' if the amount of feedback differs from pupil-to-pupil:

"Sometimes you might mark a book and it doesn't take you long to do and for others you might write reams and reams, it would seem and then you feel guilty that you haven't put as much effort into another child's book. I often go back and think, well, what else can I write because if they are sitting together and comparing feedback..." (Ref. Carol, Group Interview Beta primary School)

And this view was endorsed by the other colleagues too, supporting Bethany's concern of perceived fairness. This echoes Ames' (1992) stance, whereby she believes that the ways pupils are evaluated can affect their motivation, with the key point being that it concerns pupils' perceptions of the meaning of evaluation.

The study has provided evidence that analytical feedback motivates pupils and can be seen by the pupils to impact positively on their self esteem. The implication then is that the teachers need to manage the way that they provide feedback to ensure that both they and the pupils can capitalise on the value of analytical feedback, whilst ensuring time is used efficiently. The teachers involved in the study described how they provide written, analytical feedback, and an answer for both of them appears to lie in learning objectives. Both teachers described how they seek to mark work in relation to these explicitly. However, what is of interest is that although the teachers perceive this as a useful means of responding to pupils' work, evidence from the study would suggest that there is the potential for work to be merely evaluated as opposed to being analysed. To be successful at this implies that the teachers and pupils need to be clear about intended learning outcomes and the criteria for success.

A further strategy that is advocated by proponents of formative assessment is self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is perceived as a strategy that promotes pupil progress, persistence and self-esteem (see for example, Sadler, 1989, Black and Wiliam, 1998a and b). The aim of self-evaluation is to promote pupils to become independent learners and to encourage the development of metacognitive strategies and Bandura (1992) claims that the more students feel in command of their own learning, then the more excited and active they will be about it, and therefore more likely to fulfil their potential.

The findings of the study would concur with this. The pupils involved in the study are very aware of the purposes of the activities that they are engaged in and are able to talk about their work in relation to learning objectives. What is of interest, is that the pupils are able to identify features of their work that could be described as 'strengths and weaknesses' and engage in self-evaluation. The pupils engage in self-evaluation before receiving feedback from the teacher, through reflection on the learning objectives, or as is the case in Bethany's class, pre-marking work using 'check and change' cards (Appendix T). The pupils also engage in self-evaluation after receiving feedback from the teacher. The pupils carry out this second activity through the reading of/listening to teacher feedback and some pupils follow this by the setting of non-recorded targets (Clarke, 2001). In carrying out these self-evaluative activities the pupils are engaged in independent learning and also could be described as developing their metacognitive strategies (Harris and Bell, 1994 and Neesom, 2000).

From a positive perspective, what is of interest in the context of the study is that pupils described how they use written comments made by the teacher, not only to reflect on that particular piece of work, but also as a tool for comparing with their earlier self. The purpose of comparing with their earlier self is, as was described by the pupils, for them to make personal improvements. This contrasts with Duffield et al's (2000) findings with pupils of secondary age, who compared themselves with their 'earlier self' in order to establish their 'place in the class'. For the pupils in this study, however, the purpose of comparing with their earlier self was much more personal, indeed, few children commented on the need for, or interest in, comparing themselves with their peers. The pupils in the study attribute feedback with personal improvement and this links with Weiner's (1984) attribution theory, whereby pupils perceive the locus of responsibility

with regard to learning lying with themselves, and also has resonance with Earl's (2003) conceptualisation of assessment as learning. In this conceptualisation, the pupils are active, engaged and critical assessors, monitoring what they themselves are learning and using their own feedback to impact upon learning.

From a more negative perspective, as mentioned earlier however, is that 'hidden objectives' associated with the 'mechanics' of writing are consistently discussed by teachers and pupils alike and often dominate the feedback. Graham and Kelly (1998: 111) suggest that teachers pay attention to these surface features because:

“When a teacher looks at a piece of writing by a child, it is easy to spot the mistakes; however competent the writer, there will generally be some spelling and punctuation errors to be corrected. Paying attention to these surface features can often prevent the teacher-reader from seeing beyond them to the content or message which was the purpose of the writing.”

The teachers in the study, when presented with the findings were somewhat surprised by this particular discovery, although on reflection it became clear that the reason that they tended to focus on 'mechanical' errors was because not only are such mistakes easy to spot, but looking for such errors is embedded in the teachers' consciousness. Indeed, both teachers discussed how they looked for such mistakes almost as a 'force of habit', highlighting therefore the need, as Graham and Kelly propose, to think in terms of 'feedback' and 'response' to writing rather than 'marking' and 'correction'; indeed, conceiving of responding to pupils' work in a formative capacity.

As the following illustrates, there are a number of further issues that manifest themselves with regard to feedback, particularly in the context of pupils working collaboratively and evaluating each other's work.



Both teachers in the study encourage pupils to work together very frequently. The purpose of pupils working together to self-evaluate is, as described by the teachers, to encourage the children to reflect on each others' work, whilst at the same time providing opportunities for scaffolded learning. As described in the case study descriptions (see section 4.1), both Amanda and Bethany hold similar values and beliefs about learning, believing that the main purpose of the formative assessment strategies that they use is to scaffold individual children's learning. With this in mind, therefore, the purpose of peers working together in a self-evaluative context serves to promote Vygotsky's (1978) notion of bridging the learning gap through the use of expert peers. However, there is a key finding in this study that relates to this. The study highlights that for peer-evaluation to be successful, pupils need to understand its purpose. Like Gipps (1994) claims, there needs to be a shared agenda, because despite both teachers advocating peer-evaluation, there is abundant evidence that pupils have difficulties with this.

Clarke (2001) and Stobart and Gipps (1997) suggest that in order for pupils to be able to actively engaged in peer and self-evaluation, they need to be trained and Bethany's use of 'check and change' cards could be described as going some way to address this. However, despite the use of these supporting materials for self and peer assessment, pupils remain concerned about marking others' work. Concerns were raised with regard to 'cheating', highlighting a misconception from the pupils' perspective about the role of peer evaluation. This concern was echoed by children in Amanda's class, and during the teacher group interviews, colleagues of Amanda and Bethany discussed this. For example, Denise, a colleague of Bethany's illustrated how children in her class also have difficulties with this and she described how, in response to this difficulty the Key Stage Two team have encouraged 'response partners' (Ref. Group Teacher Interview, Beta

Primary School). In this context pupils work with the same pupils all of the time and thus develop a trusting relationship. The notion of trust emerged as an important factor in terms of peer-evaluation, and this in many ways is unsurprising, given the personal nature of feedback. Pupils discussed the importance of working with friends and those who would not put pressure on them. Furthermore, several girls also mentioned that they did not like working with boys when peer-evaluating. Trusting relationships were perceived as invaluable and this view was endorsed by the teachers, who discussed a range of strategies for matching pupils in peer-evaluative contexts. A further issue that arose from the study regarding peer-evaluation relates to the notion of 'peer pressure', whereby pupils feel pressured to 'change each others' work' and feel uncomfortable when others pass negative criticism on their work. Tunstall and Gipps (1996) concluded that it was other children's negative evaluative judgements about their work that caused most adverse comments among the children and evidence from this study would support this. Ames (1992) believes that the ways by which pupils are evaluated can affect their motivation, and findings from this study would support this view. Social comparison plays a large role and the impact of it on children manifests itself in the avoidance of risk-taking and the use of less effective learning strategies. Evidence for this is particularly abundant in the context of peers working together. Despite the purpose of such assessments being to promote independent learning and enhance the development of metacognitive strategies, the purpose was 'lost' on the pupils, who became instead, increasingly concerned with social comparison and peer pressure.

These findings in relation to peer evaluation and collaboration strike a chord with research regarding group work. Barnes and Todd's (1977) influential work on collaborative learning highlights the importance it has on cognitive development and as

Corden (2000) points out, the value of dialogue in scaffolding children's comprehension skills has been demonstrated by a range of researchers including Rosenblatt (1989) who identified that peer-peer dialogues help children to make connections between the reading and writing processes. In addition to cognitive development there is a large body of evidence to highlight the positive impacts of collaborative learning on social development and motivation. Corden cites the work of, for example, Sharan (1980) and Slavin (1983) to support the positive impact that collaborative learning has on a range of social skills, although he highlights that in order for group work to be successful it must be managed and organised appropriately. This therefore may go some way to explain some of the difficulties pupils have with peer evaluation. The implication therefore being that for peer evaluation to be successful, pupils need to understand why they are being asked to work in pairs, see the relevance of working in such a context, and recognise what it means to work as part of a pair/group.

The study highlights a further interesting finding that, although related to the above, provides evidence of the pupils' perceptions of the role of the teacher in feedback. Despite pupils claiming that they are capable of making judgements about their own work and that of others, they overwhelmingly feel that this needs further teacher input and there was general agreement from pupils that they require further affirmation perceiving the teacher as the 'expert'. This again strikes a chord with Weiner's (1984) attribution theory, whereby pupils see responsibility lying with external factors, in this case, with the teachers.

This also highlights, that although pupils perceive the locus of responsibility with regard to their learning as lying with themselves, they perceive the locus of responsibility with

regard to affirmation of achievement as lying with the teacher. This questions the extent, therefore to which pupils are developing their metacognitive strategies. This could be attributed to Weiner's notions of 'constancy' and 'responsibility'. As described in the literature review; constancy refers to whether the learner sees responsibility as restricted to one event or not, and responsibility refers to whether the factors can be controlled or not. Evidence from the study suggests that pupils perceive written feedback, for example, to be useful for future work and for making comparisons with their earlier self. Yet, what is interesting, is that pupils and teachers are working in a 'top-down' model of education (see section 2.3.2) and, as described earlier, planning in the long and medium terms appear to be set in stone. One could question, therefore, the extent to which pupils really have control of their own learning.

There are a number of further implications associated with all of the above. Firstly, the teachers must ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of the purpose of assessment techniques otherwise the advantages associated with strategies such as peer-evaluation can be overshadowed by lack of understanding; and secondly, before embarking upon peer-evaluation, relationships need to be established and the teachers must ensure that peer evaluation episodes are clearly managed and organised (Corden, 2000). In addition, evidence from the study supports Clarke's (2001) and Black and Wiliam's (1998b) notion that for self and peer-evaluation to be effective, pupils need training.

The study has also drawn out a further finding in relation to self and peer-evaluation, and this lies in how teachers provide opportunities for, what I have termed, 'guided' self and peer-evaluation. There is evidence in the study that the teachers use the plenary of a literacy hour to engage in guided self and peer-evaluation. The teachers provide

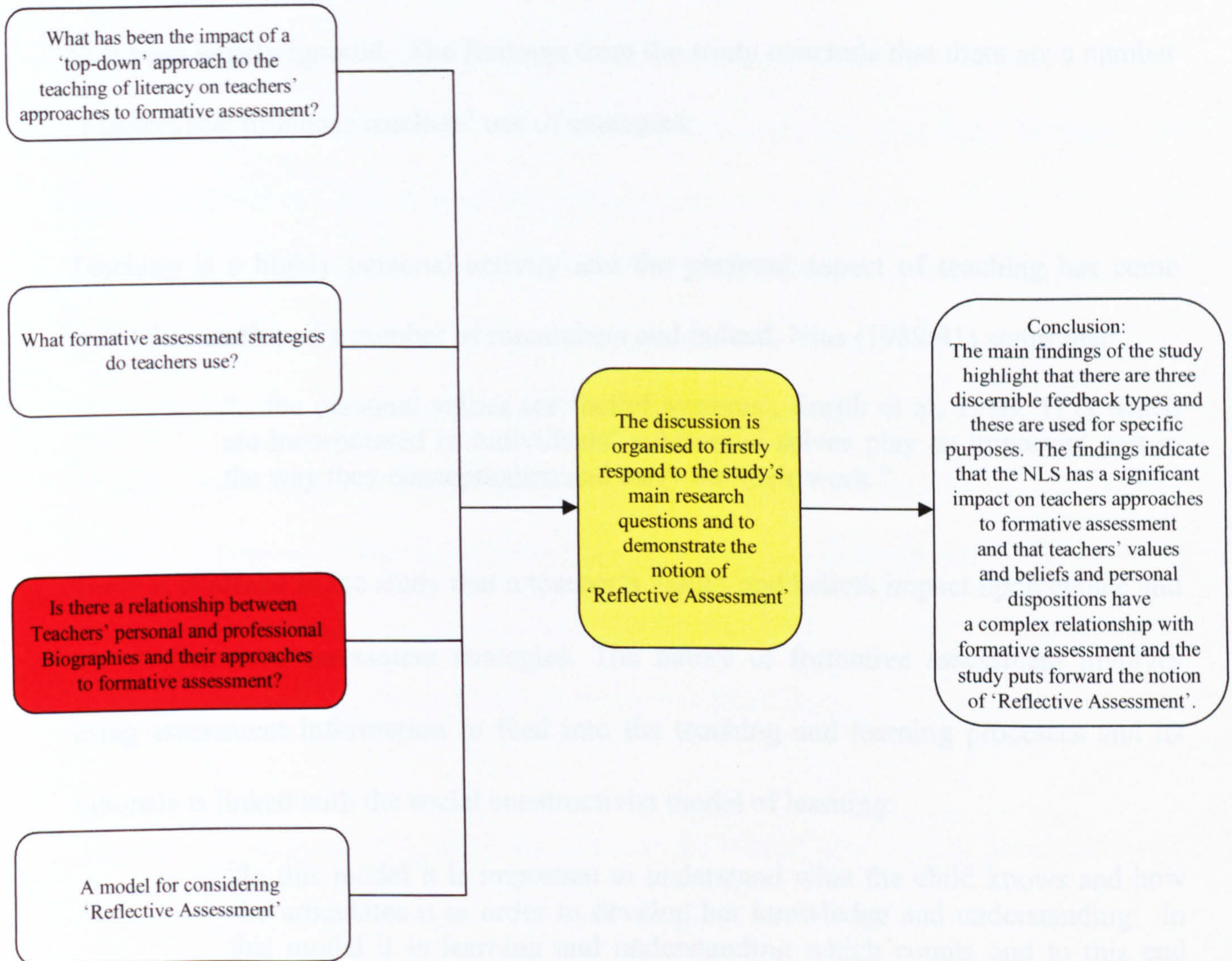
opportunities during these times for individuals to reflect on their own performance and for the class to reflect on the performance of individuals and groups. During these times, teachers act as models and mediators, and this highlights the notion that plenaries can be used as highly effective tools for training pupils in self and, in particular, in peer-evaluation (Clarke, 2001). Furthermore, in this context, whereby evaluation could be described as 'guided' the pupils' perceptions are much more positive. This is particularly interesting, given the findings of OFSTED (2001) who stated that the quality of the teaching during the plenary was good in only two in five lessons and weak in one in five lessons. OFSTED also concluded that weak plenaries tended to take the form of 'show and tell' sessions.

The implication of this aspect of the study is that effective plenaries provide the teachers with opportunities to develop pupils' evaluative skills, and in this respect need to be exploited, particularly given some of the misconceptions held by the pupils as was described earlier.

The main finding, then, in relation to analytical feedback seems to suggest that pupils need to have a very clear understanding of the roles that certain assessment strategies play, the implication then being that the teachers need to gain a deeper understanding of pupils' needs, given the mismatch in the teachers' and pupils' perceptions of particular strategies. Duffield et al (2000:272) state that:

"Fostering dialogue at the classroom level, enabling the pupils' voice to be heard and valued has the potential not only to improve relationships but to enhance the learning and achievement which policy makers seek."

## Discussion of the Findings



Legend: ■ Main Section ■ Sub-Sections ■ Rationale for Organisation

### **5.3 Is there a Relationship between Teachers' Personal and Professional Biographies and their Approaches to Formative Assessment?**

In most research regarding assessment, factors influencing teachers' use of strategies have been largely ignored. The findings from the study conclude that there are a number of factors that influence teachers' use of strategies.

Teaching is a highly personal activity and the personal aspect of teaching has come under the scrutiny of a number of researchers and indeed, Nias (1989:41) states that:

“...the personal values (or ‘belief systems’, Smith et al. 1986: 117) which are incorporated in individuals’ substantial selves play an important part in the way they conceptualize and carry out their work.”

There is evidence in the study that a teacher's values and beliefs impact upon choice and use of formative assessment strategies. The nature of formative assessment involves using assessment information to feed into the teaching and learning processes and its rationale is linked with the social constructivist model of learning:

“In this model it is important to understand what the child knows and how she articulates it in order to develop her knowledge and understanding. In this model it is learning and understanding which counts and to this end information about existing ideas and skills is essential.” (Harlen, 1994:72)

Therefore, to engage effectively in formative assessment a teacher must hold a social constructivist view of learning. The teachers involved in this study describe their teaching philosophies, and it is possible to discern that both hold what could be described as ‘social constructivist’ views of learning, given that they believe that the main purpose of the formative assessment strategies that they use is to scaffold individual children's learning (see sections 4.1). There is evidence in the study that teachers' views of learning

not only lead them towards the use of formative strategies, but then impact on the type of formative strategies that they use.

Amanda and Bethany, as described earlier, use a broad range of formative assessment strategies, but they use their knowledge and understanding of how individuals in their class learn to influence the type of analytical feedback that they give to them. In Pollard's (1997) terms, therefore, the teachers can be described as acting as 'reflective agents' because they make judgements about individuals and provide appropriate teaching input, thus they scaffold an individual's understanding across the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). For example, both Amanda and Bethany describe how modelling examples is a useful strategy for less able children, as it provides them with a structure within which to work and in addition they use a range of strategies to motivate pupils and impact upon their self-esteem, selecting appropriate means for achieving this in light of their understanding of what motivates particular individuals.

Amanda and Bethany both described how, on the whole, their beliefs about children's learning and the values that they hold have remained unchanged over the years, and for both teachers their teaching contexts, experiences and personal biographies have shaped their views of learning and their classroom practice with regard to formative assessment. The following is therefore organised to reflect that teaching contexts, experiences and biographies impact upon the formative behaviour of the teachers. In addition, this section considers how notions of reflective practice and the role of ITT also have a bearing on such activities.



## Teaching context

At the time of gathering the empirical data for the study, the teaching of literacy within primary settings was driven by the National Literacy Strategy (NLS). Broadfoot and Pollard (2000) describe how there was pressure from policy makers to return to 'traditional' teaching methods, particularly whole class teaching and a framework for teaching was introduced into schools. The framework sets out learning objectives from Reception to Year Six in an attempt to fulfil the governments' agenda to raise standards of literacy (see section 2.2.3).

This model implies an objective driven approach to planning and such an approach to planning is endorsed in OFSTED documentation:

"Good planning means that teaching in a lesson, session, or sequence of lessons has clear objectives for what pupils are to learn and how these objectives will be achieved." (OFSTED, 1995:68)

The teachers in the study both use an objective-first approach to their daily planning that is primarily driven by the NLS. What is of interest is that both teachers translate the NLS framework's objectives into their medium term planning, and these are 'set in stone' (see section 5.1). The context of the NLS is, therefore, having a direct impact upon teachers' planning. However, such an objectives-first model is criticised in much research as being static and controlled (see for example, John, 1993), and given the fact that teachers do not veer from these medium term objectives, then this seems to be endorsed. The question that therefore arises is why, then, does this 'context' have such an impact? As described in section 5.1, Neesom (2000) goes some way to explain this, claiming that the NLS's unintended message is that plans cannot be altered. However, if one considers Richards' (2000) criticisms of the period of education that we are currently immersed in, whereby there is 'zero tolerance of failure', then it is possible to surmise

that adherence to the detailed and prescriptive national strategy for literacy is inevitable given, as Richards describes it, the 'policing' by external bodies such as OFSTED and LEAs.

However, the teachers in the study appear to strike some balance between the prescriptive, objective driven nature of their planning and the consideration of the needs of children as described in section 5.1. One contextual factor that impacts upon this is the nature of their classes. Although the structure of Amanda and Bethany's classes are different (that is, streamed/un-streamed by ability), both teachers described how the actual composition of their class impacts upon their use of formative assessment strategies. They described their classes as consisting of pupils with different academic abilities, different learning styles and different levels of maturity, and are aware that they need to cater for these differences in order to meet individual needs. What was of interest was a comment made by Amanda:

"Not all classes are the same, you have to work hard to understand what makes children 'tick' and it's the relationships I have with my class that have helped me do this." (Ref. Biographical Interview with Amanda)

Pollard (1997) describes how it is important that a teacher 'connects' with a pupil's thinking and is therefore able to extend, challenge and reinforce. This therefore implies that a teacher requires a secure understanding of the individuals, what 'makes them tick' and uses strategies appropriate to the individual learner. This sounds like an extremely daunting task; however, as Black and Wiliam (1998b:13) state:

"This is not meant to imply that individualised one-to-one teaching is the only solution, rather, what is needed is a classroom culture of questioning and deep thinking in which pupils will learn from shared discussions with teachers and from one another."

The study highlights that the two teachers use a broad range of assessment strategies to meet the needs of individuals and their teaching contexts impact upon this. As is discussed above, formative assessment does not imply individualised approaches, and both Amanda and Bethany described how they facilitate the use of a range of strategies as result of the structure of the Literacy Hour.

The Literacy Hour (see section 2.2.3) promotes the use of a range of teaching contexts. The shared aspect of the hour facilitates whole class teaching through shared reading or writing. The principal of this is such that it allows a group of children to experience many of the benefits that are part of a storybook. The importance of teachers actually teaching children to use a variety of de-coding skills and a range of reading cues and strategies is promoted (see for example, Graham and Kelly, 1998 and Corden, 2000). As a consequence of the structure of the literacy hour, both teachers make explicit reference to the learning objectives during shared work and devise activities that not only fulfil the objectives of the lesson, but they engage with the learning objectives with the children in diverse ways, thus the teachers are behaving formatively and meeting the needs of a range of pupils without having to deliver individualised one-to-one teaching (Black and Wiliam, 1998b).

### **Teaching experience**

Beijaard et al (2000) describe how teaching experience leads teachers to have developed rich knowledge bases and Eraut (1994) also describes how experience relates to professional knowledge. The teachers in the study both have personal philosophies which are central to their conceptualisation of teaching, based upon their beliefs and

values, and there is evidence to suggest that these philosophies are strongly held and not open to significant change. As Nias (1992:xvi) states:

“...(teachers) find it hard to modify the behaviours which most closely reflect the sense of personal identity in which these beliefs and theories are embedded.”

Both teachers in the study described how their teaching experiences have shaped their knowledge and understanding of how children learn and consequently which formative assessment strategies to use at a given time. Particular experiences include the teachers developing an understanding of early years' literacy through either teaching in such settings or attending courses. Both teachers claim that in order to have a secure understanding of how children learn, then experiences are needed to enhance this. Thus, by having a more secure understanding of how children learn, they can match learning needs and bridge learning gaps, concurring with the constructivist views of Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1985). These experiences of Amanda and Bethany have, therefore, shaped their understanding not just of what pupils know, but what they might achieve through adult or peer support and collaboration.

A key finding in the context of teaching experiences is that both teachers believe that their recent ITT work has influenced the formative strategies that they use. They described how they are increasingly aware of strategies, and suggest that this is because they need to explain to trainee teachers explicitly why they are using them. This is an interesting finding, because in many ways teaching is perceived as an isolated career and, as Nias (1989:16) states:

“Teachers often learn to depend upon their own knowledge, interests and preferences in making pedagogic and curriculum decisions.”

Eraut (1994) describes how professionals continually learn 'on the job' and this seems to hold true for Amanda and Bethany, given that 'their job' extends beyond the isolated classroom context.

The notion that being involved in ITT can have a positive influence on a teacher's formative assessment strategies is a particularly interesting finding of the study, not least because it reinforces the notion of CPD. Evidence from the study substantiates the notion that effective teachers, using effective formative assessment strategies actively engage in CPD (see section 2.3.4). Although both teachers describe how training has influenced their ability to teach literacy effectively, a common vehicle for CPD in terms of formative assessment appears to be ITT involvement (This is discussed in greater detail later in this section).

### **Personal biography**

A particularly significant finding of the study is the importance of the teachers' sense of self and the influence of a teacher's personal biography on their formative assessment strategies.

