Caught in the Grip of a Clockwork Universe: jazz-hands, razzamatazz and the lure of *techné* in formative assessment in GCSE resit English.

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Abstract

This thesis chronicles the conduct of a small-scale, mixed-method, practitioner-research investigation. It is also coupled with an account of my own personal journey through this PhD. The research reported here involves presenting accounts of the lived experiences of my GCSE English students, the GSCE English teachers who are my colleagues, and myself. It explores the reasons behind the troubling lack of impact of pedagogic interventions predicated upon research in the field of formative assessment in the context of GCSE resit English as enacted in the FE college based in the North-East of England where I work. The research initially began with the exploration of the use of dialogue and oracy as pedagogic devices which I developed as part of a what I hoped would be an innovative formative assessment strategy, through which I aimed to mitigate students' negative perceptions of the study of the subject of GCSE English. It is of course understandable that for most of my post-16 resit GCSE students, having to re-take a subject following an unsuccessful experience of publicly "failing" a GCSE English examination, often results in a loss of their confidence in themselves as learners. This loss of confidence is frequently compounded by a disengagement and lack of interest in learning GCSE English - a subject in which they have all too obviously been found wanting or, worse still, have been publicly labelled following their GSCE examinations as simply being not good enough.

Data from this study indicate that the problem that gave impetus to this thesis is grounded in issues surrounding the implementation, or perhaps more accurately, misinterpretation of the theory and practice of formative assessment research in educational contexts. It is reasonably plausible therefore, to infer that the problem surrounding the troubling lack of impact of formative assessment strategies encountered in my college may not be an isolated case and could be prevalent in other FE colleges across England. This thesis investigates why written formative assessment is not living up to the promises that the findings of highly-respected, peer-reviewed educational research suggest that it should. It also investigates why the formative assessment feedback, painstakingly provided to students by their teachers, is not successfully closing the gap between students' current and potential levels of achievement.

A pressing issue here is that too many young people are still not passing their GCSE English resit exams despite the considerable efforts of their teachers in FE colleges to provide them with robust and rigorous written formative assessment feedback. As the research has developed and progressed, and as I incrementally engaged more critically and deeply with key literature in this field of study, so too has my understanding of the complexity of the problem. As a result of my research journey, the focus of the thesis has now shifted towards an exploration of the 'grip' that preoccupations with technique – first described by Aristotle

(384-322 BC) as *techné*, cited in Dunne (1993) have tightened their hold over the practices of vocational teachers in FE colleges in England.

This thesis also critically discusses how, and why, the unintentional displacement of the first principle of formative assessment, active learning, (Black and Wiliam, 2009) has become lost in preoccupations with assessment techniques. In the course of this research, I have also become more aware of the dangers of uncritically accepting a set of formative assessment techniques (*techné*) and making the assumption that the simple application of a technique in practice will provide a 'quick-fix' to complex and enduring educational problems.

A further focus of this study is upon the neglect in FE of multi-modal assessment, capable of taking into account all 3 domains of learning, cognitive, affective and psychomotor which take the lived experience of learners in FE seriously. This thesis also brings to light how the same neglect of multi-modal assessment, may prove to be pivotal in bringing about a more balanced and holistic approach to formative assessment in vocational education contexts. It also highlights the adverse consequences of inauthentic approaches to assessment for FE learners. In addition, this thesis explores the potential of alternative pedagogic approaches in AfL assessment strategies that can be deployed to bring about active learning including, oracy and storytelling. Finally, a deeper understanding of the relationship between authentic assessment techniques, meaningful pedagogy and the purposes of education are also discussed. The findings and subsequent recommendations that unfold in this thesis, are the story it tells.

Key Words: Assessment for Learning; Formative Assessment; GCSE English Resits; Oracy; Story.

Chapter One: Finding New Ways to Fail

Starting Position for the Research

As a proud graduate of the Further Education (FE) sector myself, I am privileged to be a champion and an ambassador for the importance of the FE sector in terms of offering learners potentially life-changing second chances in education. This is particularly important to learners whose experiences of learning while in compulsory education in the school system may have been less than optimal (of which I, myself, have personal first-hand experience). I am also heartened by how the FE sector provides gateways into employment and progression into higher education for many marginalised and disadvantaged learners from lower socio-economic groups. I was born locally in Sunderland, in the North-East of England and my research is both symbolic of, and important to, the personal and professional values which guide my practice as a teacher.

This thesis is connected to a realistic problem in practice faced on an almost daily basis by front-line teachers of GCSE English and maths in FE colleges to post-16 learners throughout England, namely the failure of written formative assessment to deepen student engagement in learning and raise learner achievement. This research is also careful not to be over ambitious in its endeavour. It strives to build the capacity of teachers in FE to improve practice in the teaching, learning and assessment of GCSE English through formative assessment strategies which not only encourage but require active learning. As Sarason (1993) notes, real-life educational issues in context are best understood by those who are required to implement them - the teachers who in the end, are tasked with the responsibility of making education good in practice.

The final enduring educational issue which gave impetus to this thesis concerns the matter of social justice, that in the second decade of the 21st Century, too many young adults are still leaving Secondary education and FE without the necessary functional English skills to enable them to access their human civil rights to become active citizens. Furthermore, many young adults lack the confidence, knowledge and skills to access higher education or progress into employment. Many young people who come to college have been repeatedly and publicly 'failed' by the schools' sector. On the face of it, this might seem to be a bold and unsubstantiated statement, however, to give some context to this, as educators, we need to recognise the serious enduring educational issues at the heart of the matter, namely access to, and inclusion in, an education worthy of the name.