Several researchers (see for example, Nias, 1989, Ball and Goodson, 1995) have reported that teachers see themselves as 'persons in teaching' rather than as teachers and have considered the biography of the teacher as influencing their professional lives. There is clear evidence in this study that when considering formative assessment strategies, teachers reflect on 'themselves as people'. Amanda, for example, frequently stated that she uses particular strategies, such as providing models because they 'work for her' and Bethany echoed these sentiments, highlighting the crucial fact that as persons in

teaching, these two teachers reflect on themselves as 'persons' and this has a direct impact upon their practice. In addition, 'critical events' and 'relevant others' are, in this context, perceived as having an impact upon individuals and, therefore upon their practice.

There is substantial evidence in the study that a teacher's personal and professional life can be deemed as influencing classroom practice. The most notable influences for Amanda and Bethany seem to be early educational experiences. Teachers are in a highly unique situation when they begin teaching, having experienced school from the perspective of their own education. Lortie (1975) describes this as 'apprenticeship of observation'. The teachers involved in the study appear both to have been affected by their own education.

Amanda described negative childhood education experiences, whereby she developed an image of herself as 'lacking in intelligence'. Such negative critical events had a significant effect upon Amanda who claims that she learnt how to teach by seeing, 'how not to teach'. For Amanda, these negative experiences have shaped her view of learning powerfully. She believes that, unlike her own childhood education, a child's education should be one in which they forge strong relationships with teachers and pupils and where children know, not only that they can achieve things, but how to achieve things. Bethany's early educational experiences contrast sharply with Amanda's. Her experiences were positive and she discussed her early years with warmth. Nevertheless, her own educational experiences have also shaped Bethany's ideology and influenced her practice. Beijaard (2000) considers the influences 'relevant others' have on a teacher's beliefs and values about education, and this sentiment is echoed by the teachers

in this study. They consider particular people who have influenced their professional thinking. For both teachers, there have been significant characters in their professional lives who have evoked an influence over their personal teaching philosophies. As with 'critical events', both negative and positive experiences have served to affect the individuals' in a professional capacity. It therefore comes as no surprise that, when considering the needs of the children and which assessment strategies to utilise, both teachers draw on their own personal experiences. The social context in which these individual teachers developed; their culture, interaction and experiences with others, serve to influence their views of themselves and consequently of other learners. Yet what is of further interest, when reflecting on the work of Nias (1989), is the need to acknowledge in teachers, the urge, sometimes to be, for example, rebellious and creative. This may go some way to explain, therefore why the teachers' planning in the medium term appears 'set in stone' when in reality they are going some way to being flexible in their shorter term planning; the teachers display targets for others to see, but make no reference to them at all; and why the teachers use a diverse range of creative strategies for specifying attainment and feedback to pupils. These teachers have incorporated their own ideologies into the NLS framework and devised, what could be described as a 'composite model' of the framework. In this composite model, the teachers use the given framework in the medium term and 'translate' it into practice in weekly and daily lessons through the incorporation of their personal ideologies.

The influences of teaching context, experience and personal biographies, in the study, emerged as factors that impact upon teacher's classroom practice and formative assessment strategies. The notion of such influencing factors has emanated as a significant finding of the study.

## **Reflective practice and the role of ITT**

A key finding of the study is the positive role that being involved in ITT has had upon both Amanda and Bethany in terms of their approaches to formative assessment. This discussion has been touched upon earlier, as ITT is described as a significant component of a teachers' continuing professional development and the notion of professional development could be described as an element of 'teacher experiences'. However, I have decided to focus on this finding in more detail separately as in doing so I feel that I am acknowledging the significance of the fact that ITT involvement affects the way that teachers behave in terms of their approaches to formative assessment.

As was described earlier (see section 2.3.3), adopting a reflective approach implies that teachers are engaged in actively thinking about and evaluating their performance, and the aim of this activity is, by and large, to impact positively on pupils' achievement. As described in the literature review, Schon (1983) identified two notions of reflection; reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Schon describes how, in terms of reflection-in-action, teachers respond to 'surprises' and what distinguishes reflection-in-action from other kinds of reflection is its immediate significance for action (Eraut, 1994). As this study has evolved, I have become intrigued by this particular notion of reflection and its very close tie with formative assessment. Schon's work is largely based on anecdotes and when reading some of these it is possible to see how a teacher responds to a given situation, reflecting 'on the spot' and implementing a change to the activity. This feature is common to both Amanda and Bethany, whereby during teaching situations they made swift changes in response to individuals' needs and emerging criteria. Thus, through behaving in this formative manner, both teachers were actively reflecting-in-action. What is of interest is that this ability to 'reflect-in-action' has, for



both teachers, been influenced by their involvement in ITT. Both teachers described how they have developed their skills of reflection because of the need to explore their actions with trainee teachers. Hence, through working and learning together, the teachers and trainee teachers develop a sense of who they are; learning about individual strengths and weaknesses (Biott and Easen, 1994).

In Schon's further notion of reflection, reflection-on-action is conceived as a form of deliberation, whereby the focus is on interpreting and understanding situations by reflecting on what one knows about them. Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) propose that there are four key ideas in terms of reflection-on-practice. They identify these as; reflection on values, practice, improvement and context. For the purpose of discussion, I have taken each of these key ideas and used them as a basis for identifying how, through involvement in ITT, Amanda and Bethany have engaged in reflective practice, with particular reference to formative assessment.

Reflection on values, Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) explain, implies that a reflective practitioner tries to understand the nature and importance of values, and tries to put these values into practice. A key finding of the study is that both Amanda and Bethany are able to articulate their values clearly, and, as was described earlier a teacher's values and beliefs impact upon their approaches to formative assessment. Through interviews and participatory activities, both teachers expressed their values and beliefs with passion and clarity. What is of particular interest is that when discussing their personal teaching philosophies, and approaches to assessment, both teachers explained how, as a consequence of being involved in ITT they can understand themselves better as teachers. This, both teachers made clear, is because they have to share their values and beliefs

explicitly with trainee teachers. Through engagement in discussions with trainees following taught class lessons and through being engaged in delivering training to trainees, both are 'more aware' of what they do and why they do things. This supports the findings of Child and Merrill (2003) who identified that teacher training encourages practitioner reflection.

Considering Ghaye and Ghaye's (1998) second notion of 'reflection-on-practice' there is again evidence that involvement in ITT serves to impact upon this. Ghaye and Ghaye highlight how confident and competent teaching requires teachers to reflect systematically and rigorously on evidence from practice. In the context of the study, both Amanda and Bethany conduct observations of trainee teachers during their school placements. These observations involve teachers observing their own class being taught by a trainee. Amanda described how this is an 'eye-opener' and how through observing someone else, she is able to inform her own understanding of how children in her class learn best; how best to motivate them and to critically evaluate the quality of her own repertoire of teaching strategies. Amanda also described how through working alongside trainees, who bring 'fresh ideas', she has seen new strategies work, and has learned from these experiences. This, Child and Merrill (2003:3) state, is because:

“...student teachers bring to their work the benefits of their reading and an introduction to the most up to date research into pedagogy. They also cast a critical, but accepting eye, upon the many initiatives which have been asked of schools over the last years.”

In the context of formative assessment, what is of interest is the notion of sharing success criteria. Both Amanda and Bethany, at the outset of the study, did not explicitly use 'success criteria', although they do now (Ref. Group Teacher Interviews, Alpha and Beta Primary Schools). This could be attributed to a number of factors, however, it is

also fair to say that as part of the PGCE course at Newcastle University, trainees are expected to use success criteria in all lessons, and this has influenced the practice of practitioners within the partnership schools. Indeed Daniel, Amanda's colleague stated that as a direct consequence of being involved with PGCE trainee teachers, he uses success criteria and he aired concerns regarding School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT). He stated that, because SCITT trainees would be largely based in one school, sharing practice from the University and across partnership schools may be negatively affected:

“It is a bit worrying and something we need to keep a check on.” (Ref. Daniel, Group Teacher Interview, Alpha Primary School).

One of the fundamental purposes of reflective practice is to impact upon the quality of teaching and learning. Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) describe how self and peer validation are important features of this. What is of interest with regard to the study is that Amanda and Bethany are frequently involved in both activities, particularly when trainee teachers are in their classrooms. Bethany described how it is important that she is clear about 'how a lesson has gone' such that she can discuss it openly and honestly with trainees. Furthermore, both teachers are engaged extremely frequently in observing trainee teachers, asking them probing questions about how they felt lessons were managed, and encouraging reflective teaching.

The final notion, as identified by Ghaye and Ghaye (1998:97), is that of reflection-on-context. Ghaye and Ghaye contextualise this idea as follows:

“Ask most student teachers what makes a 'good' school experience and they will name three things:

1. their relationship with the class teacher
2. their relationship with the children
3. the general school environment and culture.

...Contexts often range from the very supportive, collegial environments, where the student teacher and class teacher work alongside on another and learn from one another, to less supportive, even hostile environments, where student teachers feel uncomfortable in the class teacher's presence and unwelcome in the school."

In describing Amanda and Bethany, and their respective schools it is certainly fair to describe their approaches to ITT as the former, and it is this notion of 'learning from one another' that is particularly important in the context of the study. Both Amanda and Bethany perceive involvement in ITT as mutually beneficial, so much so that, as described in the case study descriptions (see section 4.1) both teachers have expanded their ITT roles.

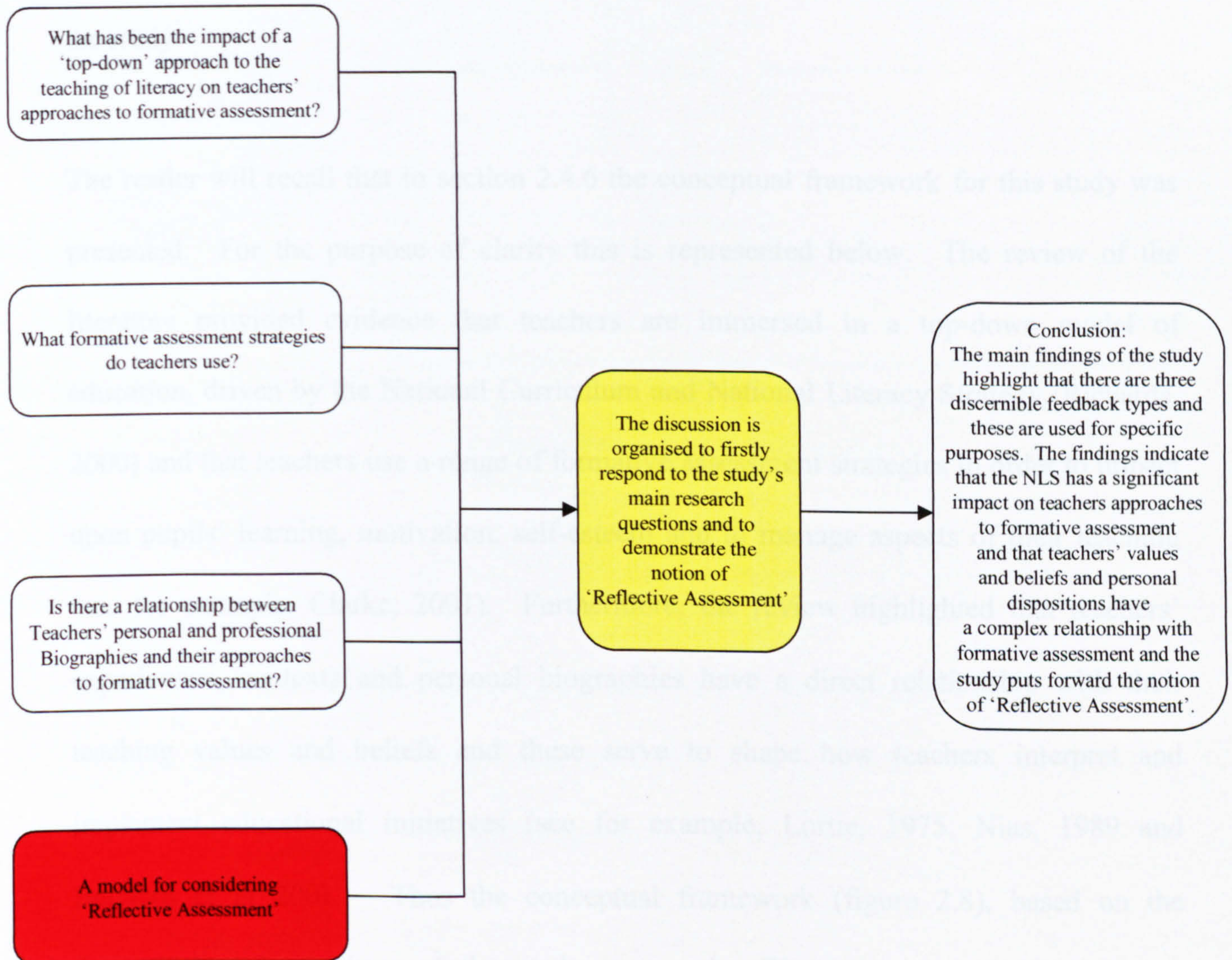
Considering the above, there is clear evidence from the study that ITT involvement has served to impact positively on both Amanda and Bethany, and it seems evident that the major factors that contribute to this are the sharing of expertise and knowledge and a commitment to collaborative learning, and as Harvey (1999) claims, in contexts where there is a collaborative work culture, teachers are more likely to incorporate new ideas from in-service programmes. This is reflected in the study through the teachers' use of a broad range of assessment strategies and their ability to discuss, with clarity, their values and beliefs and their strengths and weaknesses. Through working and learning collaboratively with trainee teachers, the teachers have developed a sense of who they are and what they can or cannot do (Biott and Easen, 1994).

### **Summary of the discussion**

The preceding sections have served to discuss the main findings of the study. Prior to moving to conclude this chapter by discussing a model for considering 'reflective assessment', the following provides a brief summary of the main points.

The study has teased out a number of findings in relation to formative assessment. However, it seems evident that a key issue is that teachers are immersed in a top-down model of teaching, driven in particular by the NLS. This model has direct consequences for the teachers' approaches to formative assessment in that primarily it leads them to plan using an objective driven model and thus specify attainment to pupils. What is of interest is that in spite of the constraints and limitations of working within such a prescriptive context, the teachers are devising 'work-a-day' means of incorporating their personal teaching ideologies into the 'given' framework. In addition, in the prior sections, I have discussed how the teachers use three particular feedback types in their day-to-day interactions with pupils, although there are a number of issues associated with these in relation to disparities between phatic and analytical feedback and also teacher and pupil perceptions. The following section therefore moves to discuss the notion of the 'reflective assessment' model. The rationale for this is to demonstrate the complex and sophisticated relationship between the teachers' experiences, contexts, biographies and values and beliefs and their feedback to pupils.

## Discussion of the Findings



Legend: ■ Main Section ■ Sub-Sections ■ Rationale for Organisation

## **5.4 A Model for Considering Reflective Assessment**

This section presents the reader with the Reflective Assessment model. The rationale for presenting this as an independent section is to highlight that it is a fundamental finding of the study.

The reader will recall that in section 2.4.6 the conceptual framework for this study was presented. For the purpose of clarity this is represented below. The review of the literature provided evidence that teachers are immersed in a top-down model of education, driven by the National Curriculum and National Literacy Strategy (Richards, 2000) and that teachers use a range of formative assessment strategies in order to impact upon pupils' learning, motivation, self-esteem and to manage aspects of their teaching (see for example, Clarke, 2001). Furthermore, the review highlighted that teachers' experiences, contexts and personal biographies have a direct relationship with their teaching values and beliefs and these serve to shape how teachers interpret and implement educational initiatives (see for example, Lortie, 1975, Nias, 1989 and Beijaard et al 200). Thus the conceptual framework (figure 2.8), based on the theoretical underpinnings of the study, emerged. The conceptual framework was organised to reflect the notion that this study was concerned with gaining a deep understanding of teachers' practice with regard to formative assessment.

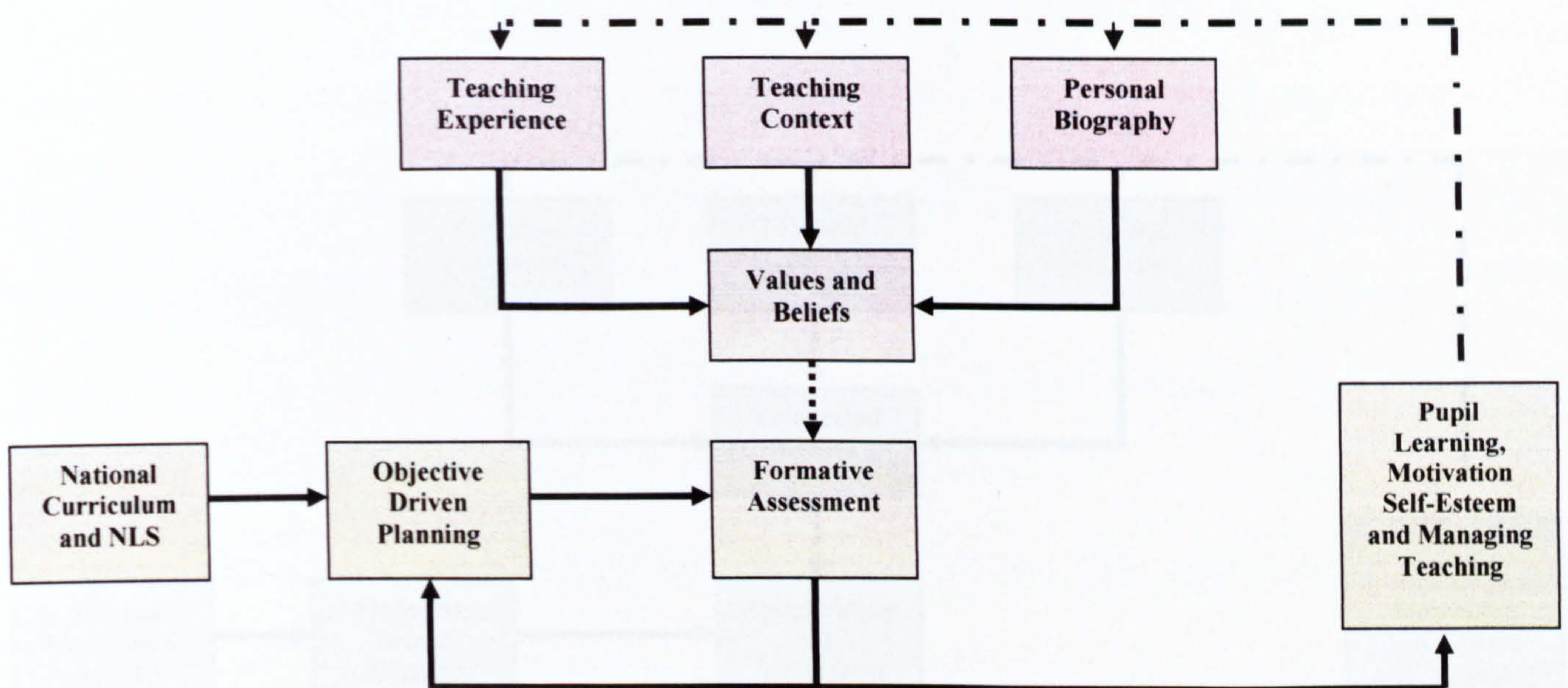


Figure 2.8 The Conceptual Framework of the Study

Having established that this study was concerned with developing an understanding of teachers' formative assessment practice based on a conceptual framework, the following discusses how a model of 'Reflective Assessment' emerged.

Having analysed the data, it became evident that the conceptual framework adopted for this study, evolved into a more sophisticated model of 'Reflective Assessment'. The reader will recollect that the model of Reflective Assessment was used as a basis for structuring the findings in Chapter 4, however, for the purpose of lucidity, the Reflective Assessment model is represented below.



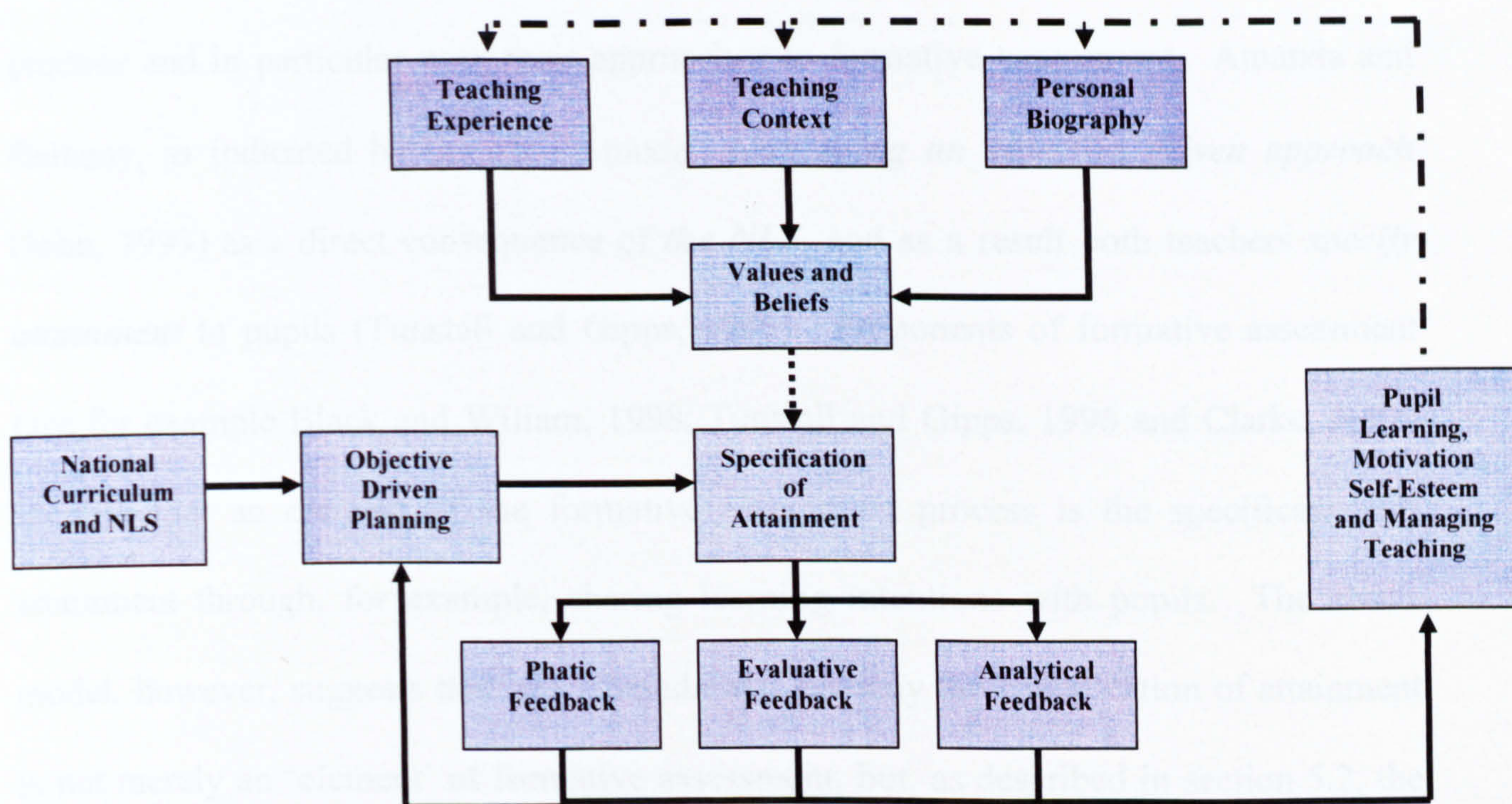


Figure 5.1 The Reflective Assessment Model

The finding of this study is that there is, for Amanda and Bethany, an elaborate relationship between the ‘top-down’ approach to the teaching of literacy in which they are immersed; the personal and professional biographies of the two teachers and their approaches to formative assessment.

The following illustrates the model in further detail and the reader will note that each element of the model is referred to. For the purpose of clarity, each aspect of the model is highlighted in the text (in bold, italic font) to demonstrate that it has been given due discussion.

Amanda and Bethany, as indicated in section 5.1, are immersed in a top-down model of the teaching of literacy and use the NLS (DfEE, 1998) materials for their long and medium term planning. For both of these teachers, this serves to impact upon their practice and in particular with their approaches to formative assessment. Amanda and Bethany, as indicated by the above model, *plan using an objective driven approach* (John, 1993) as a direct consequence of *the NLS*, and as a result both teachers *specify attainment* to pupils (Tunstall and Gipps, 1996). Proponents of formative assessment (see for example Black and Wiliam, 1998, Tunstall and Gipps, 1996 and Clarke, 2001) identify that an element of the formative assessment process is the specification of attainment through, for example, sharing learning intentions with pupils. The above model, however, suggests that, for Amanda and Bethany the specification of attainment is not merely an 'element' of formative assessment, but, as described in section 5.2, the driving force of their subsequent approaches. Both Amanda and Bethany primarily specify attainment to pupils and as suggested by the above model, the approach that Amanda and Bethany take with regard to specifying attainment is influenced by their *teaching contexts, experiences and biographies*. For example, Amanda's *values and beliefs* are influenced by her own experiences as a teacher and thus her personal biography impacts upon her values and beliefs. Amanda had largely negative early educational experiences (see section 4.1) and as a result believes that it is important that children have positive educational experiences and are encouraged join in and participate in lessons. Therefore, when specifying attainment to pupils, Amanda uses a diverse range of methods to encourage engagement and participation (see section 4.2). For example, she will use models and examples to not only specify attainment, but to stimulate interest. The Reflective Assessment model therefore supports existing literature that highlights that the sense of self of teachers is particularly important

because of the way it influences teachers' perspectives, strategies and actions (Pollard, 1997).

The model identifies that not only do values and beliefs impact upon the two teachers' strategies for the specification of attainment, but they also have a relationship with the feedback strategies that the teachers use.

As explained earlier in section 5.2, both teachers use three specific feedback types in their daily oral and written interactions with their pupils, namely: *phatic, evaluative and analytical*. This study highlights that the teachers' contexts, experiences and biographies, which impact upon their values and beliefs, have a specific relationship with their feedback strategies. For example, both teachers, like those identified by Alexander in his comments regarding the 1990-1992 'Changes in Curriculum-Associated Discourse and Pedagogy in the Primary School' (CICADA) project (ESRC, 1990-1992, cited in Alexander, 2000), are keen never to discourage pupils. Amanda and Bethany therefore provide pupils with feedback in written work, in efforts to ensure that pupils are aware that their work has been 'seen' by the teacher, and to provide pupils with 'positive' feedback. However, again in consideration of Alexander's observations, its function is merely phatic (Alexander, 2000: 369).

Proponents of assessment for learning argue that formative assessment must be at the heart of the learning process and seen to affect both the teaching and learning (for example, Shepard, 2000 and Black and Wiliam, 1998a and b). The Reflective Assessment model provides evidence that, for Amanda and Bethany, the formative assessment strategies which they adopt affect both of the afore mentioned processes. For

example, in specifying attainment to pupils, Amanda and Bethany, as described in section 4.2, use a range of strategies to impact upon *pupil learning, motivation, self esteem* and to *manage their teaching effectively*. In seeking the appropriate means of specifying attainment and the provision of appropriate feedback, Amanda and Bethany draw on their values and beliefs. For example, in seeking to provide analytical feedback, the teachers made it explicit that this was to impact upon pupils learning and the particular strategy that they used was grounded in their contexts, beliefs and biographies. Amanda seeks to use models and examples believing that: for the particular children in her class (her context); this has been successful in previous teaching experiences (her experience), and as a learner herself she learns well from examples (her biography) that, such a strategy is appropriate. However, it is evident that although Amanda and Bethany hold similar views with regard to learning and strive to provide rich, quality feedback to pupils, this is not always possible. This is largely as a consequence of issues associated with 'time'. Both teachers state that it is difficult to provide rich written feedback due to the amount of time this takes for them to do and thus their current teaching context has a direct influence on their behaviour.

The Reflective Assessment model is, as the reader will note, cyclical in nature and reflects the notion that teaching is not 'static' and is frequently open to change. Nias (1989) reports that the social context in which individuals develop; their culture, interaction and experiences with others are important in influencing views of self, and Ball and Goodson (1985:18) suggest that the ways that teachers achieve, maintain and develop their sense of self, throughout their careers, are critical in understanding their actions and commitments. Thus, the Reflective Assessment model highlights that, having engaged in activities with pupils and provided them with feedback, this

experience and interaction will influence the manner in which the two teachers perceive themselves and will impact upon their values and beliefs and consequently on future actions.

In summary, this study suggests that the factors that influence Amanda and Bethany's views of learning, such as teaching experience, context and personal biography have a complex relationship with their approach to formative assessment and has highlighted the importance of the teachers' formative assessment strategies, the complexities of these strategies and how they manifest themselves in practice.

Prior to concluding this section, it is important to note the choice of 'title' for this proposed model. The term 'Reflective Assessment' has been chosen for several reasons.

As indicated in the review of the literature, assessment is used to indicate the range of methods used for evaluating pupil performance and attainment (Gipps, 1994), with formative assessment, Black and Wiliam (1998a:7) conclude, being described as all activities undertaken by teachers and/or students, to provide information to be used as feedback in order to modify both teaching and learning. The model therefore has embraced the term 'assessment' to demonstrate that it is about how evaluation and feedback are used to inform both teaching and learning.

Eraut (1994) describes how reflective practice can be regarded as a form of deliberation and as a form of metacognition. As a form of deliberation, reflective action can be described as the process of making sense of an action that has occurred (Schon, 1983). The Reflective Assessment model demonstrates that teachers reflect on their contexts,

experiences and practices in order, possibly, to learn from them and to impact upon their knowledge base.

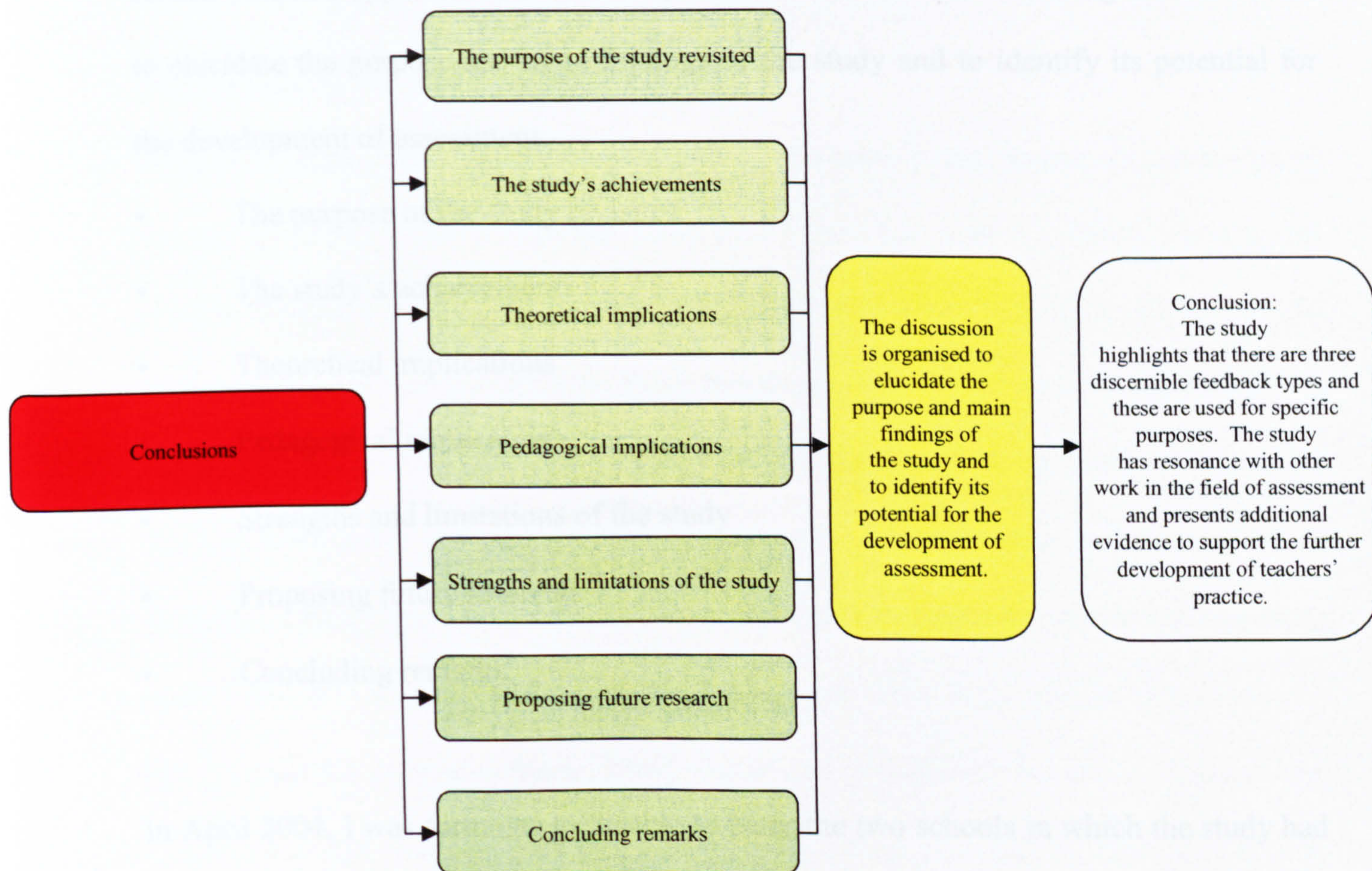
Eraut (1994) suggests that Schon's (1983) notion of reflection-in-action provides an original and useful metacognitive theory of skilled behaviour. Schon describes three significant features of reflection-in-action. He identifies that reflection is at least in some measure conscious, has a 'critical' function, and gives rise to on-the-spot experiment. Schon claims that what distinguishes reflection-in-action from other kinds of reflection is its immediate significance for action (Eraut, 1994). The Reflective Assessment model identifies the potential for teachers to engage in reflection-in-action and this can be explained by considering Nias' notion of the autonomous 'I' that was discussed in section 2.3.1. Nias implies that the autonomous 'I' is sensed in moments when individuals break through social conditioning and act with non-conscious inner prompting. In this sense 'I' is impulsive and creative and arguably, when engaged in activities Amanda and Bethany are impulsive and creative, able to 'reflect-in-action' and respond to the immediate needs of the pupils.

The model has therefore adopted the term 'Reflective' to demonstrate that: the manner in which the teachers specify attainment and provide feedback is as a result of deliberative reflection on their values and beliefs; that complex sequences of actions have become so habitual through practice and experience that they are performed virtually automatically and that the process of teaching and providing feedback is cyclical in that having engaged in an activity, this potentially impacts on experience, context or biography and therefore on future actions.

Consideration of the model of Reflective Assessment (Figure 5.1) highlights the complexities of teaching and provides teachers and policy makers with a means of considering how and why formative assessment strategies are implemented in day-to-day teaching.

The following chapter describes implications for policy and practice in further detail and discusses opportunities for further research in light of the study.

## Conclusions



Legend: ■ Main Section ■ Sub-Sections ■ Rationale for Organisation



## Chapter 6: Conclusions

This chapter considers a range of issues that could be considered as having implications for practitioners, policy makers and teacher training development and also considers further research opportunities. The chapter is divided into the following main sections, to elucidate the purpose and main findings of the study and to identify its potential for the development of assessment:

- The purpose of the study revisited
- The study's achievements
- Theoretical implications
- Pedagogical implications
- Strengths and limitations of the study
- Proposing future research
- Concluding remarks.

In April 2004, I was fortunate to be able to enter the two schools in which the study had been conducted to engage in group teacher interviews with Amanda and Bethany and their respective colleagues. The purposes of these visits were threefold:

- To contribute to the validity of the study
- To share the main findings of the study with participants
- To engage participants in discussion of the implications of the main findings.

To this end, the implications of the main findings are therefore based on personal reflection and consideration and on teacher perceptions. Reference is made throughout

this section to a range of teachers who contributed to the group teacher interviews and made a range of suggestions based on the findings.

The following section revisits the purpose of the study to contextualise the implications of the study.

### **The purpose of the study revisited**

Raising standards has become a key issue for education policy in the United Kingdom and particularly over the past twenty years where there has been: "...steady warning that educational standards in the United Kingdom are declining." (Conner, 2000). Given such concerns, where should schools be focussing their efforts to raise standards? A number of writers and researchers argue that efforts should be targeted at developing skills of assessment for learning as opposed to the current fixation with assessment of learning. However, although there has been much research conducted regarding assessment for learning with impressive messages from high profile writers on the subject (see for example, Black, 2000, Black and Wiliam, 1998a and b, Tunstall and Gipps, 1996 and Clarke, 2001) who assert its enormous potential for raising standards, there has been little commentary on teachers' practices with regard to strategies that they use and crucially factors that influence their choices. The main purpose of the study was, therefore, to gain a deep understanding of formative assessment practices of two teachers (see Chapter 1). The investigation of this phenomenon was addressed by considering the following:

1. What formative assessment strategies do teachers use?
2. What has been the impact of a top-down approach to the teaching of literacy on teachers' approaches to formative assessment?

3. Is there a relationship between teachers' personal and professional biographies and their approaches to formative assessment?

As was discussed in the methodology chapter (see section 3.5), a case study approach was adopted. A case study approach was chosen for its appropriateness in exploring the complexity of formative assessment within its natural context (Basse, 1999) and because case study research facilitates the opportunity to explore a phenomenon through the use of multiple sources of data. As was described in Chapter 3, the aim of the study was to gain a deep understanding of teachers' formative assessment practices and was therefore about discovery as opposed to testing a theory, and therefore a picture-drawing case study approach was embraced, such that the case could be presented with the aim of allowing the reader to understand and to search for meaning.

In adopting a case study approach to respond to the research questions presented above the study has a number of explicit achievements. The following section therefore presents these.

### **The study's achievements**

At the outset of the study, I was passionate about conducting a study that served to enhance understanding about formative assessment through a thorough investigation of the practices and beliefs of practitioners and in terms of its findings, this study has made a number of accomplishments.

Firstly, the study has successfully added to the body of knowledge regarding formative assessment through responding to the main research questions. In seeking to establish

what formative assessment strategies teachers use (research question one), the study has provided evidence that the two teachers involved in the study use a broad range of formative assessment strategies and has identified three discernible feedback types that manifest themselves in these teachers' practice. Other studies associated with formative assessment identify two types of feedback. For example, Tunstall and Gipps (1996) describe feedback as 'descriptive' or 'evaluative'. However, this study has provided evidence of three distinct feedback types, namely: phatic, descriptive and evaluative. Alexander (2000) notes that teachers in the CICADA project provided pupils with, what he describes as 'phatic' feedback. This study has embraced the term 'phatic' to demonstrate that the two teachers provide pupils with low level feedback, the function of which is largely affirmation that written work has been 'seen' or an acknowledgement of an exchange of information. Therefore this study provides empirical evidence to support Alexander's observations. The study has also adopted the terms 'evaluative' and 'analytical' feedback. The term 'evaluative' is used to describe feedback that provides some form of evaluation of pupils' work and the term 'analytical' is used to describe rich feedback that is used as a tool for not only motivating pupils, but also as a means of improving learning.

In response to research question two, the study has identified that the NLS has had significant impact upon the two teachers' practice. In particular, the teachers are immersed in a top down, objective driven approach with regard to the teaching of literacy. The main implication of this with regard to formative assessment is that Amanda and Bethany therefore specify attainment to pupils. Research in the field of formative assessment highlights the importance of specification of attainment. Black and Wiliam (1998b), for example, on the basis of their findings, assert that teachers

should share learning intentions with pupils and similarly, Clarke (2001) advocates the sharing of both intentions and success criteria with pupils. However, this study provides evidence of the fundamental role of specification of attainment in the formative assessment process for Amanda and Bethany. This study highlights that specification of attainment is at the heart of formative assessment for the two teachers involved.

In seeking to understand the practice of Amanda and Bethany, the study has identified two nested models of feedback (see section 4.2). These models identify the critical role of specification of attainment in both oral and written feedback, and demonstrate that whilst the teachers provide rich analytical feedback in oral contexts, much written feedback is 'phatic'. The work of Weeden et al (2002) identifies that if every piece of work done or task undertaken has to be marked then this can lead to a 'flick and tick' approach and evidence from this study endorses this. This study demonstrates that the two teachers provide rich quality feedback in their oral interactions with pupils but there is less evidence of this in their written work.

As identified at the outset of this study, although there has been work conducted with regard to the nature of teaching that has raised the significance of the personal and individual nature of teaching (see for example, Lortie, 1975, Nias, 1989, Beijaard et al 2000), a gap was identified in the literature regarding the link between the individual and personal nature of teaching and formative assessment. This study therefore, has contributed to the body of knowledge regarding the nature of teaching and, specifically, it has provided empirical evidence that choice and use of particular formative assessment strategies is grounded in Amanda and Bethany's beliefs and values as practitioners and

also influenced by their particular teaching context, in this instance the main contextual factor has been the National Literacy Strategy.

A further achievement of this study is that in seeking to understand the practice of Amanda and Bethany, a model of 'Reflective Assessment' has emerged which in itself is novel. The study has contributed to understanding about formative assessment and the notion of 'Reflective Assessment' provides a means of understanding the sophisticated relationship between the context in which Amanda and Bethany are immersed, the factors that influence their values and beliefs and the interplay these have with regard to feedback.

The study has, therefore, made a number of achievements, and the following section therefore makes explicit some of the theoretical implications of the data discussed and the analyses proposed. The purpose of this is to situate the main findings of this study in a broader theoretical framework.

### **Theoretical implications**

As described above, this study has made a number of achievements and the following section therefore considers these in further detail.

The reader will recall that a main finding of this study is that in the discussion of the findings I have put forward a case for considering three discernible feedback types. As explained earlier (see section 5.1) much contemporary literature associated with feedback identifies two feedback types. In general these types of feedback can be described as 'evaluative' or 'descriptive/formative.' Evaluative feedback, Tunstall and

Gipps (1996) state, is described as that which is 'judgemental' and descriptive is that which is competence related and is, they state, associated with formative assessment (Tunstall and Gipps, 1996).

However, the implication of Tunstall and Gipps' terminology may cause confusion. As indicated in the analysis section of this study, (see section 3.7) I originally began to categorise the data using Tunstall and Gipps' framework, however, it became evident that the data were not falling into the ascribed categories of 'evaluative' and 'descriptive'. For example, the category of 'descriptive' as outlined by Tunstall and Gipps, when used to analyse the data, seemed to indicate that feedback was merely 'describing' achievement; however, data from this study indicated that feedback could be more than merely a description. Therefore, in liaison with external judges (Atkins, 1984) the following categories for feedback evolved: 'phatic', 'evaluative' and 'analytical'. In summary, the term 'phatic' draws on Alexander's (2000) observation and is used in this study to indicate feedback that is 'superficial' and 'low level' such as 'ticks' or 'smiley faces'. In seeking clarification of the term 'evaluative', I drew on Tunstall and Gipps' (1996) definition, and feedback that was purely 'judgemental' was interpreted as evaluative. Such 'evaluative' feedback in this study manifested, for example, itself in brief comments that indicated that learning objectives had been met. The term 'analytical' feedback has been embraced in this study to identify rich quality feedback. The reader will note in the examples cited in section 4.3, analytical feedback can be descriptive (Tunstall and Gipps, 1996), in that the teachers describe how learning objectives have been met, however the analytical feedback category also includes feedback that is detailed and provides guidance for the pupils.

A further conclusion of the preceding chapters is the fact that the teachers involved in the study are immersed in a 'top down' model of education (Richards, 2000) and this has a direct impact upon their approaches to formative assessment. Specifically, I have argued that as a consequence of this, these two teachers plan using an objective driven model and then specify attainment to pupils.

The notion of planning using an objective driven model is not in itself innovative, (see for example, John, 1993, and Clark and Peterson, 1986) and, indeed, the National Curriculum conforms to such a model (Dann, 2002) however, the number of pedagogical confusions and dilemmas (English, et al, 2002) associated with this seems to suggest that, for Amanda and Bethany the National Literacy Strategy framework has served to curb their initiative and freedom, with neither teacher seemingly, adjusting planning in response to formative assessment. For example, evidence from this study suggests that, for Amanda and Bethany, the NLS has served to make their medium planning superfluous. Both teachers use the NLS as a long term planning document and translate this into medium term documents which, it seems, are not altered in light of their teaching experiences, thus endorsing Neesom's (2000) observation that the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have sent the unintended message planning cannot be adjusted in response to formative assessment.

However, despite the constraints of working in such a rigid manner, these teachers are exercising their professional judgement with regard to shorter term planning and making efforts, within the boundaries of the framework, to craft plans to meet the needs of their class (John, 1993). Yet, although there was evidence in this study that Amanda and Bethany craft planning in the short term, through engaging in discussion with their



colleagues and making changes to lessons, the evidence for the crafting of this is somewhat scant and this seems to suggest that although these teachers are actively working to ensure their shorter term plans are suitable, they are anxious not to seem overtly critical of the NLS framework. One could question, therefore the extent to which, as Richards (2000) states, the policing of schools by OFSTED and LEAs has led these two practitioners to 'jump through the hoops' rather than 'take risks'.

There is a further theoretical implication of the study that is highlighted by the fact that this study offers a construction for how and why the two teachers in the study specify attainment to pupils. As was discussed in Chapter 5, evidence from the study highlights that, as a direct consequence of being immersed in a top down model of education, Amanda and Bethany specify attainment to pupils. The manner in which they facilitate this is not only influenced by the model in which they are immersed, but also by a range of contextual and biographical experiences (see section 4.1). What is of particular interest is that the analysis also casts doubt on some of the proponents of formative assessment who describe characteristics of specification of attainment, such as sharing learning objectives with pupils, as merely 'elements' (Clarke, 2005) or 'factors' (Weeden et al, 2002) of formative assessment. Specifically, I have claimed that specification of attainment is, for Amanda and Bethany, the driving force of formative assessment.

As indicated in Chapter 2, although there is research regarding the individual and personal nature of teaching, (see for example, Lortie, 1975, Nias, 1989 and Beijaard et al, 2000) this has not widely been linked to assessment. This study suggests, however, that personal history should be given attention, with regard to assessment. Evidence from the study highlights the interplay between: teaching experience; context and

biography; teaching values and beliefs and the manner in which Amanda and Bethany behave with regard to formative assessment. This endorses Hargreaves' stance that:

“...we have come to realise in recent years that the teacher is the ultimate key to educational change and school improvement. The restructuring of schools, the composition of national and provincial curricula, the development of bench-mark assessments – all these things are of little value if they do not take the teacher into account. Teachers don't merely deliver the curriculum. They develop it, refine it and interpret it too.” (1992, Foreword, in: Hargreaves and Fullan)

Summing up, then, not only has the study shown that, for Amanda and Bethany, feedback manifests itself in three discernible ways it has also demonstrated that feedback is influenced by a range of factors, some external, such as the constraints of the NLS, and some internal, such as the experiences, contexts and biographies of the individuals. The model of 'Reflective Assessment' illustrates the sophisticated relationship between all of these dynamics and it seems fair to conclude that the Reflective Assessment model is an assessment concept in its own right which may shed new light on current theories of assessment.

As well as having implications for theory, the study has a number of pedagogical implications. The following section presents these and considers those that are relevant not only to practising teachers, but their head teachers and also trainee teachers. The purpose of this is to identify how the study has potential consequences for practice.

### **Pedagogical implications**

The data and analyses have uncovered a number of pedagogical confusions and dilemmas for the two teachers involved that have significant implications for their practice. The first is associated with planning. In sections 4.2 and 5.1 evidence is presented that the teachers use the NLS framework as a 'given' and their medium term

planning appears to be 'set in stone'. The pedagogical implication of this finding is evident – either these teachers need to have a much clearer understanding of the purpose of planning and the message from external bodies, such as OFSTED and LEAs must echo the need for planning to be grounded in the needs of the class and individuals, or policy makers need to rethink why they are asking teachers, such as these described in the study, to plan in particular ways.