At the same time, the attempts of professionals in FE also appear to be unsuccessful in meeting the GCSE English Language development needs of learners. Ironically, current formative assessment practices paradoxically appear to be in danger of positioning the student as a passive recipient of their educational experiences of studying GCSE English in FE as opposed to helping them to become the active learners that Wiliam (1998) advocates.

What appears to be missing from current formative assessment practices is that the very first principle of formative assessment, which is active learning, is being underestimated, overlooked and ignored. The fundamental purpose of formative assessment is to keep the learner active. Oddly, enough what is currently happening in practice is that while the teacher is actively engaged in providing detailed comments and suggestions for further improvement, the learner is not. Learners' responses to feedback provided by their teachers are allowed to remain at best too passive, at worst, non-existent.

The second enduring educational issue which prompted this study relates to the tension between the theory of formative assessment and experiences of formative assessment in practice. Tensions, problems and dilemmas in the provision of formative assessment in practice are repeatedly being encountered by teachers of GCSE English in FE colleges across England.

It is possible that well-intended and much-needed educational reform, which aims to offer second-chance opportunities for learners to acquire GCSE qualifications in English and maths appears to have become caught up in dysfunctional rituals surrounding the provision of and learners' passive responses to written formative assessment. The educational problem at the heart of this study, therefore, concerns the pre-occupation in FE with a single formative assessment strategy (written feedback) and this appears to be inhibiting the use of other possibly more powerful combinations of formative assessment strategies.

As discussed above, a key question here is that if current assessment practices are having little or low impact upon student learning and achievement in relation to the amount of time FE tutors spend in providing this feedback, then why do teachers continue to use written formative assessment across the FE sector? This puzzling phenomenon suggests that we urgently need to ask ourselves how could teachers 'do' formative assessment differently?

This small-scale, research study also investigates multimodal pedagogical approaches to the provision of formative assessment and learner feedback and the extent to which they can

encourage and support active learning and a more holistic learning experience in the context of GCSE English resit courses in a FE College.

As this research is based upon experiences of front-line practice, it seems appropriate therefore to draw upon the work of Dewey (1933), who reminds us that as human beings we should be mindful that we are all always fallible and therefore for this reason we need to keep an open mind and be able to learn from our mistakes. He points out that experience is all that human beings have at our disposal to help us to make sense of our world and that is why we must not only take experience seriously, but also be able to learn from experience and from our mistakes. In this respect, he asks us to note that educational research needs to begin in experience, examined through the lens of a pragmatic epistemology that involves problem-finding, problem-solving and critique (Dewey 1910, Sennett 2008).

As already discussed above, a central theme of this thesis is to understand why current formative assessment practices in GCSE resit English in FE colleges appear to be unable to successfully meet the English development needs of learners who have to date been failed by a system of formal schooling based upon continual testing through written examinations.

This ongoing educational challenge is explored in this thesis which is set in the context of a large General Further Education college (GFE) in the North-East of England. Particular attention is given to the problem of successfully supporting the GCSE English Language development needs of this group of learners. A point worth reinforcing is that this thesis highlights the importance of putting attention and effort into creating opportunities to explore improvements in assessment theory and practice in vocational education in England (Levine, 2008), rather than attempting to provide quick-fix solutions to over-simplified, complex enduring educational issues.

The Grip of Technique over Practice

Part of the title of this thesis is borrowed from the work of Joseph Dunne (1993), an Irish teacher-educator and a philosopher of education. Confronted by the introduction of Behavioural Objectives Model (Bloom et al, 1956), Dunne describes how he came to reject the notion that everything essential in teaching can be dis-embedded from the values, purposes and traditions from which it emerged; the contexts in which it currently takes place; and the urgencies and contingencies of the social and material realities of what constitutes what we mean by good work in context in that practice. In the case of this thesis, the values, purposes, traditions and context in which this study of assessment practice is set, is embedded

in GCSE English classrooms in my college. The work of Dunne, (1993) will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, Literature Review.

The Overarching Aim of the Research and Key Research Questions

This study begins with a problem or disturbance (Dewey 1933, 1938) which stems from the worrying lack of impact of formative assessment pedagogic interventions in GCSE resit English. The original aim of the research initially began with the exploration of the merits and use of oracy and dialogue as an alternative pedagogic device which could be developed into part of an innovative formative assessment strategy. The current assessment strategy for GCSE English within my college is heavily punctuated with written feedback. This alternative pedagogic assessment device attempted to help mitigate students' negative perceptions of the study of the subject of GCSE English.

The research begins with 3 key research questions:

- Why are teachers spending so much time preparing written feedback to meet quality and audit standards which students seldom read and rarely act upon?
- What is wrong with Assessment for Learning, why is there a disconnect between the theory and practice of AfL?
- How can the practice of formative assessment be sharpened so there is a more holistic approach to AfL which takes seriously the lived experiences of young people?

As the research developed and subsequent themes unfolded, the focus of the research shifted.