The second pedagogical dilemma is associated with target setting. Both teachers engage in target setting processes, yet they are not altogether convinced by them. They espouse the target setting agenda by setting and displaying long term whole class targets but never refer to them or use them as part of their lesson discourse. Again, the implication is evident; either these teachers need to have a clearer understanding of the purpose of target setting or, those advocating target setting need to have a much clearer understanding of why these teachers are offering token responses.

As discussed in sections 4.3 and 5.1, this study has identified three specific feedback types and identified a significant disparity between oral and written feedback. This finding has potential pedagogical implications. Firstly, as described in section 4.3, much research regarding feedback types identifies two types, namely: 'evaluative' and 'descriptive' (see for example, Tunstall and Gipps, 1996). Tunstall and Gipps' evaluative feedback category seems to suggest that feedback is rather detailed, with the aim of providing an 'evaluation' or 'judgement' about pupils' performance, however, evidence from this study suggests that in practice and in relation to written feedback specifically, much feedback from Amanda and Bethany is low level phatic feedback, the purpose of which is to provide pupils with affirmation that work has been 'seen' or to

acknowledge exchange of information. The implication then is that although the teachers successfully provide analytical feedback in oral contexts, this is not translated into written feedback and pupils would like this to be the case. The pedagogical implication, therefore, is two-fold.

Firstly, it seems evident that the teachers need to understand the perspective of the children more fully, to ensure that the feedback they are providing them with is appropriate. Section 3.4.4 discusses the value of listening to the children's voice and it is clear that this should be done more readily in practice. Children are the ultimate users of assessment (Black and Wiliam, 1998); they should have a say in issues that affect them.

Secondly, it is clear that the teachers require some form of training in order to develop their skills in providing rich, quality, written analytical feedback to pupils. However, as identified in the main findings, Amanda and Bethany explained that fundamental barrier to this is 'time'. The implication of this is that their schools should develop systems of professional development whereby individuals can reflect critically on their practice and target development needs appropriately and thus develop manageable approaches to providing pupils with rich written feedback. Although I am advocating further training, it is important to note that, on the evidence from this study, simply handing a set of techniques to these teachers is insufficient.

Recollecting on the previous chapters, I provided evidence that there are a number of factors that influence these teachers' use of particular formative assessment techniques (see sections 4.1, 4.4 and 5.1) and this has a number of further pedagogical implications.

The first implication is very much contrary to the beliefs of Reynolds (1998a) who claims that in order to achieve a more self-respecting and emotionally fulfilled teaching profession, more educated children and a more prosperous and cohesive society, we need to develop a science of teacher effectiveness. Reynolds (1998b: 5) advocates the development of 'technologies of effective teaching' and he states, for example, that: "We need to ensure that all pre-service teachers receive the technology" and he asserts that: "... (Teaching) ... is more and more prescribed as politicians and others, quite rightly, intervene in the teaching methods that are used." (1998b: 1)

However, this study suggests that simply giving Amanda and Bethany the 'technologies' is insufficient. Reynolds poses the following question "Why is every British teacher not given the science of their profession?" (Times Educational Supplement, 1999). His argument being that, the existence of a codified, scientifically established body of knowledge with regard to teaching will improve teacher effectiveness. However, Lawlor (Times Educational Supplement, 1999) contests this view and states that there is no general skills model to fit every circumstance and evidence from this study would endorse Lawlor's perspective. Formative assessment, as evidenced throughout this study (see sections 4.4 and 5.1, for example), is far more than the application of specific techniques into daily teaching. Firstly, formative assessment involves these teachers responding to individuals, groups of children and the whole class as a lesson progresses and involves them in evaluating and adapting lessons 'on the spot'. This echoes Schon's (1983) conceptualisation of reflection-in-action. Secondly, because formative assessment involves Amanda and Bethany responding to individuals, it follows that they are engaged in critical analysis of lessons, to ascertain the extent to which pupils have

met learning objectives and to plan and prepare for future lessons. This has resonance with Dewey (1933) and Schon's (1983) notion of deliberative reflection-on-action.

Although the above characteristics of Amanda and Bethany have resonance with Reynolds' (1998b) 'effective teacher behaviours', in that, for example they provide frequent feedback and probe pupils for knowledge, evidence from this study highlights that, with regard to formative assessment, the 'giving' of the technologies is, in the case of Amanda and Bethany, insufficient. Lawlor (2003) argues that we cannot build the 'identikit ideal teacher' and that the notion of using lists of criteria for teacher effectiveness is flawed. Lawlor argues that teaching is a profession, and the 'how' of teaching should be learned in its practical application. Evidence from this study endorses this, given that both Amanda and Bethany engage in deep reflection when behaving in a formative manner, both during lessons and following lessons and their actions are rooted firmly in their teaching experiences, contexts and biographies (see section 4.1). This sentiment was echoed by Carol, Bethany's colleague, during the group interview who stated:

"Formative assessment...it's very personal." (Ref. Carol, Group Teacher Interview, Beta Primary School)

Indeed, the conceptualisation of formative assessment, offered by this study is 'Reflective Assessment' (see section 5.4). Pollard (1992, cited in Ecclestone and Pryor, 2003) highlights that researchers' tendency to create new categories may cause confusion as opposed to being a genuine tool and I acknowledge this caution. However, by conceptualising formative assessment as 'Reflective Assessment' then it is clear that there is a sophisticated relationship with the teachers' values, biographies, contexts and

experiences (Ghaye and Ghaye, 1998 and Beijaard et al.2000) and their approaches to formative assessment.

Formative assessment is not, and should not be, something 'extra' that 'we do'. Instead, it should be integral to our day-to-day teaching and to the choices that we make, in terms of what feedback to give to pupils. As practitioners, we need the confidence to know which strategies work for us, for our pupils, why, and in which situations and be able to reflect on ourselves and our performance. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that if experienced teachers such as Amanda and Bethany have further knowledge about formative assessment and if they are aware of the factors that influence their use (or non-use) of particular strategies, then they may be better equipped to use them more effectively, able to develop them and thus enhance their skills and classroom effectiveness.

The study offers a means of reflecting on formative assessment and Black and Wiliam (1998b:1) stress that learning is driven by what teachers and pupils do in the classroom:

“...teachers have to manage complicated and demanding situations, channelling the personal, emotional and social pressures amongst a group of 30 or so youngsters in order to help them to learn now, and to become better learners in the future. Standards can only be raised if teachers can tackle this more effectively – what is missing from the policies is any direct help with this task.”

An implication for the head teachers and colleagues of Amanda and Bethany, therefore, is the need to consider the influence that they have, or indeed do not have, on the teachers' choice and use of formative assessment strategies. The study highlights the influencing factors of teaching context, experience and teachers' biographies on Amanda and Bethany's formative behaviour. Their head teachers and other colleagues may have

little influence with regard to some formative assessment strategies that are employed by Amanda and Bethany. This is because aspects of their teaching are influenced by their sense of self, some of which are unsusceptible to change as they are firmly embedded in their psyche (see section 2.3.1). However, other aspects are open to change, and the context and culture of the school may influence these teachers' use of strategies. Raised awareness of this may serve the head teachers and other colleagues of Amanda and Bethany to have a greater understanding of how and why they use such strategies and contribute to the effectiveness of formative assessment as a whole. Clarke (2001) advocates a 'whole school approach' to formative assessment. This study has implications therefore, as it highlights that, although a whole school approach may be 'advocated', in practice, there may be differences in what, why and how individuals use and conceive of formative assessment. This implies that for there to be a whole school approach to formative assessment then individuals, head teachers and colleagues need to be in a position to understand themselves and each other better.

At school level an implication of this may be that the head teachers create opportunities to enable the teachers to observe practice and discuss the formative strategies they use in order to learn from each other. And, pertinent to the notion of the pupil's voice as discussed earlier in this section, the head teachers need to establish a culture whereby pupils' voices are seen as paramount. In addition, as identified by Bethany and her colleagues during the group interview, given that Amanda and Bethany's formative assessment strategies are influenced by a range of factors, then teachers in different contexts will behave very differently. Therefore it is important that the teachers are exposed to as many different teaching contexts as possible such that they can draw upon these experiences (Ref. Group Teacher Interview, Beta Primary School).



In terms of pedagogical implications, the study also highlights the role that involvement in ITT can have on an individual. The notion of ITT as a tool for continuing professional development (CPD) is not revolutionary; however the study has provided further evidence of the positive impact that being involved in ITT has on the day-to-day practice of teachers, and particularly in the way that they behave with regard to formative assessment. The study then, echoes the sentiments of other studies (see for example Child and Merrill, 2003) and claims that, for Amanda and Bethany, ITT involvement is a powerful CPD mechanism. At the outset of the study, the notion of ITT impacting upon formative assessment was not something that I had considered in great depth, indeed, only as the study began to take shape did I become aware of its importance. This, I feel, implies a need for HEIs and schools to continue to work together in close partnership, to ensure that ITT provision is mutually beneficial, and that all parties can engage in professional development.

To sum up, not only has this study demonstrated that there are a number of pedagogical confusions and dilemmas associated in particular with planning and target setting, it has also demonstrated that, in light of the findings of the study, simply providing teachers such as Amanda and Bethany with the techniques for formative assessment is insufficient; instead these teachers need to be engaged in a cyclical model of reflection and appropriate development.

It seems fair to conclude that when immersed in a 'top-down' model of education, Amanda and Bethany receive conflicting messages and arguably the imposition of the National Strategies (DfEE, 1998 and 1999a) has served to create these messages.

Ultimately, it seems that for the effective development of the practice in general and formative assessment practice in particular, a 'bottom-up' approach is crucial.

### **Strengths and limitations of the study**

The following section presents the main strengths of the study and identifies some of its limitations. Chapter 3, section 3.7 provides a thorough discussion of the validity of the study and demonstrates how, in spite of potential threats to the data, I endeavoured to produce a credible and trustworthy study. The purpose of this section is therefore to highlight specific strengths and limitations in light of the findings.

A key strength of the study is that, as a consequence of adopting a case study approach, I gathered rich, quality data that were grounded in teachers' practices. In addition, because of the mutual reciprocity (Lather, 1986) between myself and the two key teachers, findings were regularly shared and discussed and a true picture has been presented (see section 3.8). The study has therefore successfully demonstrated the practices of two practitioners; their values and beliefs and teased out interesting insights as to how the personal and individual nature of teaching impacts upon formative assessment. This study provides a clear description of how and why these two teachers behave as they do. In this respect it successfully adds to the body of knowledge regarding assessment and may be of interest to practitioners and policy makers alike. Nevertheless, although such an approach provides rich and relevant data, it comes at a cost. One, for instance, can be generalisability. The approach shows us what can happen in a particular context, but not necessarily what will or must happen. Secondly, such an approach is dependant upon descriptive validity, and factual accuracy can be difficult to achieve, given that all human observation is partial (see section 3.8).

A further strength of this study is that not only were teachers involved but so too were their pupils. Although this in itself is not novel, given studies such as Tunstall and Gipps (1996), I believe it is complementary to their work and serves a number of purposes. In eliciting the views of the children through the use of participatory techniques (see section 3.6.4) an insight into their perceptions of aspects of assessment was gained; disparities between teacher and pupil opinions emerged and the significance of listening to the pupil's voice was highlighted. In addition, by seizing opportunities to involve pupils in the study, data from observations and teacher interviews were triangulated. However, although I believe that the use of pupils was a strength of the study, there are a number of limitations associated with this. As I have discussed in Chapter 3, a small group of pupils were chosen from each class for their ability to engage in discussion about practice, and the extent to which these children are representative of the whole class could be argued. In addition, although I used participatory techniques to engage the pupils, I was present and the children may have been conscious of this and responded to the activities aware that my role was not merely that of facilitator.

A further strength of the study is that it is contextualised within the realm of literacy. Again, there is much work regarding literacy and studies have been conducted that have investigated the NLS and aspects of assessment and feedback (see for example, Hardman et al 2003, and Mroz et al, 2000). However, this study offers insight into the role that the NLS has had upon formative assessment for Amanda and Bethany, and like the study by English et al (2002), has revealed a number of 'pedagogical dilemmas' and confusions associated with this. However, the notion of 'context' is also a limitation of the study. It

is clear that this study is bound by several factors including: subject, year group and time. To this extent, generalisability is once again difficult to claim.

A further strength of the study is the similarities between Amanda and Bethany. As described in section 4.2, both are Year Six practitioners who hold similar responsibilities in their respective schools and have similar views with regard to their teaching values and beliefs. I believe this is positive as the purpose of the study is to make tentative generalisations and to 'ring bells' with those who may find themselves in similar situations. However, because of the similarity between the case studies, there has been little scope to compare or contrast. It would have been interesting to have had the opportunity to offer comparison between say, novice and expert.

### **Proposing future research**

This section provides some suggestions for future research given the findings of the study. The purpose of this is to highlight potential research opportunities that will continue to add to the body of knowledge regarding formative assessment.

This is a small scale study and involved two teachers from two different settings. The logical suggestion is that further research into formative assessment is encouraged to develop understanding.

The following outlines some suggestions for further research and is organised as follows:

- The contextual nature of formative assessment
- The 'sense of self'
- Teachers' Continuing Professional Development

- Children's voices
- Extending the findings of the study.

### **The contextual nature of formative assessment**

The study has drawn out a number of key findings regarding formative assessment, however, the study was very context bound. It focused on two Year Six teachers during a given time and was conducted within the realm of literacy.

A key finding of this study is that, for Amanda and Bethany, specification of attainment is the driving force of formative assessment. It would be of interest to ascertain whether this feature was common with other subjects and in particular those that have had somewhat lower level intervention from central government, such as the arts or humanities. Is specification of attainment the driving force of formative assessment in foundation subjects? It would also be of interest to unpick whether the 'Reflective Assessment' model proposed in Chapter 5 corresponded with other curriculum areas or year groups.

Furthermore, I have put forward two nested feedback models for Amanda and Bethany's oral and written feedback and it would be interesting to establish the extent to which these matched the feedback in other curriculum areas and/or year groups. Is the disparity between analytical and phatic feedback common in all subject areas or particular to literacy? Is the disparity between analytical and phatic feedback common in all year groups or particular to Year 6?

### **The 'sense of self'**

There are several issues raised by the study that relate to the personal nature of teaching and in particular highlighting the importance of teaching context, experience and biography. It would be worthwhile to continue to explore this phenomenon to gain a greater understanding of what influences a teachers' use of strategies. For example, it would be of interest to conduct a study to track pre-service trainee teachers' notions of self as they become more experienced practitioners. To what extent does experience in the field impact upon practice?

### **Teachers' continuing professional development**

The study has drawn out the value of CPD for Amanda and Bethany and proposed a 'bottom-up' approach to developing the two teachers' formative assessment strategies. What is of particular interest is that the study has teased out some links between Amanda and Bethany's ITT involvement, formative assessment and their CPD and I believe that it would be extremely fruitful to extend this. It would be of interest to involve teachers in evaluating the contribution that ITT has on their professional development and to seek to develop mutually beneficial partnerships. Furthermore, as described earlier (see section 5.1), Daniel aired concerns regarding the potential for CPD in School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT), and it would be of interest to conduct a study that considers the CPD roles within different ITT settings. How do teacher training settings contribute to the development of practising teachers?

### **Children's voices about formative assessment**

A particularly interesting element of the study has been the involvement of the pupils, such that the study has not merely been about them, but been conducted *with* them.

Lansdown (1996) highlights how there is a substantial proportion of adults who perceive children's views to be ill-informed, irrational, irresponsible, amusing or cute. This study highlights how, contrary to such negative views, when given the opportunity, children are able to discuss issues that affect them and can do so thoughtfully, honestly and articulately. The study has, like for example, Tunstall and Gipps' study (1996), highlighted that children are capable of discussing complex aspects of teaching and learning. It would be of significant interest to conduct a further study into 'children's voices' with regard to formative assessment. For example, it would be interesting to establish how older pupils feel about assessments, particularly given the high stakes of GCSE results. This would be useful in determining how assessment impacts upon both pupils' motivation and self esteem and would also cast further light on which assessment techniques pupils perceive as useful. Furthermore, a study into children's perceptions of other complex areas may provide further insights into teaching and learning processes. For example, what are pupils' perceptions of thinking skills/mantle of the expert (etc) activities?

The children in the study were interviewed using, amongst others, participatory techniques, and it is possible to conceive of pupils providing further information to researchers regarding the research tools that they are using.

### **Extending the findings of the study**

The study has proposed a model for considering assessment. Although this model is context bound, it would be of interest to explore the extent to which it could contribute to how teachers conceive of their formative assessment strategies. To what extent does using the model, as a means of reflecting on practice, impact on practice?

## **Concluding remarks**

I believe that the study has drawn out some interesting findings regarding the practice of Amanda and Bethany. In particular, this study has identified three discernible feedback strategies employed by the two teachers, together with nested models of feedback and an analytical feedback typology. In addition, this study has highlighted the importance of specification of attainment and in particular has concluded that, for Amanda and Bethany, specification of attainment is the driving force of their formative assessment practice. The study has provided evidence of a relationship between the individual and personal nature of teaching and the formative assessment strategies employed by Amanda and Bethany and has drawn up a model for considering 'Reflective Assessment' and although context-bound, I am convinced that there are aspects of the study that will be of relevance to other teachers, policy makers and researchers.

From a personal perspective, I have been intrigued, throughout the study by my own understanding of teachers and in particular the notion of 'self'; a concept that I had, in the past, underestimated. Teaching is a highly personal activity and the study offers ways of considering why teachers use a range of formative assessment strategies.

Prior to commencing the study, I had experienced limited opportunities of working with Year Six pupils. As a consequence of the study, I have developed my understanding of how children learn and believe that the methodological approach of the study served to enhance this understanding. I was impressed by the confidence of the children and in particular by their ability to discuss what I perceived as complex notions. In itself, the



study has consolidated my understanding of the power of listening to and responding to children.

Being involved in the study has caused me to reflect, not only on the teaching practices of the two teachers involved in the study, but on my own values and beliefs as a practitioner. In this respect, I have appreciated the opportunity of being able to carry out the small-scale study. I believe that the way forward, in terms of developing our understanding of the complexities of teaching and learning is to continue to seek opportunities to carry out studies of classroom practices and involve practitioners such that research of this nature can directly impact upon their day-to-day teaching practices.

Finally, as the study has evolved, I have become fascinated by the term 'formative assessment' and passionate about coming to my own personal understanding about what exactly it is, and I feel personally satisfied that as a consequence of this study, I have proposed a model of 'Reflective Assessment' that ensures that I am secure in my own interpretation of this much debated phenomenon.

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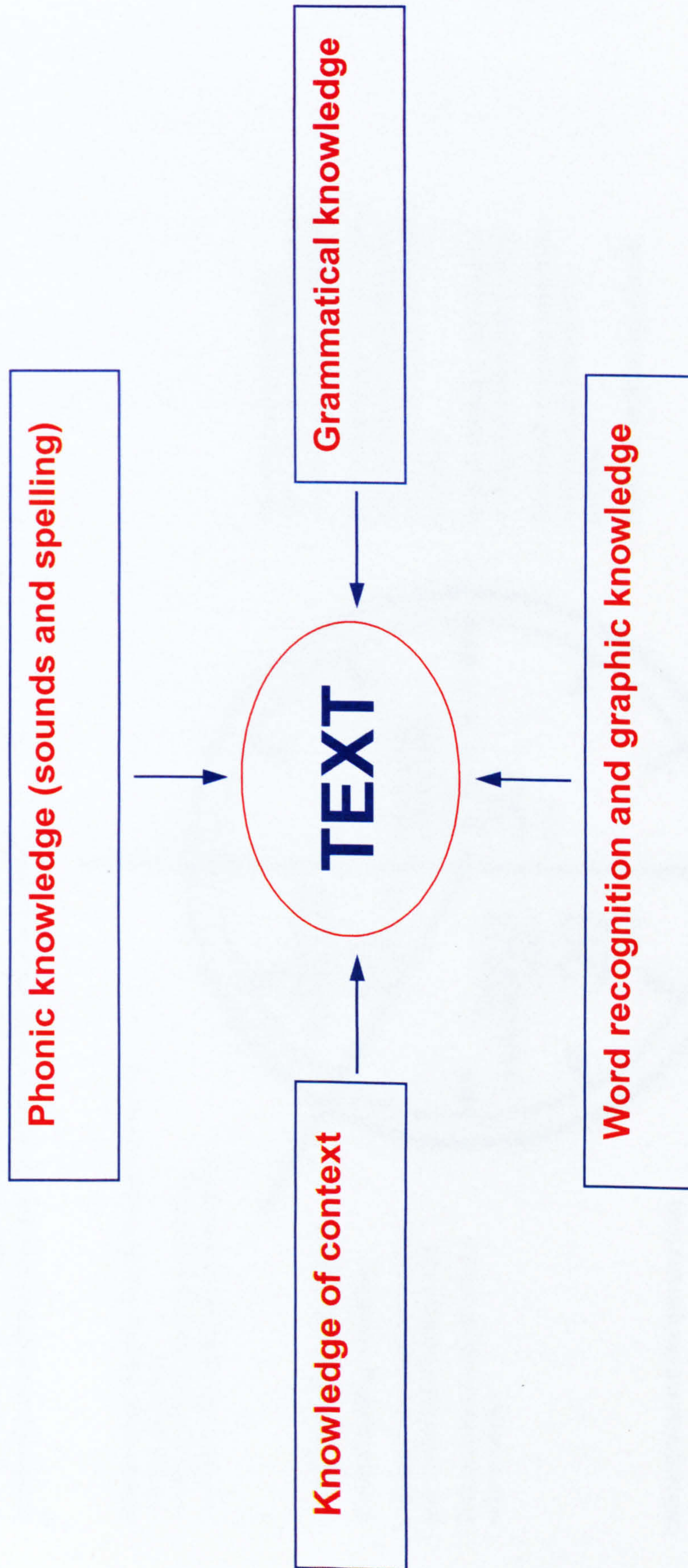
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# The Searchlight model



# Teaching writing in the Literacy Hour

Curricular and children's targets are visible, monitored and assessed

## Whole class Plenary including opportunities to:

- review progress
- make connections to other learning
- reinforce the objectives of the lesson

## Group and independent work

### Guided reading or writing

Independent tasks to develop and consolidate literacy skills

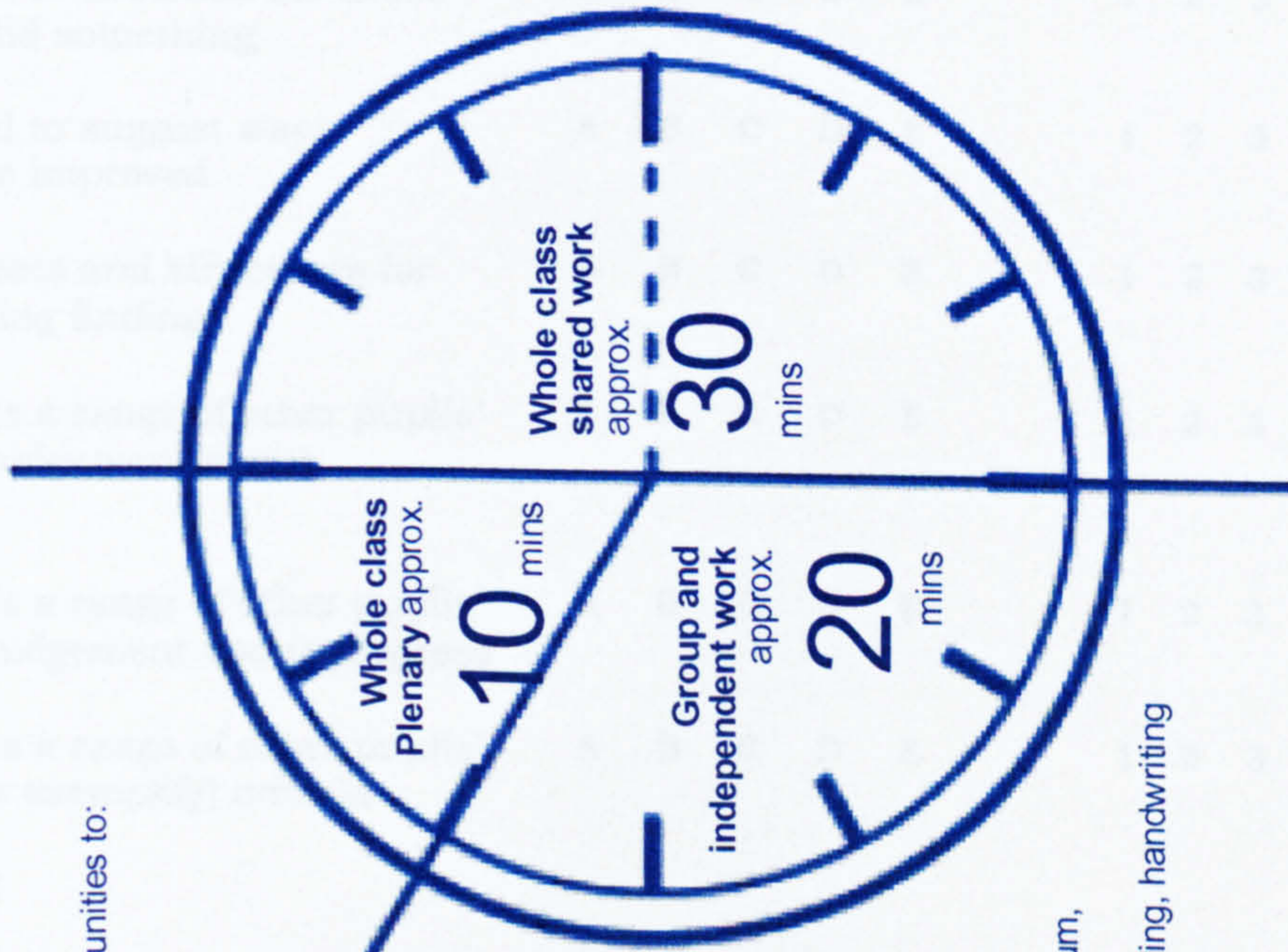
Second wave support offered where needed