This thesis now presents evidence to support the claim that the technique (*techné)* of Assessment for Learning (AfL), namely written formative assessment, is being applied in a mechanical and instrumental way which is encouraging not active, but passive learning instead. To put it another way, evidence from this thesis suggests that formative assessment is being applied in GCSE English contexts in my college of Further Education which is based in the North-East of England in such a way that at best overlooks, and at worst, decidedly discourages the first and most important pedagogic principle of formative assessment which is active learning.

This thesis contends that these instrumental practices and preoccupations with assessment techniques run the risk of not only becoming ever more un-productive, but also run the risk of locking much needed policy reforms in education and scarce funding for the improvement of student attainment in GCSE English Language into predictable failure Sarason (1993).

This practitioner-research study centres upon post-16 GCSE English students. Firstly, its intention is to explore the disconnect between the theory of Assessment for Learning and AfL in practice and if, or how, the practice of formative assessment can be improved and if the research could suggest more active learning approaches to formative assessment. The research seeks to explore the possible reasons for the disconnect between theory and practice and despite teacher's best efforts current Assessment for Learning approaches are not having the sufficient impact in closing the gap between students' current performance and future attainment.

Secondly, the study seeks to identify the extent to which Assessment for Learning strategies (AfL), coupled with more multimodal and holistic approaches to formative feedback, (which employ both written, verbal feedback and other sensory modes of assessment), can contribute to improving student engagement and achievement as well as enhancing learners' perseverance and resilience and increasing learners' self-confidence.

The work of Clarke (2001) is particularly helpful in providing practical examples of how teachers can unlock the potential of formative assessment in action and how a range of alternative approaches to the provision of formative assessment might be put to work to improve and support deeper levels of learner engagement through active learning and improve learner achievement.

Thirdly, and finally, this study also seeks to explore the influence of oracy as a pedagogic device (Bernstein, 1996) in the provision of formative assessment and the development of language skills within the feedback processes involved in the study of GSCE English, in order to deepen learner engagement, increase learner autonomy and confidence as well as foster positive behaviours and attitudes towards learning.

Moving the subject of oracy and dialogue forward, the works of Vygotsky (1978) and Carter (2000) are of particular interest in the context of dialogical approaches to learning and assessment. Both authors above emphasise the importance of listening, interaction and dialogue and the positive impact this can have on language and cognitive development in zones of proximal development (ZPD) in which collaborative and immersive learning can take place.

From a socio-cultural perspective, Vygotsky (1978), foregrounds the link between thinking and speaking. He argues that talking is necessary to deepen and develop thinking, clarify learning, support meaning-making and encourage cognitive development. Vygotsky (1978) contends

that collaborative learning can be achieved by encouraging learners to engage in dialogue and conversations. He draws attention to how, as human beings, we speak before we write. He argues that oracy, has always been a pre-cursor of language and literacy development. He reminds teachers of the impact of socio-cultural factors in the importance of recognising the relationship development of language and thought, and the importance of recognising the relationship between the two.

It is important to note that this thesis does not set out to rule out the use of written feedback. It does, however, seek to discover the extent to which other approaches to formative assessment might provide a more balanced, multimodal approach and more useful ways of providing assessment feedback to learners. It is hoped that in the longer term, the findings of this research might inform the development of assessment policy in the FE college in which this study is set.

How the Principles of Formative Assessment Became Reduced to Empty Rituals

As a front-line practitioner, in my experience, there is increasing pressure and academic tensions which require curriculum managers in FE colleges to operate between two 'worlds'. The first is a world of evidence and metrics of student outcomes and achievement. The second is a world of imperatives which require the auditing and micro-management of recording evidence of performance measures in the form of robust and rigorous written formative assessment feedback. This is often accompanied by increasing demands upon practitioners to evidence learner progress in regard to the written feedback offered to students, with the aim of helping them to improve. It is important to note however that in all of the above, no attention is paid to the extent to which students are active in, or responsible for, securing improvements in their own learning.

It is also worth reinforcing the point that current assessment methods operating in the FE college, which forms the site of this study, rely almost solely upon formative assessment feedback provided in written format. The over-arching ethos of the College's current assessment policy in which this study is set, has become more dominated by quality and audit checks and other measures demanded in order to provide evidence to demonstrate student progress. This written medium, all too often, only measures narrow progress related to target grade. It does not capture the more holistic measures of progress in relation to improvements in student experience and confidence, or as Dunne (1995) describes then, qualities of mind and character which include attitudes and behaviours towards the learning of GCSE English Language in general.

In addition, positive progress outputs and high grades for GCSE English resits are key quantifiable factors within OFSTED's and the organisation's measured outcomes for student progress. It could be argued that in FE contexts today, there is an increasing requirement for teachers to evidence written learner feedback and standardise the format in which it is delivered, to ensure consistent quality against these calculable benchmarks for performative rather than educational purposes (Ball, 2010).

There are three key points that are worthy of discussion here. Firstly, the principles of formative assessment involve much more than the performative provision of written formative assessment. For example, Clarke provides a range of practical examples of how dialogue, collaborative learning, questioning, critique, closing the gap strategies, wait time, no hands up, the provision of time in class to act upon feedback, the use of process objectives and success criteria are all formative assessment strategies that can be used in practice in ways which encourage active learning. Clarke (2001) also offers evidence of how these strategies have been found to contribute to improvements in pupil learning and assessment in the schools' sector.

Opening up spaces where active learning (Clarke 2001) can happen for students who can engage in formative assessment activities form the bedrock of this study. A particular focus in this thesis is upon an exploration of dialogical methods of feedback and the use of oracy as pre-cursors of literacy and wider skills development within the teaching, learning and assessment of GCSE resit English. The work of Clarke (2005) is also particularly helpful in drawing attention to the importance of making time for students to read and act upon written formative feedback in class to 'close the gap' between their current and potential achievement. It is the intention of this thesis to explore this in more detail. Clarke's research has helped me to see how this strategy is currently absent from the formative assessment practices of the GCSE English team in my institution.

Secondly, the provision of detailed and constructive formative assessment on student scripts is extremely time-consuming for teachers and takes up too much valuable time and energy. Thirdly, this problem is further compounded by the fact that highly committed teachers in FE colleges are spending scarce resources and precious time in providing detailed and constructive formative feedback for their students, only to observe that their students, in many cases, seldom read, let alone act upon the feedback offered to them by their tutors.

It is important therefore to consider how formative feedback information can be used to promote active learning. This brings us to question of the extent to which the students are

required and held accountable for using formative assessment to feed-forward in terms of closing the gap between their current and potential levels of achievement?

To sum up, much needed and well-intended techniques of formative assessment are currently caught up in an expensive and dysfunctional ritual. This empty ritual centres around the pre-occupation with a single formative assessment strategy (written feedback) and that this is inhibiting the use of other potentially more powerful combinations of other assessment strategies. It is argued in this thesis that this single formative assessment strategy is having little, not enough, or even no impact upon student learning and achievement and underscores Sarason's argument (1993) surrounding how educational developments become locked into predictable failure.

It is likely that similar assessment policies and audit trails operate in many FE colleges and other learning institutions across England. However, faced as I am with the problem that my College's current approach to the provision of formative assessment is not having a positive impact on the learning and achievements of our students, it would be remiss of me not to try to better understand why this is the case and to try to figure out what might be done to address this problem in practice.

In short, this study, seeks to discover how more discursive, multimodal and dynamic educational approaches to formative assessment might encourage and increase active learning among students.

The Neglect of the Affective and Psychomotor Domain in Assessment Theory and Practice

The neglect, underestimation, and under-utilisation of the affective and psychomotor domains in assessment theory and practice is foregrounded in the work of Hyland (2018). Hyland argues that attending to considerations of how these domains interact, could lead to a more holistic and more helpful understanding of how learning, experience and the senses interact in any range and context of educational activity, including approaches to the provision of learner feedback.

Of particular interest, is the potential of developing approaches to assessment that attend to, not only learning in the cognitive domain, but also of learning in the affective and psychomotor domains of learning (Hyland 2018) to impact upon deeper levels of learning. Hyland (2018) draws attention to the neglect and near absence of any attention to the affective and

psychomotor domains within subjects and disciplines in vocational education. The work of Hyland is both informative and thought-provoking. The issues Hyland raises are explored in Chapter 2, the Literature Review.

The research explores how oracy, dialogue, story and image might be used to increase students' motivation to write and improve the quality of their writing in GCSE English contexts. Freire (1970) draws attention to the important of dialogue and the power of the spoken word itself in developing thought and language in educational contexts. He notes that within the spoken word there are two dimensions, reflection and action. He argues that if one is sacrificed, even in part, then the other immediately suffers. Freire (1970) identifies the spoken word as the 'means in which we achieve significance as human beings':

> *'If it is in speaking their word that people, by naming their world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings. Dialogue is thus an existential necessity. And since the dialogue is the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are address to the world which is to be transformed and humanized, this dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's 'depositing' ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be 'consumed' by the discussant'.*
>
> (Freire,1970:69)

By exploring oracy and other dialogical pedagogical approaches, this research attempts to expand and improve the use of formative assessment strategies for learners in FE. The focus is upon distance travelled by learners and the progress they have made in situations where the aim is to support an increase levels of learner self-esteem and confidence. This research attempts to develop formative assessment/Assessment for Learning (AfL) pedagogic feedback strategies which embody both dialogical and written approaches to the development of English Language at GSCE Level. In this study this is combined with tracing the influence of formative assessment upon cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of student learning. Ofsted's recently revised Education Inspection framework resonates with much of the above. The new framework draws the practitioners-researcher's attention to the importance of the behaviours and attitudes of learners in influencing learner progress and achievement.

It is hoped that some of the dynamics between these domains might come to light as well as identifying the ways in which these impact on the achievements of GCSE English resit students.

The Problem in Practice

The existence and extent of the problems in implementing formative assessment faced my myself and other front-line teachers within my organisation may plausibly be inferred to reflect the experiences of other sector practitioners more widely across my organisation. The premise upon which this thesis is based is that there is a disconnect between the theory of formative assessment and the reality of formative assessment in practice with regard to how written formative assessment is being out to work in FE contexts.

With this in mind, it is important to recognise that the provision of high-quality and impactful written feedback to learners makes total sense. Research and literature from the field of formative assessment provides convincing evidence to support the claim that formative assessment improves student learning and achievement. However, there are several inherent problems about how these assessment strategies are being implemented. Issues surrounding the current use of written feedback as the only measure of formative assessment that is to be valued in enabling GCSE English students to improve their learning and achievement are coming into view in my FE college and perhaps this might be found in FE colleges across England.