## Literacy beyond the literacy hour

- application of skills across the curriculum, particularly non-fiction
- application time, e.g. independent reading, handwriting
- reading to children, e.g. class novel

department for

**education and skills**



## Whole class shared work

Work is based on NLS Framework and other age-related publications

**Shared reading** to enrich, improve fluency, support comprehension and response, and provide models for writing

**Shared writing** to demonstrate and support independent writing

**Word work** including systematic teaching of **phonics** and/or **spelling**

**Sentence work** as appropriate

A = very valuable  
 B = valuable  
 C = no strong view  
 D = of little value  
 E = of no value

1 = most lessons  
 2 = most days  
 3 = weekly  
 4 = termly  
 5 = never

4. Getting pupils to collaborate in groups on a joint outcome

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

5. Spurring pupils on by making encouraging but specific, focused comments, eg they are on the right lines and in what way

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

6. Getting a pupil to help another pupil

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

**Modelling quality**

1. Choosing and showing pupils examples of pupils' work for learning purposes

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

2. Getting a pupil to show you how s/he had gone about something so you can diagnose error

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

3. Getting a pupil to demonstrate to the class how s/he did something

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

4. Getting a pupil to suggest ways something can be improved

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

5. Providing formats and structures for writing or recording findings

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

6. Showing pupils a range of other pupils' work to make a judgement about performance

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

7. Showing pupils a range of other pupils' work to make a judgement about progress

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

8. Showing pupils a range of other pupils' work to model (or exemplify) criteria

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

**Giving feedback**

1. Using probing questions to diagnose the extent of the pupils' learning

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

2. Analysing completed work to work out why a pupil has or has not achieved

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

3. Giving rewards only when achievement is satisfactory for that pupil (with specific comments referring to pupil's success)

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

4. Expressing approval when achievement is satisfactory

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

A = very valuable  
 B = valuable  
 C = no strong view  
 D = of little value  
 E = of no value

1 = most lessons  
 2 = most days  
 3 = weekly  
 4 = termly  
 5 = never

6. Making a conscious decision to avoid saying a pupil is wrong

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

7. Telling pupils what they have achieved with specific reference to their learning

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

8. Telling pupils what they have not achieved with specific reference to their learning

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

9. Describing why an answer is correct

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

10. Specifying a better/different way of doing something

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

11. Writing an evaluative note on a pupil's work for the pupil

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

**Self assessment**

1. Getting pupils to suggest ways they can improve

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

2. Negotiating a route to improve something

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

3. Providing time for pupils to reflect and talk about their learning

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

4. Getting pupils to review their own work and record their progress

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

5. Helping pupils to understand their achievements and know what they need to do next to make progress

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

6. Providing opportunities for pupils to assess their own and one another's work and give feedback to one another

A B C D E

1 2 3 4 5

**Case Study Pupils A**

The pupils at Alpha Primary School, in Years Five and Six, are grouped by ability, based on previous SAT scores and teacher assessments. Prior to grouping the children, the class teachers meet to discuss individual pupils in terms of their ability and potential. During these discussions, teachers use a variety of sources of information, including SATs scores and teacher assessments of pupil' academic ability and attitude towards learning, considering the 'whole child' in terms of the appropriateness of groupings (Ref. Preparatory Interview with Amanda). The pupils are based within different ability classes for literacy and numeracy in Year Five and Year Six and these sessions are delivered every morning. The foundation subjects are delivered during the afternoon and during these times the pupils are in their mixed ability registration classes.

Amanda is responsible for delivering the literacy sessions to the more able pupils of Years Five and Six. These children are identified as being of 'level four' ability, with the potential to gain a level five or six in the end of Key Stage SATs.

Six children from Amanda's class were chosen to participate more fully in the study. This group, although within the 'streamed ability' set, contains pupils with a range of abilities. The group is also consisted of male and female pupils.

*Frances*

Frances is described by the class teacher as one of the most able pupils in the class.

Frances is a Year Six pupil within Amanda's literacy class. Amanda elected Frances



for the group for a number of reasons. Amanda was particularly pleased with Frances' recent improvements, in terms of academic ability and attitude towards peers and staff. Frances had a 'difficult start to the year and her attitude towards her teacher 'could be unpleasant'. Amanda was aware of Frances' academic potential, but was anxious that Frances's approach to their relationship would 'sour her work' (Ref. Participatory Interview with Amanda). Amanda decided to liaise with both Frances and Frances' mother, and following a meeting between the three of them, Frances 'blossomed.' Frances' attitude to her work saw a great shift, with Frances developing excellent classroom relationships with peers and adults alike. This shift was influenced by Frances and Amanda working closely together and with Frances establishing personal targets. Amanda describes a complete shift in Frances' academic ability. The standard of her work continually improved as did her confidence in her literacy capability. Amanda is 'thrilled' with Frances's progress and believes she has the ability to achieve a level six in the end of Key Stage SATs.

Frances is very aware of her own academic ability, although when discussing her work is keen to seek improvements. She describes herself as learning best 'when given a challenge.' (Ref. Individual Interview with Frances)

### *Ryan*

Ryan is described by the class teacher as a quiet boy who has recently begun to 'achieve his potential' (Ref. Preparatory Interview with Amanda). Ryan arrived at Alpha Primary School the previous year, and evidence from his previous school suggested that he would be 'best placed in the lower set.' (Ref. Preparatory Interview with Amanda) Throughout this time, Amanda describes Ryan as gaining in

confidence, more willing to participate and making significant academic progress, indeed Ryan was moved from the lower ability set to the higher ability set at the commencement of Year Six.

Ryan believes that he learns best when he 'starts to think about what other people say.' (Ref. Individual Interview with Ryan)

### *Susan M*

Amanda describes Susan as being very diligent and committed to 'doing her best' (Ref. Preparatory Interview with Amanda). Susan has made continued progress in her reading and writing during her time in Year Six and exceeded the teacher's expectations by producing recent written work that is of a 'level four standard, but nearer to level five.' Susan's written work 'usually gets off to a good start' but in the past would 'tail off.' However, Amanda describes Susan as a very competent reader and believes that the recent improvements in Susan's reading ability have wrought about significant improvements in her writing capability. Susan is conscientious, and throughout the year Amanda has noticed increased confidence and willingness to participate.

Amanda stated that she believed that Susan learns best when she considers what other people say and interacts with them. She stated that Susan responds well to peers and adults and is able to use the ideas of others to seek improvements in her own work (Ref. Preparatory Interview with Amanda).

### *Susan C*

Amanda describes Susan as being 'gifted' in literacy. Susan has increased in maturity during the year and made progress in both reading and writing. Amanda states that improvements are most recognisable in Susan's written work, where she 'writes with a tremendous amount of pathos and empathy.' (Ref. Preparatory Interview with Amanda)

Amanda describes Susan as a 'good all-rounder' however, at the beginning of the year she was concerned that Susan was merely 'coasting' and not, therefore achieving her full potential. Amanda had a meeting with Susan to discuss her progress and attitude towards her literacy work. She explained to Susan the need for her to 'stretch herself' in order to make improvements in her work and attain potential. Amanda and Susan have a good working relationship and Amanda stated that in light of this discussion and the targets that were set for Susan, Susan 'took on board' what she needed to do and began to work very hard and achieve work of a very good standard' (Ref. Preparatory Interview with Amanda)

Susan describes working effectively when work is 'at the right level – not too hard, not too easy.' She states that it is important for the teacher to make decisions regarding the appropriateness of the levels of work to enable her to 'get on and do it, and know I can do it' (Ref. Individual Interview with Susan C).

### *Julie*

Amanda is "very pleased with the progress Julie has made so far this year." (Ref. Preparatory Interview with Amanda) She describes Julie as a 'middle of the roader'

who this year has displayed 'sparks of originality' and despite some earlier 'confusions with literacy' has a natural gift for being perceptive and this has influenced her academic achievements. Amanda describes how Julie, over the year, has increased in confidence and is much more willing to 'have a go.' Julie's ability in reading has made steady progress over the year, and Amanda believes that this has influenced how Julie tackles her written work. Indeed, Julie's current written work is of 'an acceptable level four overall, and I thought she would be a 'wobbly' level four when she came in at the beginning of the year.' (Ref. Preparatory Interview with Amanda)

Julie is aware of the progress she has made this year and stated:

"I'm learning much more and it's because I get work that's at the right level. That's how I work best. If it's too hard you can't do it, especially if you're doing it independently and if it's too easy, well, you *just do it*. For me to learn it's got to be in the middle. The teacher knows where I am, what I need to learn, what I'm good at and I can get on and improve.' (Ref. Individual Interview with Julie)

### ***Bobby***

Bobby has made very good progress in literacy this year and Amanda states that he has the ability to be highly perceptive and this is more recently reflected in his reading and written work. Bobby's attitude towards learning in literacy has seen great improvement and Amanda describes this as occurring as a result of their positive relationship. She describes Bobby as 'being worried about his 'street cred' and "in the past he didn't want to look as if he was working hard." (Ref. Preparatory Interview with Amanda) However, following discussions with Bobby, regarding these concerns, they have 'come to an understanding' and Bobby now sees his academic achievements in a more positive light and strives to achieve his best. Bobby is

currently achieving particularly well in his reading, and in conjunction with this his writing ability has increased. Amanda describes his work as shifting from a 'wobbly level four' to a more consistent level, with aspects of his work now being in the level five spectrum.

Amanda believes that Bobby learns best when given the chance to explore and do things. He is, as described by Amanda, fairly independent, and by working in contexts that allow him to explore and do things for himself, views learning more positively and at the same time 'maintains his 'street cred' with his peers.' (Ref. Preparatory Interview with Amanda)

## **Case Study Pupils B**

The pupils at Beta Primary School work in mixed ability classes for all subjects, remaining with their registration class throughout the day. Within each class pupils are placed into ability groups for literacy and numeracy lessons. In Bethany's class, the ability groups sit with each other throughout the morning. For foundation subjects, Bethany uses a range of strategies for grouping children, from ability to friendship groups.

The ability groups for literacy were determined from a range of information. At the beginning of the year, Bethany grouped the children in the same manner as they had been grouped in Year Five. This had been established by reading and writing ability and sourced from SATs scores and teachers assessments. In addition, the previous teacher had grouped children according to their ability to work effectively in such a group context and considered the relationships (positive and negative) that individuals exerted upon each other. As the year in Bethany's class progressed, she exercised flexibility in the groupings and as children's academic ability changed, so too did the groupings.

The children elected to participate more fully in this study were chosen from a range of groups and consisted of a combination of both boys and girls.

### ***Emily***

Bethany explains that Emily has made good progress in her reading and written work throughout the year. Emily has become increasingly confident and willing to 'have a go', she frequently participates in whole class and group aspects of the literacy hour.

Emily's approach to literacy has, Bethany describes, matured over the year and there is increased evidence, from Bethany's daily observations of Emily, that she is eager to develop her own learning. Bethany cites a range of strategies Emily has begun to use in order to develop her reading and writing skills, including more frequently asking questions, carrying out additional literacy tasks at home and becoming less frustrated with tasks and increased determination.

Emily is in a lower ability group for literacy, however, Bethany states that Emily's ability within that group, has seen marked improvement, particularly in reading and choice of vocabulary in written work. (Ref. Preparatory Interview with Bethany)

Emily is very clear about her own learning style and about her personal response to work. She stated that for her it is very important that work is at the right level for her own ability , "...because I get frustrated if it's too hard and I get aggressive if people ask me stuff and I don't understand it." (Ref. Individual Interview with Emily)

### *Katy*

Bethany describes Katy as being a very hard working child, whose confidence has soared over the year. This confidence boost has had a highly positive 'knock on effect' on Katy's work in literacy. Bethany explains that as Katy's confidence and self-esteem have increased over the year, she has matured and developed in all aspects of literacy, and through the provision of a range of strategies to support Katy, such as writing frames and 'check and change cards' Katy is becoming increasingly independent.

Katy is in a middle ability group within the class for literacy and states that she learns best when the teacher ‘tells her things.’ Katy has a very positive relationship with her class teacher, she enjoys being in Bethany’ class because “...when she stands in front of us to tell us how to do our work, she does it well so that I understand. She explains a lot and uses lots of expression to make sure I can learn best.” (Ref. Individual Interview with Katy)

### *Michelle*

Bethany is pleased with the progress that Michelle has made during the year, in terms of Michelle’s consistency at performing at a ‘strong level three’ level.

At the beginning of the year, Bethany states that Michelle was developing as a confident reader, and that over time this has become much more secure and is now beginning to impact upon her written work. Although Michelle’s written work has not progressed as rapidly as her reading, Bethany describes how Michelle is now able to use much more complex sentence structures with increased accuracy and is able to use and spell correctly a wider range of more complex vocabulary. Michelle is increasingly confident during whole class and group work and much more willing to participate with aspects that Michelle would have perceived as too difficult only a short time ago.

Michelle is in the middle ability group within the class for literacy lessons and perceives herself to learn best both when the teacher ‘shows us and tells us things’ and when ‘listening to others’.

“When the teacher tells us things I don’t get muddled, so when the teacher tells us and explains things, sometimes she shows us, then I think I can go



and do it and I usually can. But I also like co-operating so I also learn best when other people say things. When I work with others, and listen to what they are saying I can think 'well, this is wrong, or this is right' and then I can do well." (Ref. Individual Interview with Michelle)

### *Nina*

Nina's confidence, Bethany describes, has 'rocketed' this year and Nina has recently moved into the high ability group for literacy. Nina is very good at working independently, and this ability has increased over the year. Bethany describes how Nina is now more able to 'take on board' what has occurred during the main teaching aspect of a lesson and apply it and adapt it appropriately in her own pieces of work.

Nina is described by her teacher as being increasingly well motivated and works hard to achieve her full potential, including working at home to improve her spellings.

(Ref. Preparatory Interview with Bethany)

Nina believes that she learns most effectively when the work is pitched at the right level and enjoys working independently.

"I learn best when the work is at the right level for me. If it's just right I can get on with it by myself and I don't need to ask the teacher, or I can spend time learning by myself." (Ref. Individual Interview with Nina)

### *Nigel*

Nigel is in the lower set for literacy within his class. Bethany is extremely pleased with the progress Nigel has made so far this year and is particularly impressed by his increased confidence and self-esteem. Bethany explains that Nigel is a quiet boy, who finds some aspects of literacy difficult. However, recently the level of his work has been greatly improved, and Bethany has noticed that Nigel is much more willing to 'take risks' with his work. Nigel is a sensitive boy and Bethany describes how she

has worked with Nigel to boost his self-confidence and encourage him to participate in whole class and group activities and discussions (Ref. Preparatory Interview with Bethany).

Nigel's literacy work has improved in a number of ways during the year, although Bethany describes noticeable improvements in his reading and reading comprehension. She also describes Nigel's increasing independence and explains how Nigel's structure and word order in written work has 'come on in leaps and bounds' and how he pays increased attention to detail during whole class teaching activities such that he translates concepts and ideas into his own written work. (Ref. Preparatory Interview with Bethany)

Nigel says that he learns best when the teacher tells him things and is clear, because:

“...when I then have to go off and do my own work, she's told me clearly what I've got to do, you wouldn't learn otherwise.” (Ref. Individual Interview with Nigel)

### *Simon*

Simon is in a top ability group for literacy within his class. He is described by his teacher as very confident in his abilities and has made consistent improvement in all areas of literacy throughout the year. Simon willingly 'takes on board' new things and is 'putting a huge effort into improving his reading and is reading more and more books at home.' (Ref. Preparatory Interview with Bethany)

The level of maturity in Simon's work is far greater than at the beginning of the year and he is able to identify aspects of his own work which he feels is within the level five spectrum.

Simon learns best when the work is pitched well because he can 'learn it straight away'. However, Simon also describes how he enjoys challenges in his work because he can then improve his work on his own (Ref. Individual Interview with Simon).

**Name                      School   A   B**

**Using a piece of written work**

**What I want to find out:**

**Can children explain what they were told to do?**

**Do they know how good this piece of work is? How?**

**Do they always get the marks/feedback they expected?**

**How do they feel about the comments or feedback from the teacher?**

**What comments or feedback help them/ do not help them?**

**Do they set targets for improving work?**

**Prompts:**

**Discuss piece of work.**

**Points to remember**

**Spradley's Typology...grand tour questions, mini tour questions, example questions, experience questions, native language questions**

**1. Incident Interview Prompts**

**What I want to find out:**

What strategies they use and why?

To discuss some of the main strategies that I have observed them using.

**Prompts:**

**Discuss structure of the lessons – key features from observing.**

**Use of questioning, modelling, how they use learning objectives, children working in pairs...**

**Cite examples from observations/specific lessons**

**Points to remember**

**Spradley's Typology...grand tour questions, mini tour questions, example questions, experience questions, native language questions**

## **2. Assessment Interview prompts**

### **What I want to find out:**

What strategies they use and why?

Their perceptions of formative assessment and associated strategies.

### **Prompts:**

**Starting point-CLIO questionnaires....anything specific they want to discuss?**

**Any strategies that they use specifically and why? Any they don't use...why?**

### **Points to remember**

**Spradley's Typology...grand tour questions, mini tour questions, example questions, experience questions, native language questions**

### **3. Biographical Interview Prompts**

#### **What I want to find out:**

Details of each teacher's educational background:

own schooling, initial training, further training, professional experience

Teaching experience:

How long in present school, Current and previous age ranges taught, working with other colleagues, organisation of the classroom

**Also..How they are currently working**

**Any changes to practice? Assessment techniques? Learning styles?**

**Prompts:**

**Critical incidents that have affected them professionally;**

**Events in own schooling, events in previous schools, events in own personal life**

**Critical people who have influenced them professionally;**

**Other teachers, other people (key people including colleagues/non colleagues)**

**Relevant reading materials**

**Observation information**

**Distribution grids**

**Overview of pupil feedback**

**Initial findings**

**Points to remember**

**Spradley's Typology...grand tour questions, mini tour questions, example**

**questions, experience questions, native language question**

**Statements for Activity**

**1**

**A.**

Specifying learning objectives at the beginning of an activity:

Eg: today we are going to learn how to use powerful language in persuasive writing

**B.**

Providing written, descriptive feedback:

Eg: Well done, Kelly! You have used some powerful language in this letter. Next time, try adding more adjectives to make your language even stronger.

**C.**

Modelling why a piece of work was successful

Eg: A child in your class written a story, it meets the LOs of the lesson, but it has a number of spelling errors in it. You read it to the class, highlighting where it is good.

**2**

**A.**

Marking children's work - Ticks on written work

**B.**

Marking children's work – Commenting that children have met LOs.

**C.**

Marking children's work – Identifying where work is correct and explaining why.

**3**

**A.**

Pupils marking own individual work

**B.**

Pupils marking work of peers

**C.**

Teacher marking work



## Visual Resources for Activity



Introduction  
The purpose of this activity is to help students understand the concept of...  
The students will be able to...  
The activity will be conducted in a...  
The materials needed for this activity are...

Objectives  
The objectives of this activity are to help students understand the concept of...  
The students will be able to...  
The activity will be conducted in a...  
The materials needed for this activity are...

Procedure  
The procedure for this activity is as follows:  
1. The teacher will introduce the concept of...  
2. The students will be divided into groups of...  
3. Each group will be given a set of...  
4. The groups will be given 10 minutes to...  
5. The teacher will then ask each group to...  
6. The teacher will then ask each group to...  
7. The teacher will then ask each group to...  
8. The teacher will then ask each group to...

Slide  
1

**Assessment for Learning**

Formative assessment strategies of two teachers  
*Alpha and Beta Primary School*

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**'Amanda'**

- Qualified for 28 years, taught across foundation stage, KS1 and KS1, taught in USA kindergarten for 1 year, during study based in Y5/6, top ability for literacy, Literacy Co-ordinator, attended Literacy training, delivered in-house training, ITT role
- Works alongside Peter, plan together and evaluate together at weekly meetings, discuss lessons and individual children as needed

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**Purpose of the session**

- To validate the study and ensure the data is a 'true record'
- To share the main findings of the study with the teaching teams
- To consider implications of the study

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**Influences on Amanda...**

- Family
- Colleagues
- Headteacher
- Own schooling
- ITT

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**'Alpha Primary School'**

- Based in North East England
- Urban area-outskirts of inner city
- Organised into Key Stage phases
- 250 on roll (approx)
- Ofsted 1996, 1999: "...improved beyond recognition since its previous inspection."

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**Amanda's philosophy...**

- Important to develop firm relationships with children
- Being approachable
- Ensuring children are clear about tasks-explicit Los
- Children should 'join in' and 'ask questions'
- Children need structures
- Need to establish what children can do
- Need a secure understanding of 'where children have come from'
- Children working together

**Social Constructivist?**

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### 'The pupils'

- Chosen for ability to work in group context and with Lisa
- Y5/6
- Top ability group for literacy
- Mixture of boys and girls

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### Influences on Bethany...

- Family
- Colleagues
- Carol
- Own schooling
- ITT

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### 'Beta Primary School'

- Based in North East England
- Urban area-outskirts of inner city
- Organised into Key Stage phases
- 350 on roll (approx)
- Ofsted 1996, 1999: "significant improvement in standards by the end of Key Stage 2 over the past two years from a very low baseline."

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### Bethany's philosophy...

- Need to understand children's needs
- Should be reflected in planning/evaluations (discussions)
- Progression built in to lessons
- Calm approach with children
- Important to build self-esteem
- Important to value children
- Important to have clear understanding of how children learn
- Children learn effectively when on-task, engrossed in learning, can share learning, are 'guided' by the teacher

*Social Constructivist?*

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### 'Bethany'

- BA QTS, 1996, London teaching Y5 and Y6, Larch View 2000, Y6, mixed ability class, Literacy Co-ordinator, attended Literacy training, delivered in-house training, attended foundation stage and Key Stage One training, AST, ITT role
- Works alongside Carol, plan together and evaluate together at weekly meetings, discuss lessons and individual children as needed

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### 'The pupils'

- Chosen for ability to work in group context and with Lisa
- Y6
- Mixed ability
- Mixture of boys and girls

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## What formative assessment strategies do teachers use?



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## Specification of attainment Some Examples...

- "Before we did the literacy hour I knew what I was doing, but I just did it and I'd say 'right, let's have a look at this piece of writing.' But the focus wouldn't be clear. I wouldn't necessarily have said 'Today we are going to look at official language, and the correct words. It is just much clearer and I know exactly what I'm doing."