As discussed above, this thesis questions current assessment practices in relation to the use of written formative assessment in colleges of FE in the context of GCSE English. Again, we return to the tension points between how much time FE tutors spend in providing written formative assessment feedback in relation to how little time students spend reading and acting upon their feedback. We also revisit the issue of the extent to which students are motivated, able, and held responsible for their use of the formative feedback provided by their tutors to 'close the gap', between their current and potential levels of attainment. Other pedagogic devices that might help to increase students' motivation to act on the feedback they have been given by their tutors are also considered.

The problem in practice presented in this thesis is based on the stark observations of teachers and myself, as a practitioner-researcher, regarding the distinct lack of impact (impact is measured by the progress made on predicted grade outcomes and closing the gap between current performance and student attainment) of the formative assessment feedback we offer is having on our students, alongside a disappointing absence of any engagement from students in the feedback process itself.

It is also worth repeating the point that, at best, the teacher's feedback is read by students, seldom acted upon and put to work in the pursuit of improvement in learners' achievements

and at worst, (the teacher's well-meaning and time consuming, detailed written feedback) is simply ignored placed in the students' folders never to be viewed or visited again. It seems the road to learner apathy is currently paved with teachers' good intentions and learners' inaction.

As previously discussed in this chapter it is possible that current assessment practices in GCSE English have unintentionally become more about satisfying audits trails and measures of quality compliance. Teachers appear to be caught up in the virtuous error of ignoring the obvious and missing the very point of formative assessment in practice – keeping the learner active.

Turning back to the issue that teachers are unintentionally and unconsciously neglecting the first principle of Assessment for Learning, which is active learning, the imperative of formative assessment, keeping the learner active, seems to have been overtaken by the mechanics or the techniques (which Aristotle would have described as *techné or techniques*) of formative assessment, while losing sight of its fundamental purpose. Students appear to have become passive recipients of a feedback process in which they are required to play no part.

This observation is even more troubling in the context of the teaching, learning and assessment of the subject of English, as it is not only the primary mode of communication of the students participating in this study, but also the gateway through which they are able/unable to access learning and achievement in other subjects and disciplines.

When the Technical-Rational Framing of the Research Problem is the Problem

Until now, a top-down, technical-rational framing of enduring educational issues, problems and potential policy solutions to them, dominates the political and policy landscape in FE including the literature and the discourse surrounding this field of study. This top-down, technical-rational model of educational improvement serves to over-simplify complex educational problems in order to come up with, 'quick-fix', 'one size fits all', 'just add water' solutions, most often presented in the form of simple techniques that will, it is assumed, 'work' in any context and every situation.

As a GCSE teacher I increasingly experience tensions and contradictions emerging in my own practice and those of my colleagues in that formative assessment is not 'working'. National policy and institutional imperatives for teachers to provide metrics and audits regarding the use of AfL stand in outright contrast to the absence of the actual impact that written formative

assessment is having on the learning and progress of GCSE English students in my college. Written feedback is clearly provided and very visible. It is mapped against standards, which in turn, are benchmarked against quantifiable outcomes and measured in terms of grades and success in examinations. Written formative assessment feedback is a permanent record which has a discernible audit trail, and this is used to effectively meet the requirements and demands of quality and inspection audits.

However, the conundrum deepens when these formative assessment practices are set against the actual student achievement. This suggests that the well-intended policy imperative to provide written feedback to GCSE resit English students is falling short of the mark in that it is failing to have the desired impact in helping students to close the gap between their current and potential attainment.

As explained above, I am not suggesting that written feedback is in itself, wrong, or indeed, a bad thing. I am most definitely not. Written formative assessment does of course have a place in assessment policies and strategies as a potential pedagogical approach to improving student learning. My argument is that something is going wrong in the way that written formative assessment is being implemented in practice and we need to find out what the problem is in order to be able to address it. What is clear is that as they are being currently employed, formative assessment practices in my College rely too much upon written formative assessment and its impact upon the learning and achievements of GCSE English students is difficult to discern and therefore it is becoming difficult to justify its continued use.

Challenges to top-down, technical-rational approaches to the implementation of formative assessment policy resonate closely with the work of Sennett (2008) where he likens reforms to the NHS in England to the 'Fordism Model' – a model of quality assurance used in the United States. Sennett describes how the NHS was tasked to apply 'time and motion' principles when dealing with patients in their care. He notes how the NHS was commissioned with treating the disease and not the patient and in this way policy success became instrumentally measured by targets and league tables and how patients and the practices of nurses and doctors suffered as a result. A consequence of this, Sennett argues, is that the quality of the experiences of staff working in the NHS and being an NHS patient deteriorated into an audit culture, reduced to, and based on a numbers game.

Here Sennett, (2008) reminds us that as educators, it is unwise to strip out or underestimate the importance of the human experience element of the implementation of any educational, or policy-practice interface. Taking experience seriously and being able to admit and talk about

what is actually happening in practice, is just as important. It is, in fact, just as, if not, more important when working in an educational context where a key purpose is to help another human being who is trying to overcome their previous negative experiences of being labelled as failing GCSE English Language while at school. The failure of a learner to acquire a qualification in GCSE English Language relates to primarily outputs and achievement and being measured in the form of tests and success in examinations, and this is very much part of the current rhetoric of what is taken to constitute educational 'success'.

As already discussed in this Chapter, current assessment practices in college place students in a position where they are inadvertently being encouraged to become passive learners in terms of their experiences of the GCSE resit English and related formative assessment processes. Dewey (1930) argues that education and experience cannot, and should not be separated and that the starting point for all education should be experience. In other words, teachers cannot effectively lead students outward without starting from the place where they currently reside.