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## What formative assessment strategies do teachers use?

### Specification of attainment

- Make connections to prior learning
- Have objective driven planning
- Make explicit reference to the learning objectives
- Model through the use of examples
- Model using children's work

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- I think I've become much more aware of learning objectives since the literacy hour, because it's very much objective driven and very much more organised, with the plenary and summing up and because of that I'm much more aware of that. I don't know that I didn't do it before, but I'm very conscious of making sure I refer to the objectives. I have taught for a long time and I think sometimes we 'kept the children in the dark.' You would say 'We know why we are going to teach them this' but we didn't always give them (the children) a reason why we did it. This has become much more important and there's much more awareness. What we are teaching is not a big secret and if you tell the children why they are doing something it becomes much more purposeful." (Ref. Interview with Amanda, 05/04/01)

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## Specification of attainment Some Examples...

- "We always know what we're doing and she'll (Amanda) tell us like that we are learning something and that it is a bit like what we did yesterday." (Ref. Group interview, Amanda's class, 05/07/01)
- "It makes it much easier, I know what is expected, and so do the children, it is so much better that we now state the purpose and let the children know. That never happened when I was at school." (Interview with Amanda, 15/02/01)

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## Specification of attainment Some Examples...

- "The introduction of the lesson began with a recap on the work carried out the previous day. The teacher used only closed questioning, to generate specific information. The children had been reading parts 1 and 2 of 'The Lady of Shallot' (Tennyson) and through closed questioning the teacher was able to re-tell the poem through the children's own words." (Ref. Observation of Bethany, 19/01/01)

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- 'I tend not to write on the planning sheets. I meet with Carol (a colleague) on Wednesday's. We talk about our planning then, about what worked and what didn't and about what individuals need. It's much easier this way, we plan together, so what we do has to be the same, so talking about things together and agreeing on what is the best thing to do next works well. Also, by Wednesday, we still have two days left and it is still early on in the week.' (Ref. Discussion with Bethany following lesson, 16/02/01)

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### Specification of improvement, Some examples...

- 'It's good when the teacher explains and talks to us about our work. She can give you the answers and explain why it's that. She tells you what you've got right or wrong. You're learning from your own mistakes, no-one else's. You're learning about your strong points and your weak points. You get used to your mistakes and can improve and learn from them.' (Ref. Group interview, Amanda's class 05/07/01)

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### Specification of attainment Some Examples...

- 'It's good if you share your work, like when you are doing stories. Marking cards are useful because they give you some ideas of what to look for. But it's not always good because a friend could show you how to put in an adjective, but your friends could be wrong. A friend might just think he knows it but doesn't really. You don't know whether to believe your friends. It's ok, but only if they don't cheat. They mark you higher and expect you to do it for them and you feel under pressure. The teacher needs to mark them or walk about and talk to you.' (Ref. Group interview, Bethany's class 11/07/01)

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- "At the start of the lesson, the teacher asked a question relating to a predicament, 'Can anyone give me an example of a predicament in a mystery story?' Nobody could answer. The teacher then gave the children some examples and explained what the term meant. The children subsequently worked orally in pairs to think of further, better models that were shared with the rest of the class." (Ref. Observation of Amanda, 18/01/01)

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### What formative assessment strategies do teachers use?

#### Specification of improvement

- questioning
- model through the use of examples
- make explicit reference to learning objectives
- encourages pupil self-evaluation
- model using children's work

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### Specification of improvement, Some examples...

- "Giving them an idea of how to improve it (their work) is very important. It's important that they are given a model or example. For example, they need to be shown where an adverb has been used. I use modelling a lot. It is useful for all abilities and they can see where they need to go to improve their own work."

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- "When you analyse their work at the end it is obvious to me where there are problems. But it's more valuable if I show them before their work is actually completed. If I can do it with them, they can then go back and continue. They know there and then how to improve their work and are then more likely to succeed. They need to know how to improve work and if I can actually show them, then that's great. Sometimes, though I have to write in their books, but I try to give them suggestions and model answers for them to refer to."(Ref. Interview with Bethany 12/07/01)

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- ### What formative assessment strategies do teachers use?
- Constructing achievement
- making connections to prior learning
  - mutually articulating achievement
  - encouraging peer collaboration
  - modelling using children's work
  - providing structures/frameworks
  - making explicit reference to the learning objectives
  - Modifying a lesson in progress

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- ### Specification of improvement, Some examples...
- "It is important if the children come up with what they think needs improving. They've thought of something and then they're more inclined to do it if they've spotted it. It's very valuable to use and build on their contributions for sorting out misconceptions and reinforcing points. They can see that it is something they can and have used."(Ref. Interview with Bethany, 12/07/01)

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- ### Constructing achievement, Some examples...
- 'When you share with a friend you get a rough idea of what other people will think, other audiences. You have to have a purpose though, so your friend knows. You can get a good idea from your friend as to whether it's good enough.' (Ref. Group interview, Amanda's class, 05/07/01)

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- 'It's important when she (the teacher) tells you what to improve and it tells you how to improve, like when she says, 'Good, but you need to improve this or that.' We need to know these things. We need to know where to put commas and things.' (Ref. Group interview, Bethany's class, 11/07/01)

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- "As a person I love structures! For a child who is not particularly fluent, it is their crutch, because they know they can retain the structures. For more mature learners, take Helen, she can alter the frame herself for her work to flow more naturally."(Ref. Interview with Amanda, 05/04/01)

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### Constructing achievement, Some examples...

- "I show pupils a range of other pupils' work. When I shared Nigel's story, I read it so that the children couldn't see the spelling errors, well that wasn't part of the criteria and Nigel had done really well. This was to celebrate other people's work, the rest of the class shared in his success and could see what had made it a good piece of work." (Ref. Interview with Bethany, 12/07/01)

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### Constructing the way forward, some examples...

- "It is important to get pupils to suggest ways forward, to negotiate a route to improve things. I use questioning techniques to negotiate, I can lead them this way and it is usually a part of my guided work." (Ref. Interview with Amanda, 18/07/01)

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- 'If you've got it wrong, she can explain to you and, if we wrote a story, she can talk to you and say if your commas are in the wrong place. You find out the same day and if we get it wrong and she talks to us and says, 'well done, this is good but you've not quite got all of it.' Well then in the future we wouldn't get it wrong.' (Ref. Group interview, Bethany's class, 11/07/01)

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- "I provide time for pupils to reflect and talk about their learning, and I encourage this in pairs and in the shared part of the literacy hour. It gives them the opportunity to talk with each other about answers and find things out. In independent and guided time I get them to work together, because they feed off each other. Adults do, don't they? They bounce off each other, the quality of their work can be so much better, and they can make improvements, and then when they are working independently, really independently, they are going to remember the processes." (Ref. Interview with Amanda, 18/07/01)

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### What formative assessment strategies do teachers use?

Constructing the way forward

- questioning
- self-evaluation
- peer evaluation
- making explicit reference to the learning objectives

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### Constructing the way forward, some examples...

- "It is so valuable to get pupils to suggest ways forward themselves. On an individual level it's really important that they can look at their own work and, given guidance, suggest things themselves." (Ref. Interview with Bethany, 12/07/01)

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- 'It's good if you can show your friends, it's good for working in co-operation, sometimes friends stick together and you can get Merits if you support one another first. You have to swap with a really, really good friend. We don't like giving it to some of the boys, they get silly and tell you it's rubbish, even if it's not. But if a good friend marks it, that's good.' (Ref. Group interview, Bethany's class, 11/07/01)

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- "Gives the children a good idea of what they should be looking for and it makes it easier when I talk to them about their work. Some children though, find this easier than others. For some children it can be hard, they need to have a good self-esteem to be able to do this well." (Ref. Interview with Amanda, 19/07/01)

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### What are the purposes of formative assessment?

- Impacts upon teaching
- Impacts upon learning

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### Some examples...

- "We were told to do an argument about whether or not we should kill animals. We were told we had to use persuasive language. We had a discussion about it first of all as a class, and we did a paragraph together to help. We used some sentences in our own work. We had to sit for a couple of minutes to think about it and plan it on the frame and then the teacher gave us the first part and we continued it." (Ref. Interview with Emily, Bethany's class, 12/07/01)

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### Some examples...

- "I always try to make it clear to the children what they are doing. I start each lesson with a description of the learning objectives and explain to the children what this means to them. I think this is so important as it lets them know exactly what they have got to do and how they can get there. This motivates them. It works well because it allows the children to work at something independently. It's useful when I'm marking work and in plenaries because I am clear, and they are clear about what it is they've learned, how they've got there and what they need to do next." (Ref. Interview with Amanda, 15/02/01)

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- "I think this piece of work is good, I'm describing my arguments well. I think the arguments are strong. The teacher (Bethany) told me some of it was good and that my discussions were good. I was pleased I had met the objective and can write good discussions." (Ref. Interview with Michelle, Bethany's Class, 12/07/01)



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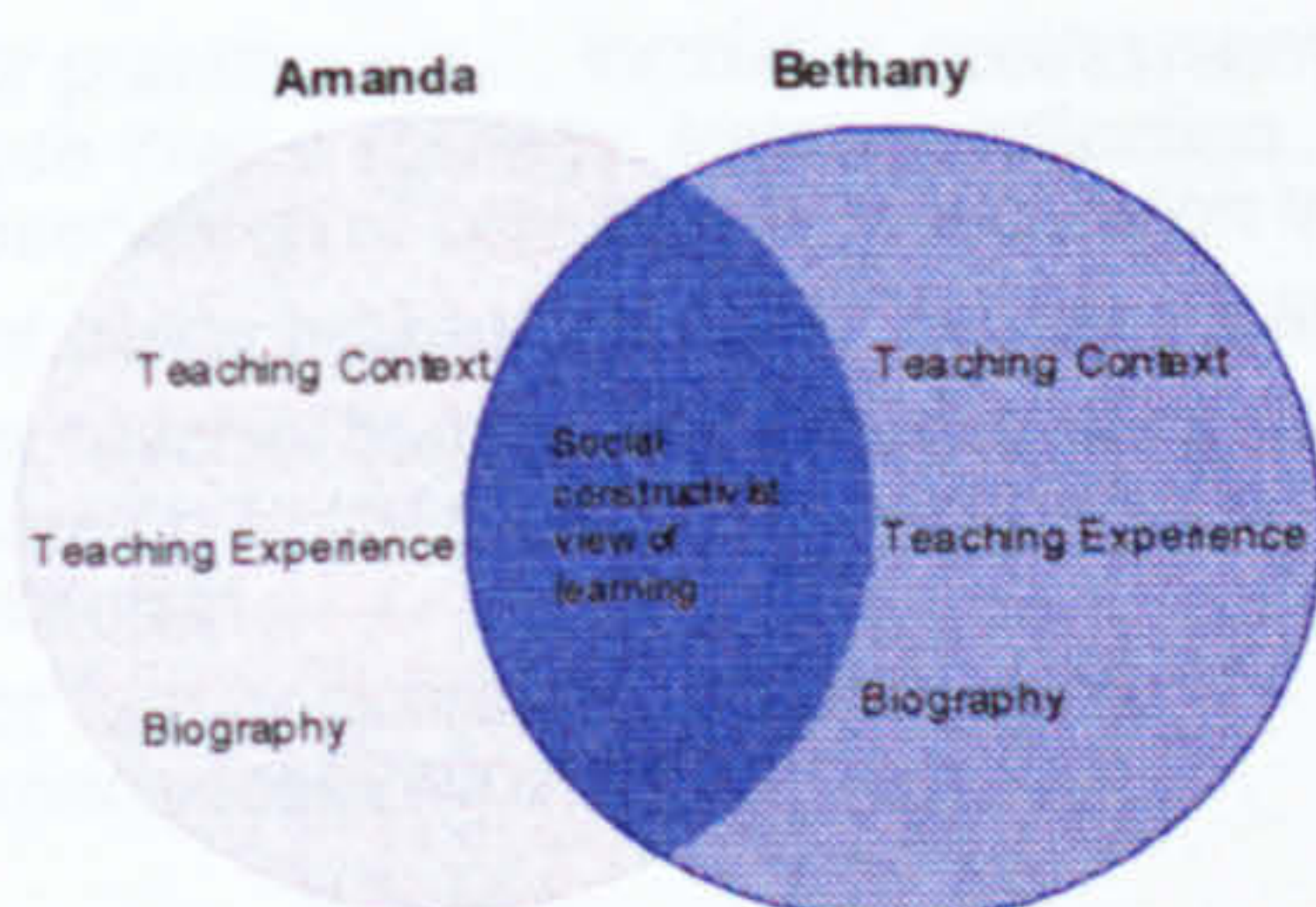
- "...is useful because it allows the children to have a go at looking at their work in a more critical way with a friend, but there's a structure to it and they know what I am expecting. This makes marking much easier." (Ref. Interview with Bethany, 06/04/01)

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- "In all classes you get a mix of children, even in this group. You have to respond to them in ways that suit them as individuals best." (Ref. Interview with Amanda, 18/07/01)
- "Children need to know that they can achieve things and know how to achieve them." (Ref. Interview with Amanda, 18/07/01)

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### What factors influence a teachers' use of strategies?



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### Some examples...

- Bethany's view of learning was also evident in her choice of formative assessment strategies, and indeed this was acknowledged by the children:
- "She (Bethany) gives us work that we can all do, she helps us if we need it, but sometimes we can do it on our own. She knows us." (Ref. Group interview with Bethany's class, 11/07/01)

Slide  
45

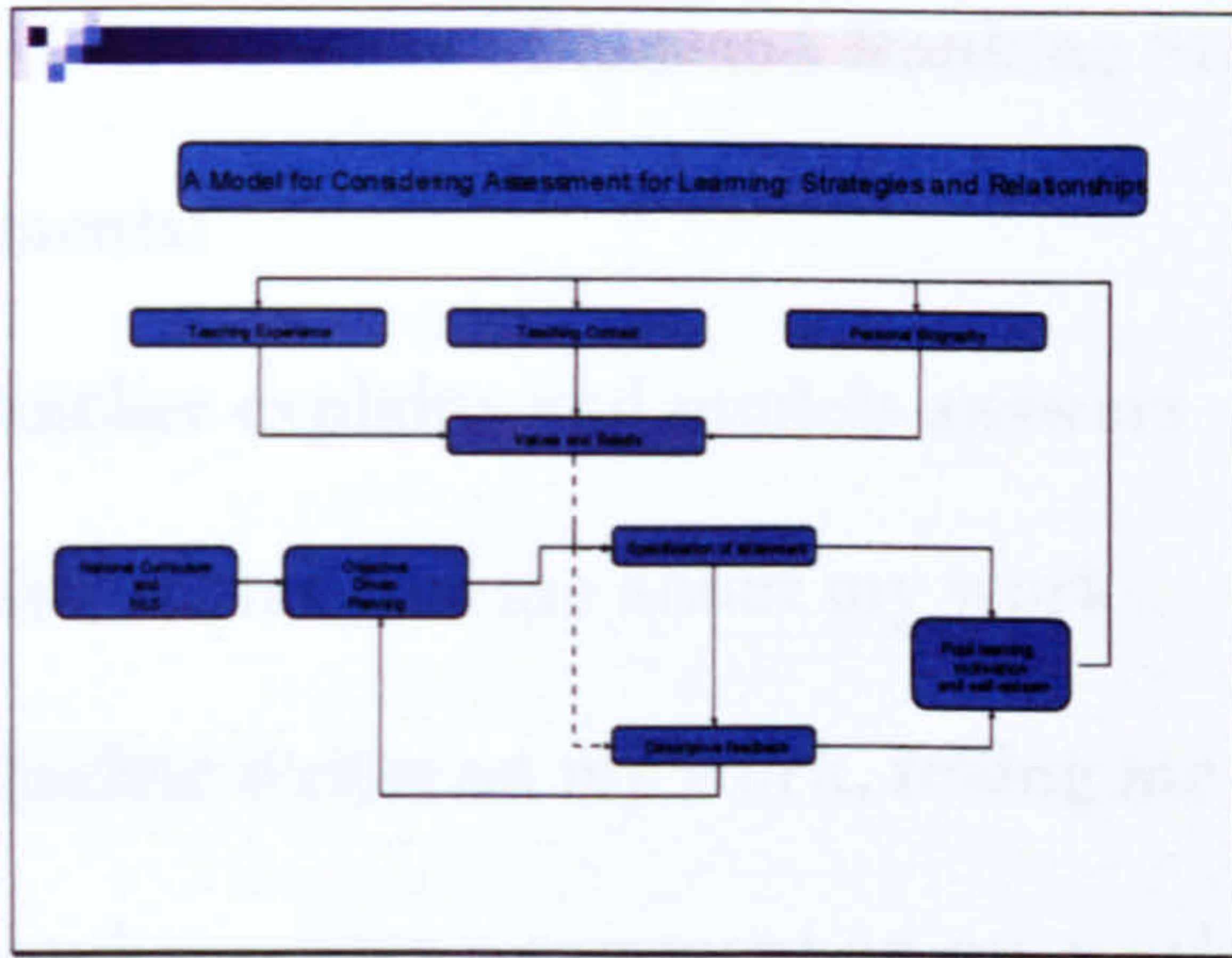
### Some examples...

- "They're not all the same, some children would find it hard to work independently and need more support. I try to provide activities that meet as many needs as possible. The structure of the literacy hour can help. We all work together on an objective and I can target individuals, but then during the group work children can work in different ways, some need more support, some like working together...it gives a balance." (Ref. Interview with Amanda, 18/07/01)

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48

- Bethany discussed similar themes in relation to this and described how pupils in her class are becoming increasingly clear about what they are learning as it is school policy to be explicit about learning intentions (Ref. Interview with Bethany, 06/04/01).
- "She'd never start with a positive, so that's influenced how I give feedback. I hope I'd never have done it like that!" (Ref. Interview with Bethany, 12/07/01) "She'd never start with a positive, so that's influenced how I give feedback. I hope I'd never have done it like that!" (Ref. Interview with Bethany, 12/07/01)

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49



Slide  
50

### Possible implications.....

- For practitioners...formative assessment is more than a strategy, training, reflection, observation of colleagues, participation in ITT....
- For policy makers...funding, raising profile...
- For teacher training and development...skills in listening to children, adults, observation, self-reflection...
- For further research...context, scale, experience/novice...

Statements:

The teacher explains and models answers

The teacher talks to me about my work

The teacher writes on my work, telling me what I need to do to improve it

The teacher writes a comment on my work in relation to the learning objective

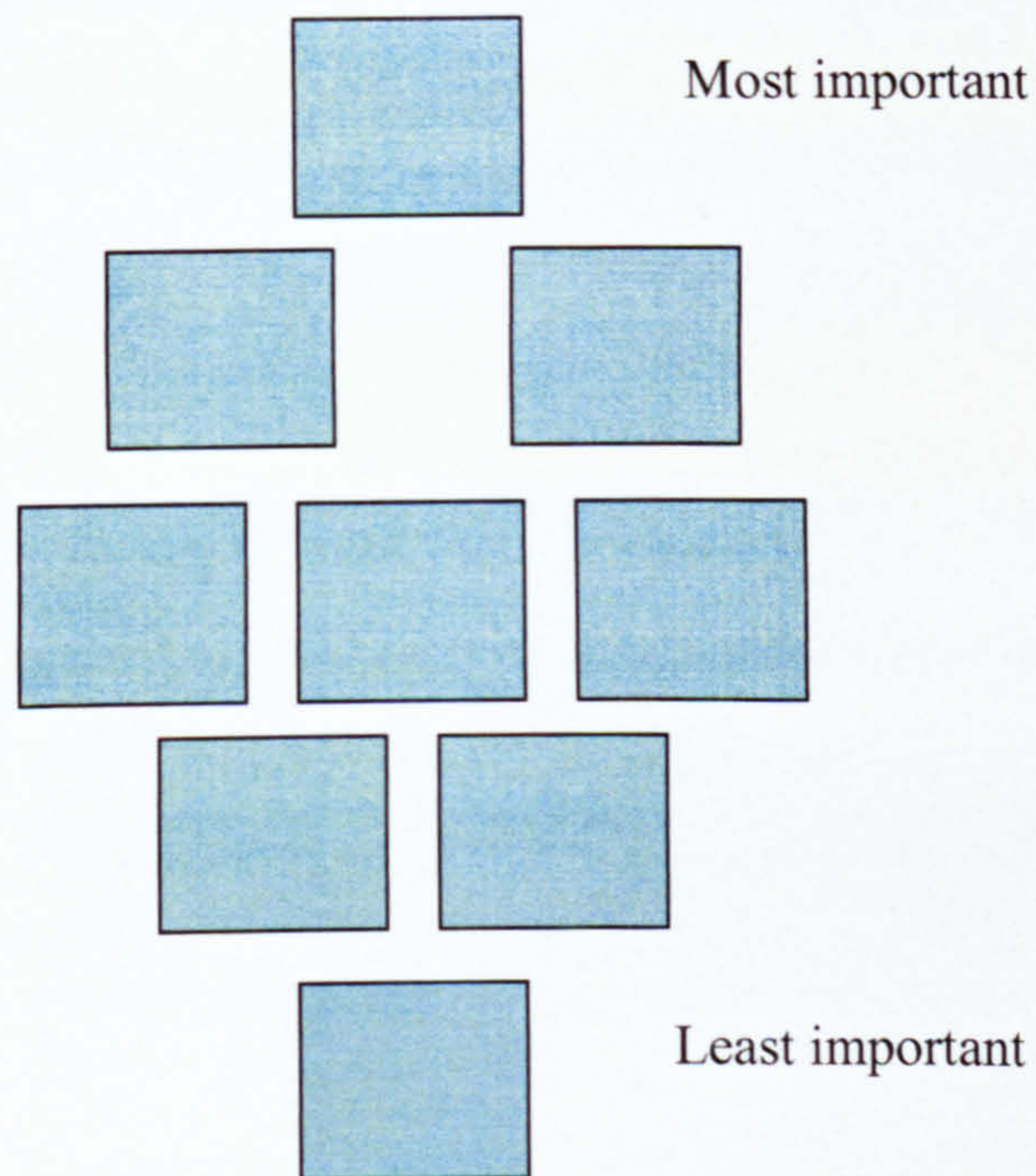
The teacher writes a comment on my work

The teacher ticks my work

I know the criteria and mark my work myself

The teacher tells us the answers and we mark it ourselves

A friend marks my work for me



**Observation 5 school B**

The teacher introduced the lesson by referring back to work that was carried out the previous day. Asking the children to recall the purpose of the letter:

“What was the purpose of the letter?” **Making connections to prior learning**

A boy explained that it had been about a trip to the fair and that people had been disappointed:, “people were disappointed with their trip to the fair.” **Using children’s examples**

The teacher encouraged further detail with a leading sentence...“Yes. So the letter was to...”and a different boy explained that it had been to ‘complain’ **Taking a statement further**

**The teacher smiled and praised. Well done!**

She then explained that the LO of today’s lesson was to write a letter using formal language by asking children. The LO was written on the whiteboard and Bethany read it out. She asked the children a question: **Making reference to LOs.**

“So today we are going to write a letter. Will we be using formal or informal language?”

Christopher said, “Informal.”Bethany asked Christopher to explain this further **Using children’s examples**

Christopher explained this to the rest of the class in his own words. “you are going to be mad so they need to know.”

Bethany then expanded further on this “you are going to be mad, and they do need to know that you were not satisfied, but you write informal letters to, for example, friends, is that appropriate here?” **Using Teacher example**

Christopher seemed unsure and turned to his friend for support and the teacher encouraged this, “Give Christopher some help to check what he’s thinking...”**Self evaluation**

The two boys discussed this and suggested that the tone of the letter should be angry, but in a formal way. She praised the boys saying Well done! And explained why to the rest of the class. **Making reference to LOs**

She then asked the whole class to think about how they were going to organise this, asking children to chat in pairs and come up with some thoughts together. **Self evaluation**

She explained that there are some features of this letter that will be the same for all of them. (ie letter structure) **Teacher examples**

“What do we need in the letter so that they know who to reply to?”

Michael said, The school address.