The shortcomings of the top-down, technical-rational approach to the implementation of educational reform in this case formative assessment policy, are most obvious when they oversimplify the problem or educational issue, oversimplify its solution, and then count success in instrumental and crude measures which involve the setting, measuring and achievement of numerical targets. This oversimplification is further compounded when success is measured simply by counting putative 'quick-fix' solutions to complex, enduring and unfolding educational problems in context.

In order to frame the context of this study more fully, we also need to consider how we arrived at this approach to measuring what we mean by good education at this point. Overly simplistic framings of deficits in the acquisition of English Language at GCSE level appear to have much to answer for, particularly in relation to how the impact of targets and policy imperatives in GCSE English have come to be measured through the application of such blunt instruments as success in written examinations.

GCSE resit English in Context and its Impact

As already discussed in this Chapter, most post-16 resit GCSE English students are re-taking a subject in which they have already been publicly labelled a 'failure'. This is a diminishing experience for any human being, in any walk of life, at any time of life to have to deal with. To be labelled a failure publicly and more than once is even worse. This can not only result in a loss of confidence but also a seriously reduced sense of self-worth for young people at a

sensitive watershed point in their lives. We already know how retaking examinations that you have already failed can negatively impact on students' confidence. This deep sense of failure is often accompanied by a profound disengagement and loss of confidence in a subject in which they have (often publicly and repeatedly) been labelled as being in deficit. Such diminishing experiences are understandably likely to have adverse influences upon student motivation and engagement. When disengagement and lack of interest in the activity in which we are already regarded as being 'lacking,' 'sub-standard' or simply 'not good enough' is our principal channel of communication with other human beings, in this case English, then matters take an even more troubling turn.

Improvements to assessment practices are much needed and long overdue, particularly when we consider the increased numbers of post-16 students studying GCSE English in college FE across England. As a result of the Government's post-16 funding initiatives, FE colleges have seen significant increases in resit GCSE enrolment numbers. This is a result of the Government's Study Programme initiative where the conditionality of funding rule is linked to the pursuit of the GCSE English and maths agenda.

To add to the narrative and give further context to the volume and the impact that this has on my college (which forms the site of this research), there are 1,178 students in 22/23 enrolled onto GCSE English resits and a further 1,351 students enrolled onto GCSE resit maths. These considerably increased enrolment numbers also see increases in the teaching and assessment workload faced by FE lecturers where each GCSE teacher would have teaching and assessment responsibilities for approximately **100 GCSE learners** based on **3 contact hours** per week from September until the June series examinations. During any one academic year there are **5 key assessment points**, this equates to **around 500 scripts to mark and feedback for each teacher**. This raises important questions surrounding how sustainable this workload is, how impactful is the feedback offered, and what teacher time and resources might be saved or redirected if formative assessment practices actually brought about active learning?

It is equally important to recognise that improvements have been made to GCSE English within my organisation in terms of student achievement and securing high grades for post-16 GCSE English resit students attending the College. However, this small-scale research study also recognises the need to continue to increase the pace, scale and sustainability of improvements towards both progress measures and high grades. What is equally important, however, is to find out and take into account, how students 'feel' about learning English Language and developing their literacy at GCSE Level.

Staying with the discussion surrounding how students 'feel', it is ironic and somewhat sad that the English Language syllabus, which clearly sets out what the learner should be able to 'do' in relation to language acquisition and competency of English Language, does not include learning outcomes surrounding 'feel' or indeed 'enjoy' English, and these play no part in the assessment outcomes or syllabus. This would appear to resonate with Pullman's (2003) contention that something is wrong in our education systems with regard to the teaching of reading and writing. Pullman (2003) believes that English Language education is now so suffused with wrong emotion that learner confidence is leaking away and 'something else' is slowly sweeping in to take its place. He insightfully draws our attention to the fact that the acquisition of reading and writing skills consist of a range of strategies to decode, select, retrieve, deduce, infer, interpret, identify and comment on the structure and organisation of text, with a clear focus on the writer's purpose and viewpoints. That is all, nothing else. (Pullman 2003) shares his frustration and indeed, sadness, that 'enjoyment' of English Language learning does not feature as a key outcome of developing reading and writing skills.

The importance of recognising literacy as a basic human right, on the grounds that it is through language and literacy that we access our civil and political rights, is not to be under-estimated. This emancipatory potential of a good education is well documented in, for example, the seminal work of (Freire, 1970) where he draws attention to the importance of creating educational experiences genuinely worthy of the name. Bernstein (1996) urges teachers to encourage their learners to experience the boundaries of what has inhibited their learning and educational achievements in the past, not as prisons or stereotypes of themselves or predictors of the future, but as tension points between the past and their potential future lives. That is why policy imperatives to improve levels of learner achievement in GCSE English are indeed welcome and so very much needed.

More importantly as Boyle (1963) reminds us, it is essential that all learners should have an equal opportunity of acquiring intelligence and developing their talents and abilities to the full. Yet, in 2023, we know too many young adults are leaving secondary education without the necessary GCSE English grades to access further academic and vocational (technical) opportunities to enable them to progress into employment and subsequent promotion.

It is therefore ever more pertinent that this small-scale study aims to bring these dilemmas into the open in order to identify and explore practical ways in which we make formative assessment, in the context of GCSE English, more educational. This would appear, at least on the face of it, to be endorsed with the recent changes to Ofsted's Curriculum Inspection

Framework. This framework has recently been reformed and is now described as the Education Inspection Framework. Contained within the new framework is the expectation that providers need to show that their curriculum developments are grounded in research and that intent, implementation and more importantly, impact, are clearly demonstrated.

Adult Literacy Policy Development and Implementation: An Illustrative Case in Point

In 1999, Sir Claus Moser was appointed by the Department of Education and Employment to uncover the scale of low levels of literacy and numeracy in England. The report was understandably greeted with encouragement by the FE sector. It gave educational practitioners in the FE sector hope that previous educational failings in compulsory education might be redressed in FE and that future generations, young people and adults, would have the opportunity to get a second chance in life through education in the FE sector.

The report also confidently stated that the ongoing educational issue of poor literacy and number skills would be resolved by 2050. The implication was that low levels of adult literacy would cease to be a problem. The importance of the keynote pledge from the Chairman's Foreword, still resounds today:

> *'The fundamental ability to read, write and speak in English, and to use mathematics at a level necessary to function at work and in society in general.'*
>
> (Moser, 1999:3)

The Moser Report, 'Improving Literacy and Numeracy: A Fresh Start', produced overwhelming and staggering findings and the stark facts drawn from this inquiry still make difficult reading today.

The report reveals that roughly 20% of adults, that is around 7 million people, or at the time (in 1999), one in 5 people in the UK, had more or less severe problems with basic literacy and numeracy skills. It further emphasised that this is a 'shocking' situation in a rich country such as the UK and a sad indictment on past decades of our education system. At this point, the top-down, technical-rational clockwork machine springs into action. Policy makers simplified the problem (low levels of adult literacy and numeracy) and framed its solution in simple terms (setting targets for the achievement of literacy and numeracy qualifications) and then measuring the success of the policy in terms of the achievement of previously set targets.

The Moser Report also went to great lengths to demonstrate the seriousness of the consequences that poor literacy and numeracy (basic skills) had for society in general, for the

economy and for families and individuals. Moser highlights how a major part of the problem stemmed from negative experiences of past education and poor schooling and his report bemoans how too many young people left school with poor basic skills in English and maths.

This policy imperative, *Skills for Life* was derived from The Moser Report. This initiated a National Strategy in which national targets which aimed to lift some 3.5 million adults out of functional illiteracy were set. Again, this is the point where policy makers demonstrated a technical-rational approach to educational reform. Once again, simplifying the problem and its solution and counting success in terms of crude measures of educational outcomes (literacy and numeracy qualifications).

In 2001 the *Skills for Life* campaign was launched and a reported £163 billion was invested over a ten-year period to support its implementation. The policy solution and its impact were funded based upon outcomes measured in terms of students' Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) and the achievement of SMART targets.

Some ten years later in 2011, a report carried out by NIACE (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education), concluded that after ten years and a £163 billion investment, the UK as a society, still had 5 million people with poor literacy and numeracy skills. Moreover, the same NIACE report highlighted that at that time, one in 6 people of employment age, lacked the literacy and numeracy skills to function effectively in modern society. Even more alarmingly, the North-East was found to have had the largest numbers of people with literacy problems, alongside Yorkshire, Humber and the West Midlands. Once again, the North-East region is positioned in the top statistics regarding educational performance. But not for the right reasons.

Moving forward from 2011, we then see the Department of Education's Social Mobility Report', on the importance of 'unlocking talent and fulfilling potential', published in 2017. This report details a plan to improve social mobility through education. This report again, reinforces the lasting detrimental impact that poor English skills can have on social mobility. The report worryingly claims that those students who do not reach the expected standard at age 11, are 11 times less likely to achieve the expected levels in maths because of poor literacy recognition.

The Social Mobility Report (2017) also presents the reader with a sharp reminder that young people who fall behind their peers by the age of 16, in terms of their development of Standard English skills, will find it much harder to catch up in later life. As a result, these young people

will have limited options, particularly within the employment market. The report also endorses that employers routinely use GCSE English and maths qualifications as a sifting device for their recruitment selection processes. The report demonstrates that 40.7% of young people do not achieve good passes at GCSE English and maths by the age of 16. This percentage rises considerably to 59.6% for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, with, once again, the North-East being one of the regions identified as being one of the most disadvantaged areas. The same report also underpins the educational issue repeatedly faced by FE colleges, that statistically, only 13.9% of FE learners over the age of 19, achieve recognised passes in GCSE English and maths.

Some researchers argue, however, that all young people are capable of learning to high levels of achievement (Hart et al, 2004) and the damage of previous negative experiences of education can be undone and that factors that influence whether a person is able to learn or not, can be changed for the better. The central message here is that everyone can get better at learning. Coffield, (2009) points out that academic success may have nothing to do with the learners' level of ability, but more to do with the lack of previous opportunities to learn. This is further compounded by the publication released in January (2019) in a national newspaper which found that 41% of the schools in the Sunderland area are failing to meet the Government's minimum standards of 8 GCSE passes, with particular weight given to GCSE English and maths.

A previous Ofsted Report (May 2022) for my organisation recognises that our region continues to feel the impact of the decline of traditional sources of employment. The youth unemployment rate remains high at 9.5%, which is 3.5 percentage points above the national average. This same report identifies how the region is in the top 15% of the most deprived local authorities in the country. This is further compounded by clear evidence that pupils in our city who achieve 5 GCSEs at grades 9-4, including English and maths, is 10 percentage points below the national average.