Bethany was pleased that Michael responded and praised him, (she explained later that Michael tends to be reticent in class discussions)

She said “Excellent! Michael” **Phatic praise**

The teacher then wanted to move children on. She said that yes, and address was needed but

“Now, we don’t know the name of the person we are writing to, and this is a formal letter, so...? **Follow up response**

Michaela spontaneously said “Dear sir or madam!”

Again the teacher praised the individual saying “Well done!” and highlighted that in formal letter this was appropriate **Making ref to LO**

She then encouraged pupils to talk in pairs to come up with further details.

**Self evaluation**

She did this as follows:

“So, we know how to start our letters, with sir or madam, now when we write a formal letter to complain what *must* we have in it. I want you to talk to the person sitting next to you.”

The children discussed this and pairs and in discussion came up with what they believed was the best example. Bethany then asked children who had not yet volunteered answers to respond to the class.

Some examples were then put forward eg.

“We must say why we are writing it.”

“We need to write main points that we are not happy about”

“We could suggest alternatives.”

**Bethany praised the responses and having heard a selection, Phatic Priase**

Then Bethany explained in further detail the purpose of this, that we need to structure our letter, but it will be more powerful if for example we can suggest alternatives or solutions! **Using teacher examples**

She asked the children to discuss this in pairs and give better ones. **Self evaluation**

Bethany then asked Cheryl-Anne, but she was struggling- Bethany reiterated this and gave a model for child to help her- if you had had an awful holiday, what solution could you suggest?” **using teacher examples**

Following this Cheryl-made an appropriate suggestion:

Cheryl-Anne said, “Well, I would say that my holiday had been terrible, they could give me a refund!”

The teacher praised Cheryl Anne, and explained to her why she was correct: “Excellent, you have put forward a reasonable solution” **making Ref to LOs**

She then asked the class for improvement on Cheryl-Anne’s phrase: Is there a more appropriate word, or other vocabulary you could use? **Self evaluation**  
Christopher suggested changing ‘refund’ to ‘compensation’. Bethany asked him to explain this to the rest of the class

Christopher explained that his mam got compensation when she fell over and ‘did her leg in’ and that it was compensation to make her feel better and because she’d had a ‘lot of trouble.’ **using children’s examples**

Bethany praised Christopher for his explanation and then told the rest of the group why this was an improvement related to LO. Saying that is a much more formal and official word and would be appropriate in the letter. **Making ref to los.**

She recapped on the LO saying the LO is to look at more formal vocab...**making ref to LOs**

Adam looked up, and put up his hand. He volunteered a question to the teacher “Miss, you’d have to end your letter yours sincerely, wouldn’t you?”

The teacher looked at Adam and smiled at him. **Phatic Praise**

Bethany then explained and modelled how to end letters as some children needed further clarification of this (they looked confused!) **using teacher examples**  
This prompted further questions to the class for example, she asked What if you did know the manager’s name? Children talked in pairs and made suggestions. **Self evaluation**

Bethany explained that that would be great, reminding them that they’d still have to remember to keep the tone formal though. **Making ref to LOs**

The teacher then moved the activity on to generate ideas for complaining. Saying “OK so we know how to start and end it and that if we complain a solution is useful. In pairs, can you think of some really useful phrases and complaints **Self evaluation**

The children worked in pairs, verbally discussing phrases. Following this Bethany asked them to share their phrases with the rest of the group. **Self evaluation**

Neil suggested “I am in disgust..” **using children’s examples**  
The teacher smiled and said, “OK Neil,” but then continued... so what we now need to do is put this in the ‘sense of the letter’ and asked if anyone could help. Kelly put up her hand and suggested “I was disgusted by...” **Self evaluation**

The teacher praised saying well done Kelly and then explained that we need the manager or owner to know how badly we felt **making ref to LO**

Bethany was aware that some children were finding this difficult - And then asked them to put themselves in the other persons' shoes. Let's think first of all about what you *would* have expected at the fairground. Why would you have gone to this particular fairground? What would you have seen? What would have persuaded you to have gone? What would have persuaded you to have bought or tried something?"  
**using teacher examples**

Again the teacher asked the children to discuss this in pairs and come up with one really good example between them- lots of suggestions were put forward, **Self evaluation**

"Good posters, telling us about the great rides."

"Word of mouth"

**The teacher praised them phatic praise**

The teacher modelled sentences, writing on the whiteboard she wrote

"I was very disappointed by the quality of the rides at the fairground. Your advertisements showed high quality rides, but on arrival most of the rides were closed or broke. I was very disappointed...." **Using teacher examples**

The teacher then asked the children to look at this and use as a basis for their own sentences. She then asked the children to model sentences, they gave a selection verbally and the teacher wrote them on the white board. **Using Children's examples**

The teacher then highlighted the difference between 'threatening' language and appropriate official language when complaining reiterating LO (**Making ref to LO**) and through modelling some examples the children gave. **Using teacher example**

The teacher asked the children to work independently on their letters, using the ideas on the whiteboard for support. She asked them to work with in pairs at the end to check each others' work. **self evaluation**

**Prior to working independently, the teacher reminded the children of punctuation. Phatic Praise**

The teacher worked with four children who said that they were finding this difficult. They remained on the mat for a further ten minutes, the teacher modelled a beginning and series of complaints and solutions and the children then moved to work independently. **Using teacher examples**

For the plenary, the teacher had prepared some sentences for children to evaluate. **Using Teacher Example** She modelled some good sentences and then asked for them to improve poorer ones. She asked children to share some of theirs and 2 children volunteered, the teacher scribed their sentences on whiteboard and asked the children to explain why they felt they were good examples of use of formal language.

Children explained why and teacher praised them. She then used their vocab to model a further powerful sentence. **using Children's examples**







# Alpha Weekly Planning Example 1

Weekly Planning Year Group: 5/6 Top The Literacy Hour: Y6T1 Range: est. stories/novels Text Reference: Moonfleet

Week: 1 Jan 8th-12th	Whole Class Word/Sentence level	Whole Class Text Level	Guided Reading/Writing Teacher Guided Tasks	Independent Group Tasks	Plenary
Monday (Shorter session due to Assemb. used for: Spell test Words of week handwriting)	<u>Word Level:</u> Investigate the doubling up rule when a suffix is added	<u>Word Level:</u> Use words which have been investigated in Hot Seat Give definition Count syllables	Handwriting practise	When handwriting practise is completed children will continue to copy up edited version of diary begun week before last.	Read some of the diaries to they follow the genre
Tuesday	<u>Shared reading</u> Introduce text of week Discuss genre -mystery Discuss author J. Meade Faulkner Read extract round group	<u>Word Level</u> Discuss words which are unknown or confusing	<u>Guided reading:</u> <u>Focus:</u> Chart the build up to the story Pick out words and phrases which create an atmosphere of suspense	<u>Text Level:</u> Outline /describe the characters mentioned, plot, where it takes place	Discuss investigations re character/plot etc
Wednesday <i>Controversy</i>	<u>Sentence Level:</u> Begin to correct punctuation of text of week including paragraphs	<u>Shared reading:</u> Discuss what they have learned from the story so far.	<u>Guided reading:</u> <u>Focus:</u> As for Tuesday	<u>Sentence Level:</u> Children continue to correct text	Read simple revised sentences could they be improved further?
Thursday	<u>Sentence Level:</u> Discuss the links between paragraphs- how /why the author used paragraphs when he did	<u>Shared reading:</u> Children devise suitable questions to accompany the text. Discuss type of question- literal, deduction, inference	<u>Guided writing:</u> As for Tuesday	<u>Text Level:</u> All groups (except guided) Children to answer questions on text of week	Discuss answers could they be improved?
Friday	<u>Shared writing:</u> Recap on what they have discovered about the story. List words which indicate suspense.	<u>Shared writing:</u> Begin writing the next paragraph in the same style <i>modelling.</i>	<u>Guided writing:</u> As for Tuesday	<u>Text Level:</u> Write the next paragraph	Read children's work and finally Faulkner's.- compare

# Alpha Weekly Planning Example 2

Weekly Planning Year Group: 5/6 Top The Literacy Hour: Y6 TL Range: ~~Journaesthetic Writing~~ Text Reference... extracts from variety of genre

*Longer established stories etc*

*hisa*

Week: 7.3 Jan 22nd-26th	Whole Class Word/Sentence level	Whole Class Text Level	Guided Reading/Writing Teacher Guided Tasks	Independent Group Tasks	Plenary
Monday (Shorter session due to Assemb. used for: Spell test Words of week handwriting )	<u>Word Level:</u> Spelling test-doubling the final consonant (Given as a dictation)	<u>Word Level:</u> Investigating use of mnemonics to help remember spellings of words with unstressed vowels		Devise own mnemonics Handwriting practise is	Discuss some of their mnemonics
Tuesday	<u>Sentence Level:</u> Complex sentences: might help to introduce phrases and clauses e.g. who, where, when, in which, as etc. Give examples <i>not completed - football (Thurs)</i>	<u>Shared reading:</u> Read a variety of introductions and compare them. Illustrate how the framework is the same but words are added or changed to create different effects. How very simply they can be changed to flashback.	<u>b/g Guided writing:</u> <b>Focus:</b> Choose a genre to write story by deciding on audience. Discuss/write opening lines to fit flashback story	<u>r/y/o Text Level:</u> Children use framework to begin own story	<b>b/</b> Read introductions to story
Wednesday <i>Tues - sentence plus wed - shared begins Thursday</i>	<u>Sentence level:</u> Identify and correct missing punctuation <i>late start new system to be explained</i>	<u>Shared reading:</u> Using character description for Antonio can children use this as a framework to discuss a character they could use in their own story.	<u>o Guided writing:</u> <b>Focus:</b> Redraft using children's work from independent time <i>Monday - recall sentence level work.</i>	<u>b/g/r/y Text Level:</u> Continue to develop short story using intro from guided writing and framework for characters	<b>r/y</b> Read stories so far
Thursday <i>miss out due to previous alterations</i>	<u>Sentence level:</u> Read text - identify demarcated speech. Discuss rules. <i>← next week</i>	<u>Shared reading:</u> Children devise suitable questions to accompany the text. Discuss type of question - inferal, deduction, inference	<u>r/y Guided writing:</u> As for Wednesday	<u>b/g/o Text Level:</u> All groups (except guided) Children to answer questions on text of week	<b>o</b> Discuss answers could they be improved?
Friday	<u>Shared writing:</u> Children given intro to be continued with the emphasis on demarcated speech	<u>Shared writing:</u> Discuss suitable endings.	<u>b/g Guided writing:</u> <b>Focus:</b> As for Wednesday	<u>r/y/b/g Text Level:</u> Continue to develop short story in preparation for final copy next week - to presentation standard on PC.	<b>r/y/b/g</b> Read final paragraphs

Groups

- r -
- y -
- b -
- g -
- o -

Beta Weekly Planning Left Hand Side of Sheet Example 1

HT①  
WKC①  
Spring

WB 08101101 YR 6 W1F		Guided group tasks		
Whole class - shared reading & writing phonics, spelling, vocabulary & grammar				
M O N D A Y	Read 'Secret in the Stone' letters p. 33 check comprehension and discuss linkers to a boxing match.	Using white boards children to write one sentence to describe movement of part. Discuss that the linker words were used for each event.	Using basic version of 'Little Red Riding Hood' introduce children to word modification.  ①	Comprehension activity on letters p. 31 (includes question 4)  ②
T U E S D A Y	Review main/sub-ordinate clauses and re-ordering these. Introduce using dashes in place of commas in adding sub-ordinate clause.	Re-read 'Secret in Stone' and identify sentences with main/sub-clauses. Use white board to re-order these sentences.	②	③/4
W E D N E S D A Y	Discuss story within a story or asides. Examine Madame Mim's thought written as an aside in the extract.	Use whiteboards and in mixed ability pairs write different aside starting 'Nastyn was...'	③/4	⑤
T H U R S D A Y	Model writing asides - Use 'Little Red Riding Hood' as basic story and add asides mainly comprising of thoughts.	→	⑤	⑥
F R I D A Y	Reinforce use of Word Modification cards - Using first draft of story from Thurs pm session work through Word Modification.			Children to continue word modification and then write out second draft.

KEY

T= Teacher                      S.E.N.= Support  
I= Independent                OA= Other Adult

# Beta Weekly Planning Right Hand Side of Sheet Example 1

Independent group tasks		Plenary	Text, Word & Sentence Lev Objectives
<p>Word activity read on proverbs alts p 31 Extr. Lesson 3 s extr for groups (2)</p>	<p>Sentence activity kells p. 39 Extr put sentences from question ① into passage using various sentence starts</p>		<p><u>Text:</u> I. to understand aspect of narrative structure e • how chapters in a book (or paragraphs in short story / chapter) are linked. • how authors handle time eg. flashbacks. • how the passing of time is conveyed to the reader. II. to write own story using eg. flashback or a story within a story to convey the passing of time.</p> <p><u>Sentence:</u> 3. to revise work on complex sentences: • identifying main clauses • ways of connecting clauses • constructing complex sentences.</p> <p><u>Word:</u> 4. to revise and consolidate work from previous 4 terms on • unstressed vowel spellings in polysyllabic words</p> <p><u>Texts</u> kells unit 2.3 'The Sword in the Stone'</p>
①			
	②		
②	3/4		

HOMEWORK

Beta Weekly Planning Reverse of Sheet Example 1

	Indicators for future learning	English done at other times
M O N D A Y		
T U E S D A Y		
W E D N E S D A Y		<p><u>Spelling</u> - Units of Sound                      - Homework based on spelling</p>
T H U R S D A Y		<p>Using text from <i>Waterbury</i> show children to write first draft continuing story into second round of magic contest. Consider carefully tactics which may be used. Follow on including <del>etc</del> complex sentences in writing and modifying work on Friday &amp; so on</p>
F R I D A Y		

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Beta Weekly Planning Left Hand Side of Sheet Example 2

WB 22/10/01

Spring  
HT ①  
WK ③

Whole class: shared reading & writing phonics, spelling, vocabulary & grammar		Guided group tasks	
M O N D A Y	Read 'Funeral Blues' WH Auden (p56/7 The Works) - discuss comprehension - rhyme - syllabic rhythm - vocab.	→	* Figurative Language - Using 'Poetry Review' structure (100 lit Hours p.160) Complete group comprehension on 'Funeral Blues' WH Auden (1/2)
T U E S D A Y	Consider from Monday vocab use / themes relating to 'stopping'. Consider and the excitement in buildup to b'day party or actual event. Thought shower - vocab/themes associated for writing pm.	reverse of this	(3/4)
W E D N E S D A Y	Read together 'The Monster in the Garden' David Harner (p.406 The Works)	Examine-rhyme - repetition - rhythmic structure Do syllable count for lines, highlight repetition.	Redrafting poems from Tuesday pm. Examine with group vocabulary used and rhythmic structure. (1/2)
T H U R S D A Y	Revisiting Highwayman and recap story content. Examine structure as wed / Mon Read as a class and identify models relating	to specific parts of poem. Give small groups set lines to learn	(3/4)
F R I D A Y	Practise given lines for 'Highwayman' and then with class teacher acting as conductor perform poem.	→ Discuss success	(5)

KEY

T= Teacher                      S.E.N.= Support  
I= Independent                OA= Other Adult



Beta Weekly Planning Right Hand Side of Sheet Example 2

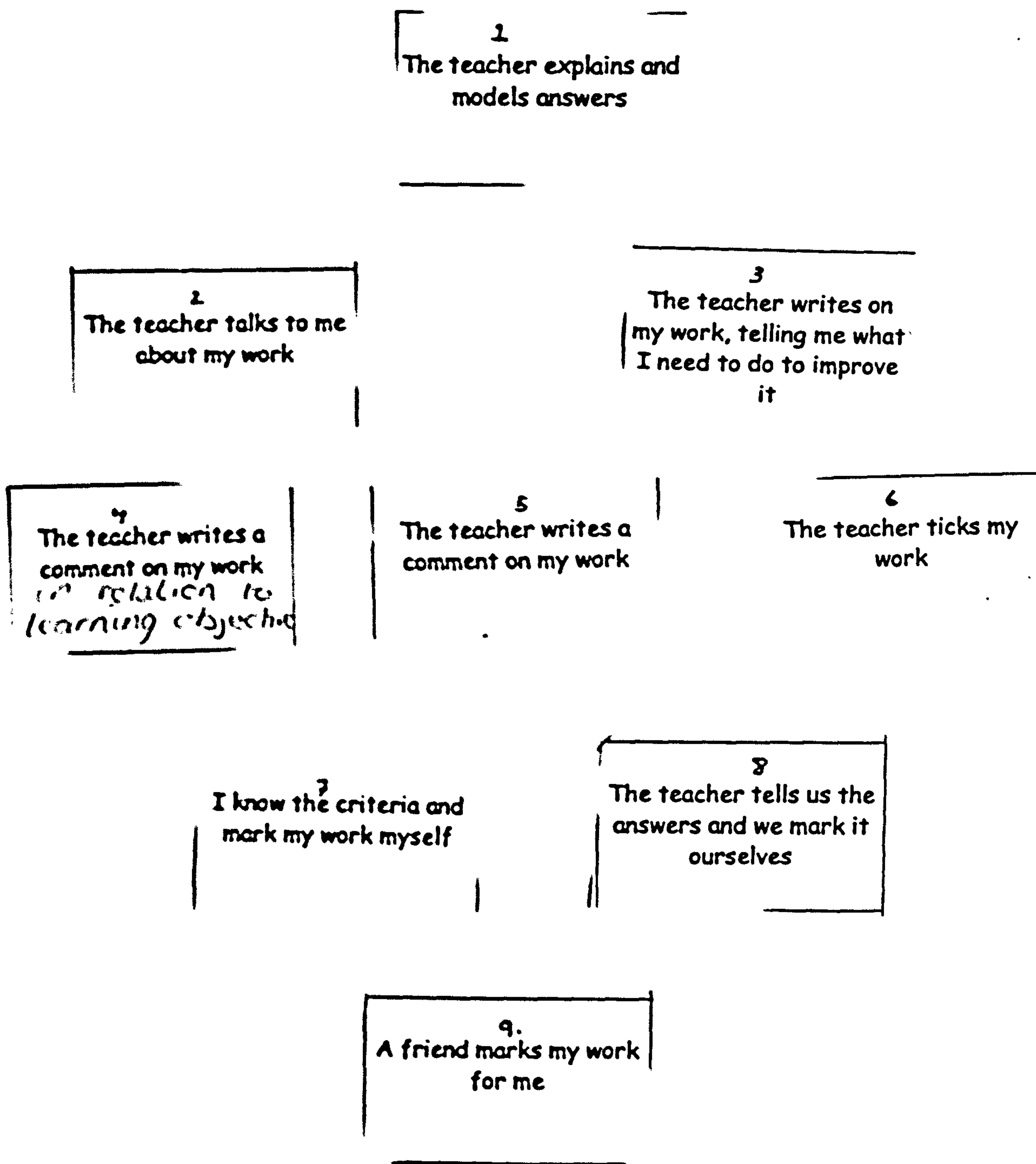
Independent group tasks			Plenary	Text, Word & Sentence Lev Objectives
Consolidation of work on complex sentences from previous weeks (p. 16 Scholastic Vocabulary) & using connectives (3)	Consolidation/ Revision of prefix/root/suffix -building words and checking accuracy using dictionary. (p. 11 Scholastic Vocab) (5)	Comprehension based on poetry Gp (1/2) Unit 5 Bt. 3 Gp (3/4) unit 20 Bt. 2 Gp (5) unit 23 Bt. 2 (4)	* Bring together words made by prefix/suffix group and discuss roots + similar words.	<u>Text</u> 3 to recognise how poet manipulate words: • for their quality of sound eg. rhythm, rhyme • for their annotations for multiple meaning of figurative language. <u>Sentence</u> 3. to revise work on complex sentences: • identifying main-clause • ways of connecting clauses • constructing complex sentences, appropriate use of punctuation <u>Word</u> 3i to use independent spelling strategies • using known suffixes/ prefixes.
(1)	(2)	(5)	Read redrafted poems from gps (112)	
(5)	(4)	(3)		
(2)	(1)	(5) - homophone game		11 <u>Texts</u> - Monitor in lesson • 'Funeral Blues' W.H. Auden (The Works) • Highwayman 'Nags' • Scholastic - Vocabulary 100 list Hrs • Ginn Key Comp. Bt 2 + 3.
(4)	(3)	(1/2) - comp 5		11

HOMEWORK

Beta Weekly Planning Reverse of Sheet Example 2

	Indicators for future learning	English done at other times
M O N D A Y		
T U E S D A Y		Writing 1 <sup>st</sup> draft of 'Funeral Blues' adaptation (with Aucter) leading on from poetry session in Literacy hr.
W E D N E S D A Y		Units of sound spelling.
T H U R S D A Y		
F R I D A Y		

Class: G11 W12 2010/11.



①

The teacher explains and models answers

③

The teacher talks to me about my work

②

The teacher writes a comment on my work in relation to learning objectives

④

The teacher writes on my work, telling me what I need to do to improve it

⑤

The teacher writes a comment on my work

⑥

The teacher tells us the answers and we mark it ourselves

⑦

I know the criteria and mark my work myself

⑧

A friend marks my work for me

⑨

The teacher ticks my work

The teacher explains and models answers

The teacher writes on my work, telling me what I need to do to improve it

The teacher talks to me about my work

I know the criteria and mark my work myself

The teacher writes a comment on my work in relation to learning objectives

A friend marks my work for me

The teacher ticks my work

The teacher writes a comment on my work

The teacher tells us the answers and we mark it ourselves

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November.

Directed and Reported speech.

1. She whispered that she hated him = Reported ✓

"I hate him," she whispered.

2. The man shouted at the dog. "Go home" = Directed. ✓

The man shouted at the dog to go home

3. "Did you find the tunnel?" She asked. = Directed. ✓

She asked if he found the tunnel

4. The man shouted at the dog to go home = Reported ✓

Example 1 from Bethany

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2000

Direct and reported  
Speech

1 She whispered that she hated him. - R ✓

"I hate him," she whispered. ✓

2 The man shouted at the dog.  
"Go home!" - D ✓

"Go home!" the man shouted to the dog. X

3 "Did you find the tunnel?" she asked. - D ✓

She asked whether she had found the tunnel.  
~~She asked did you find the tunnel.~~ X

Example 2 from Bethany

12.06.01 2001  
Report on Dukeshouse Wood (year 5/6)  
Purpose: To tell the teachers who came, how  
Paragraph good I think it was.  
D . . . . .

Example of Julie's Work from Amanda's Class

<sup>Jul</sup> A 5 day visit to Dukes House Wood  
with Year 5/6.  
Purpose: The purpose of this report is to report to  
Mr Kerr because he wasn't there and he wants  
to find out about the trip to Dukes  
House Wood -

Example of Susan's Work from Amanda's Class



Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> October  
Crazy Shoe  
Shuffle Sequencing  
Activity

Example 1 of Stephen's Work for Bethany's Class

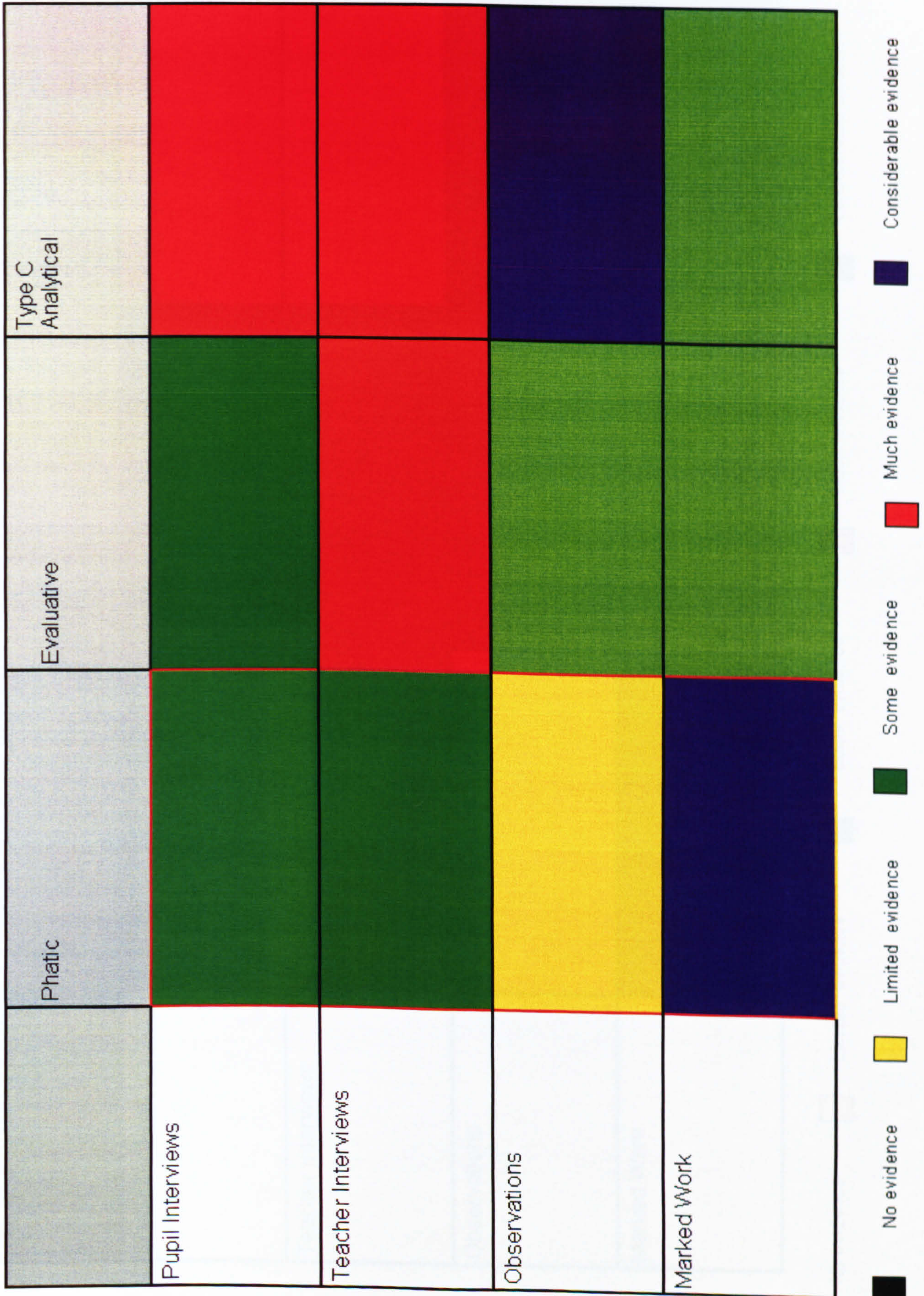
Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2000  
Directed and reported  
Speech

Example 2 of Stephen's Work from Bethany's Class

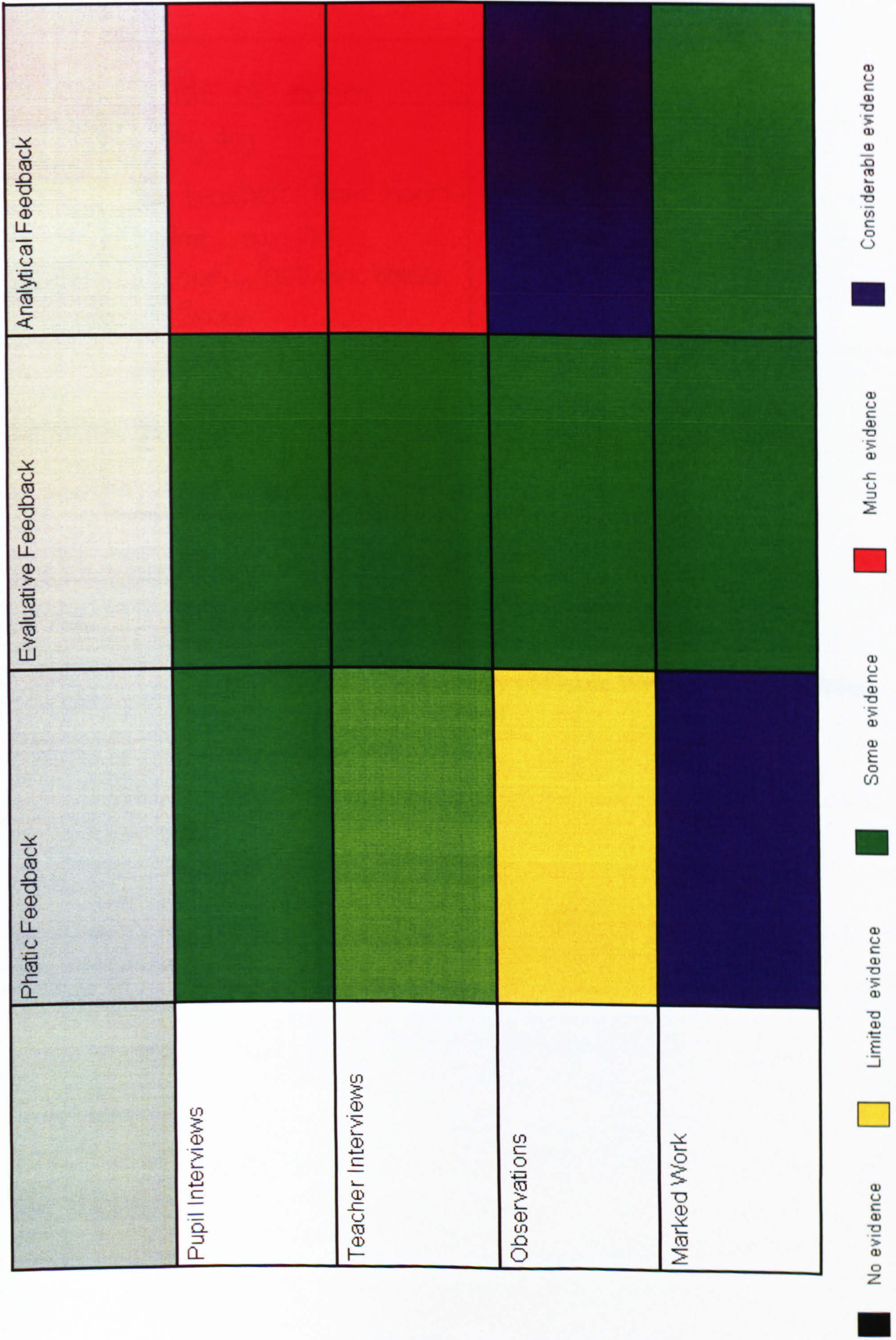
<p>Amanda                  Overview of written comments from total of 40 pieces of literacy work collected                  Includes narratives, comprehensions, analysis of poetry, comparisons of texts</p>		
<p>Phatic feedback                   33/40 ticks                  4/40 smiley faces                  5/40 well done                  2/40 good understanding                  1/40 well thought out answers                   (100% of all written work has feedback which is phatic.)</p>	<p>Evaluative Feedback                  (30% of all written work has feedback which is evaluative)</p>	<p>Analytical Feedback                  (30% of all written work has feedback which is analytical, 12.5 % is related to the LO 17.5 % relates to 'hidden objectives')</p>
<p>Ticks                  Ticks                  Good understanding Jackie                  Ticks                  ticks                  Ticks                  Smiley face                  Ticks                  Smiley face                  Ticks and smiley face                  Ticks                  Ticks                  Well done                  Ticks                  Well done Brian                  Ticks                  Ticks                  Ticks                  Ticks                  Ticks                  Well done Brian                  ticks                  Ticks                  ticks                  Ticks                  ticks                  Ticks                  ticks                  ticks                  Ticks and smiley face                  ticks                  ticks                  Ticks                  Some well thought out answers here,                  Sarah                  Ticks                  Ticks                  Good understanding Jackie                  Well done                  Ticks                  Ticks                  Ticks                  ticks                  ticks                  ticks                  Well done Ryan                  ticks                  smiley face                  ticks                  ticks                  good answers Sarah*                  ticks                  ticks                  Circling punctuation errors*                   Underlining spelling errors*                   Underlining spelling errors*                   Underlining spelling</p>	<p>Good summary                   Excellent summary, Sarah, well done                   Good definitions, Ryan                   These definitions are very good. Well done.                   This was a difficult text to punctuate. Jackie, well done*                   Well done Jackie. These are good observations                   Excellent observations.                   Well done, you have met the LO.                   You have corrected most of the missing punctuation, Ryan*                   This was a difficult text to punctuate. This is a good effort*                   Well done Faye, you have punctuated this well *</p>	<p>Try to make your answers this clear next time.                   Highlighting that something is missing using a line                   When you quote a text, perhaps you could use a phrase like "It states in the text..."                   Providing further example in the text                   Explaining-its more for emphasis                   Correcting spelling error*                   Next time, do you think you could leave larger spaces between your words when you are writing*                   Next time don't draw your table as long and just extend it as you go along-that way it would have fitted on previous page*</p>

Bethany Overview of written comments from total of 60 pieces of literacy work collected Includes narratives, comprehensions, analysis of poetry, comparisons of texts		
Phatic feedback 100% of written work has feedback which is phatic	Evaluative feedback (30% of written work has feedback which is evaluative)	Analytical Feedback (27% of written work has feedback which is analytical. 11% is related to the LO 16% relates to 'hidden objectives)
<p>A very good attempt Emma Well answered Natalie Ticks Underlining spelling error* Circling punctuation* Ticks Good work Natalie Well done Natalie ticks Excellent understanding today. Well done! Underlining spelling errors* Ticks Ticks Circling punctuation* Ticks Well done. You have answered thoughtfully. Have a Merit Ticks Ticks Well done Neil. Fabulous independent work. Have a Merit Well done Neil Ticks Ticks Ticks Have a merit Ticks Ticks ticks ticks Ticks Ticks Ticks Well done. Have a merit Ticks Some good answers Ticks A good try Good work Michaela Some good attempts Tick Ticks Good Michaela Well done. Well checked Well done Stephen Well done stephen ticks Ticks You worked well ticks Good answers Natalie ticks Ticks Good Have a merit Ticks Good answers Good Natalie A good start Good you worked well today ticks Ticks Well done Fantastic work Emma, you have reached the extension and have been making up your own sentences</p>	<p>Good word matching Neil  you worked really well at finding evidence today and showed a good understanding.  A good plan Michaela  Good complex sentence work.  An excellent effort Neil. Remember to read it through to check it makes sense.*  Excellent group work on complex sentences.  Some good mnemonics  Fantastic changes in perspective!  You sequenced this work properly, well done.  Excellent connectives .  Good word choices  Excellent work on different sentence starts  Fantastic work on clauses. *Have a merit  Excellent work with semi colons.  Remember capital letters for names*  Good work-you have used connectives well*  Good use of semi-colons*. Have a merit for your work today.  Good Natalie, you are using adverbs well and arte trying with parenthetic commas*</p>	<p>Can you think of a sentence for 'too'?</p> <p>Good work..can you make this one into the active voice? The clouds cried....</p> <p>Models example: I enjoy eating...</p> <p>Does this only apply to mice?</p> <p>Natalie, don't forget to change the tense and add that or if*</p> <p>Your last two points need more explanation</p> <p>Look at where you should use commas*</p> <p>Please check the sounds of the words I have marked</p> <p>Circling-Capital letters for name places!*</p> <p>Good answers but remember to use full sentences next time* Remember people's names and proper nouns need a capital letter*</p> <p>Circling-Capital letters for name places* correcting spelling error* correcting spelling error* correcting grammatical error* correcting-the semi-colon goes at the end of a phrase*</p>

School A Distribution of Evidence



## School B Distribution of Evidence



Title of poem	Poetic form
my dog	kenning ✓
A teacher from harrow	limerick ✓
what am I?	riddle ✓
suki/autumn trees.	Haiku ✓
Space	Cinquain ✓
You	Tanka ✓
friends	Free verse ✓
I said my pyjamas.	Nonsense verse ✓
well done.	

Example of Phatic Written Feedback from Amanda

Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> January

Funeral Verses

The poem is about a man who has died. ✓

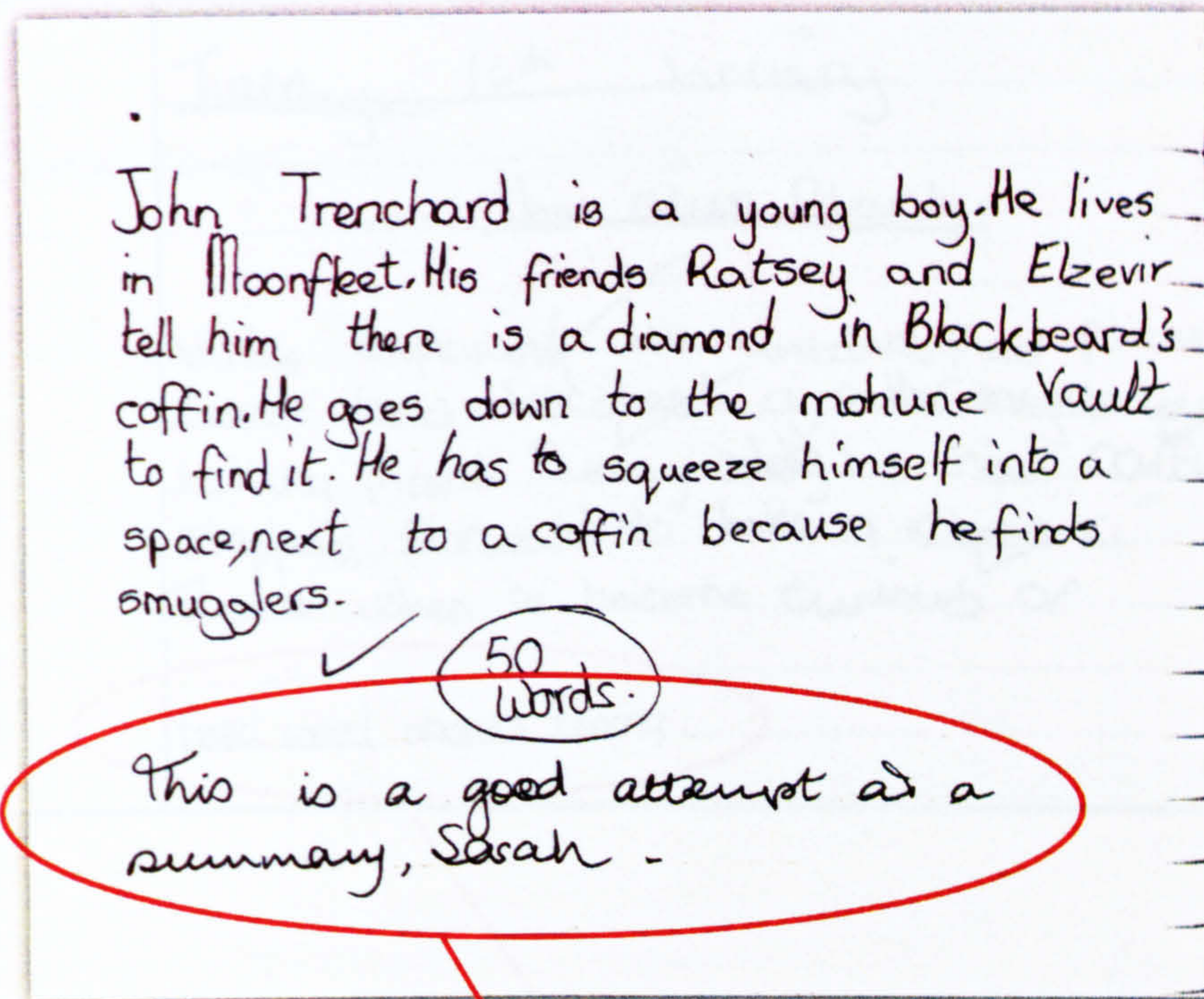
The poem has <sup>n</sup> rhyming couplets on each verse and it <sup>also</sup> has syllables 10 to 12, there are four lines in each verse. ✓

'Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone?' I like this phrase because he or she wants silence. ✓

'He was my North, my South, my East and West?' I like this phrase because he meant every thing to the poet so he could be in his North, South, East and West. ✓

Well answered Kelly.

Example of Phatic Feedback in Written Work from Bethany



Example of Evaluative Written Feedback from Amanda



Tuesday 16th January

The alien planet.

While exploring the unidentified planet, Zerat had discovered a rather mysteriously looking plant. Being odd, he had ~~carefully~~ stepped forward to take a closer look. That's when he became curious of

Good word choices Emma.

Example of Evaluative Written Feedback from Bethany

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December

~~Group Reading~~

Name of the book

The name of the book is called  
Earth Watch. ✓

How the writer introduces the book

He introduces the book by naming all the people who made, writer, illustrated the book and just fitted the contents page on the bottom. ✓

How the information in the book is organised

It is organised by putting information into columns and the diagrams are where the

Stephen, you had a very good understanding of how a non-chronological book works. Have a merit! 🌟

Example of Evaluative Written Feedback from Bethany

Examples of Feedback in relation to 'Hidden Objectives' in Written Work

So it means ~~is~~ persuaded or  
pleaded, begged. ✓

Supply - means like a day supply  
of gum all the gum you get in  
a day. ✓

Nourishment - (Means) no food or  
goodness, ✓

4. No I <sup>sp</sup> would not have liked  
Kenneth because all he does  
is chew gum and his teeth  
would be all horrible and I  
~~says~~ in the ~~text~~. ✓

Good, Brian keep using evidence  
from the text.

Example of Feedback in  
relation to 'Hidden Objectives'  
from Amanda

between the half-opened curtains  
woke Ben. ✓

7. Marco wondered, if he was  
going to be good enough to  
play for the team. ✓

Good group work.

8. Remember proper nouns, like names, need capital  
letters.

**Example of Feedback in relation to  
'Hidden Objectives' from Bethany**

## Check and Change.

To *edit* your writing, work through your **Check and Change** card. Tick the box when you have finished.

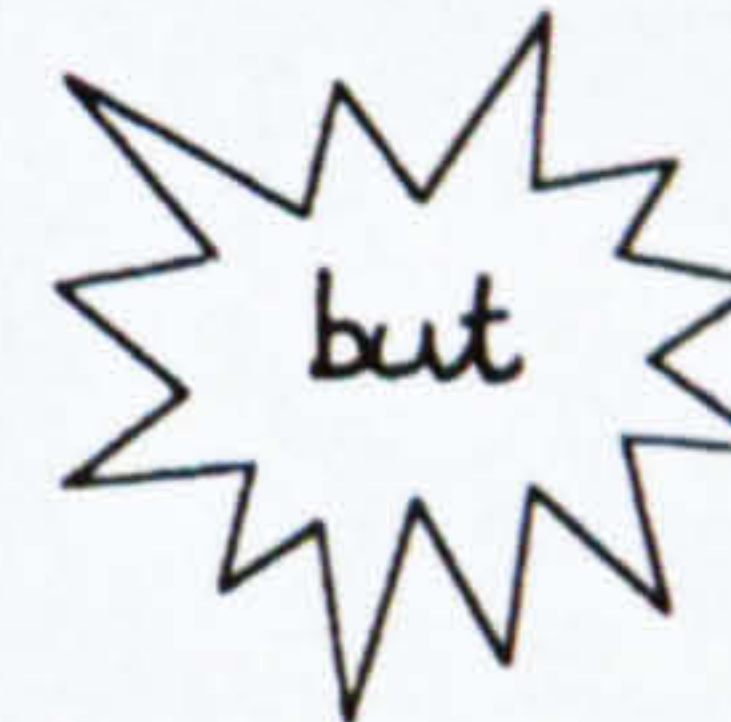
Read it. Does it make sense?




Underline any spellings you are unsure about. Can you see the word in the classroom, in your book or writing file? If not use a dictionary.




How many times have you used **and** and **then**? Can you use other connectives?




Do your sentences start in lots of different ways?

*Next... Just then... Until then...*

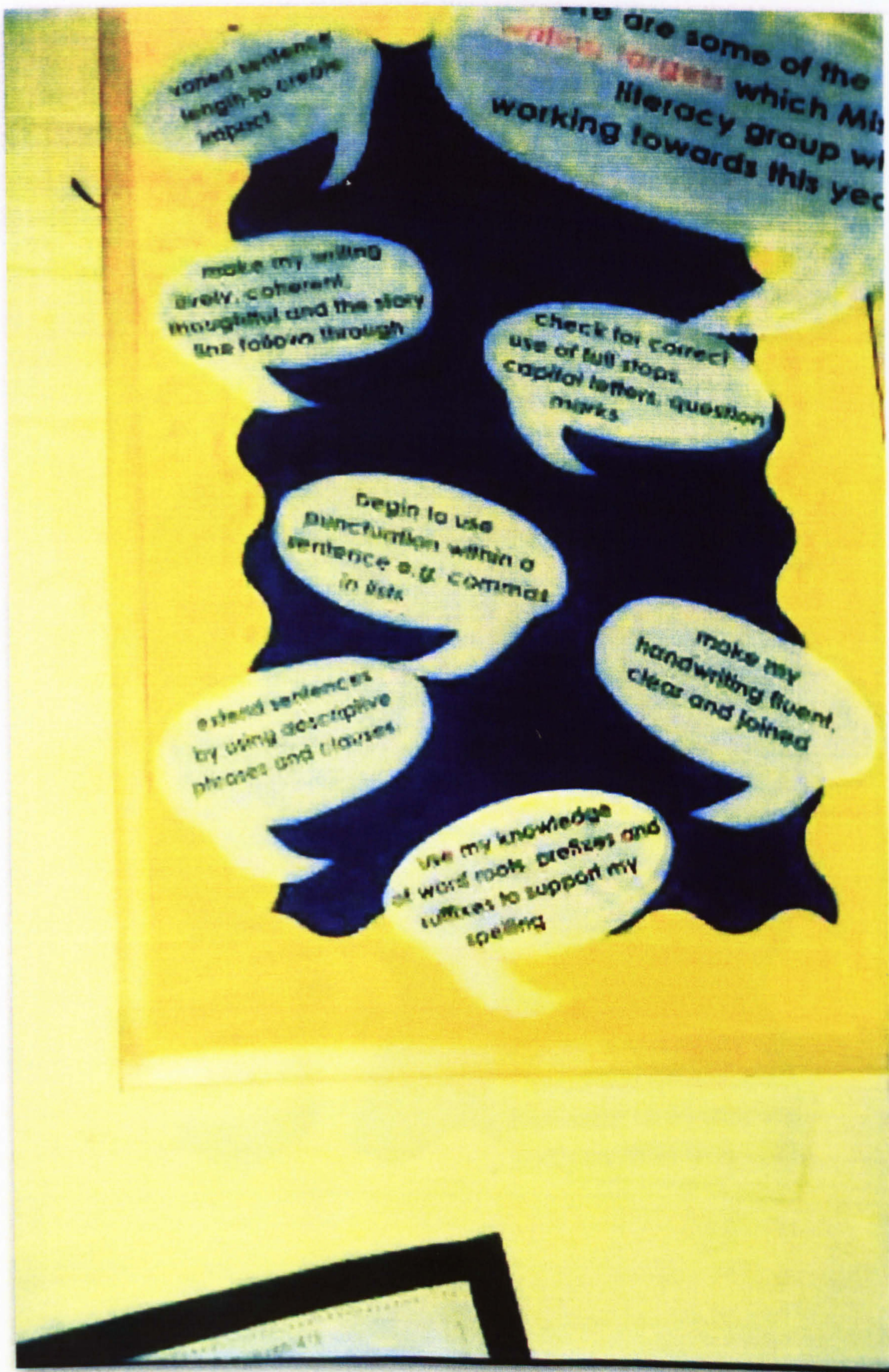
*In the mean time... Later...*

*Suddenly... Finally...*

Have you added lots of interesting *detail* to your writing?




**Read through your work once more before you give it to your Response Partner.**



Here are some of the **reading targets** which Miss [Name] literacy group will be working towards this year.

to contribute to shared discussion about texts responding to and building on the views of others

to distinguish between autobiographical and biographical text

to be familiar with some established authors

when discussing a text or answering a question I will try to justify my answers with evidence from the text

join sentences by using connectives e.g. if, when although rather etc.

work out in my head the difference between two numbers such as 3994 and 9007