What is even more alarming is a report from the North East's Local Employment Partnership (NELEP, 2019) which demonstrates that the North-East region has 22%, (which is based on per 1,000 under 18s), of young people who are categorised as living in child poverty, against a national average of 16.8%. This report also reveals that 94.3% of under 18s are categorised as 'CLA' (cared for/looked after) against a national average of 62%. This report clearly demonstrates the levels of deprivation that young people in this region are faced with, when under 18s admissions for alcohol-specific conditions is 62.7% against a national average of

32.9%. The report also highlights that these troubling socio-economic factors invariably impact on low GCSE English Language attainment for school leavers within the region.

These blunt and glaring statistics only serve to reinforce the unquestionable need to develop functional English skills for our young adults as part of their civil and political rights. The work of Dewey (1933) informs the pragmatic ontological position which underpins this study and the context in which it is set. The ontological and epistemological starting points of this theses are further discussed in Chapter 2, the Literature Review and justified in Chapter 3, Methodology.

Moving forward to the present day and as previously discussed, we currently have the Government's Study Programme and conditionality of funding rules for post-16 education. The Study Programme agenda is the central driving force which is increasingly re-shaping the FE sector and its curriculum offer for post-16 students. The Education Funding Agency (EFA) funding document (July 2014) clearly sets out the Study Programme 'conditionality of funding' rules for all FE establishments. This document stipulates that all 16-18 learners who do not achieve a Grade 4 or above in GCSE maths and/or English must continue to study GCSE as part of their full time Study Programme.

It could be argued that these outcome-based funding compliances are having a huge and adverse impact upon, and serious consequences for, pedagogy, curriculum design and assessment which are very much driven by the policy imperatives discussed above. It is important to remind ourselves that the Study Programme policy, however, in principle is essentially important and undoubtedly well-intentioned. This policy reinforces the fundamental civic principle that young adults have the right to obtain relevant qualifications which can empower and enhance personal opportunities and employment. Furthermore, as a Lead Practitioner and Curriculum Manager, I am resolute in my conviction to this principle. However, the reality of realising this principle in practice is not as easy, simple or straightforward as it might seem.

What Do We Mean by Good Work?

FE is a potentially powerful force for change within the education sector and it is essential that models of change and approaches to educational improvement across the sector are both appropriately and carefully managed. Living with change and managing change are essential skills for any educator. However, as the work of Sarason (1993) underscores, the top-down, technical-rational ways in which approaches to educational improvement and associated

policies are being implemented is in danger of locking even the most well-intended education reforms into potential failure.

One of the reasons that Sarason (1993) attributes to the predictable failure of educational reform is that policy imperatives are commissioned and implemented from the top-down by those who are not responsible or held accountable for the interpretation, implementation and evaluation of these imperatives in practice. Further reading of Sarason (1993), emphasises that the above statement is indeed not intended to be disrespectful or demeaning of the policy community, but merely to point out that policy imperatives need to be able to take context, experience and local knowledge into account in meaningful ways.

Sarason (1993) points out that the policymakers in education need to be more responsive to teachers' experiences of what is happening in practice based upon evidence derived in context. Sarason (1993) emphasises that the policymakers are caught in the grip of a technical-rational world view and that this locks both them and their policies into predicable failure. The policy community is generally well intentioned and for the most part, hard-working. However, caught in the grip of instrumental clockwork and established political-policy worlds, bolstered by technical-rational relays of power, their pursuit of the perfect one-size-fits-all policy to 'fix' oversimplified educational problems, prevents them, and their political counterparts, from seeing the bigger picture surrounding experience and what is happening in practice and subsequently prevents them from doing something about it.

The work of Sennett (2008) helps us to make intricate connections between current GCSE reforms in FE and preoccupations with the pursuit of standards of excellence, perfection or absolute correctness. The conditionality of funding rule for post-16 GCSE study is in principle, hard to argue against. However, it is at this point that Sennett's (2008) rationale of functionality now comes into play and becomes important.

Sennett points to the conflict between getting something absolutely right or perfect and getting something done and the importance of recognising how this influences what we mean by good work. He cautions us not to lose sight of the liminal zone between problem finding, problem solving and critique and points to the need to build opportunities to experience and open up these liminal spaces in vocational educational contexts. Sennett reserves his strongest criticism for notions of quality and approaches to the development of educational standards which oversimplify and reduce what we mean by good work to crude targets and longs lists of atomised and de-contextualised knowledge and skills. Sennett, in his 2008 work, *The Craftsman*, cleverly uses the analogy of Wittgenstein's attempts to build the 'perfect house' to

highlight the limitations of technical-rational world views, underscored by the pursuit of the Platonic ideal of pure forms and the ideal of perfection. Wittengstein's good work was focused on the preoccupations with formal rules and obsessions with exact proportion. Wittengstein's pursuit for perfection produced a house which did not allow the light to penetrate through and illuminate the rooms of the house.

In contrast Sennett (2008) describes how Loos', Villa Moller, built a house for his sister, based upon more pragmatic principles. He describes how Loos' more pragmatic approach to the design and proportions of the rooms and the architectural features of the house (in response to his sister's often ad hoc requests), produced a house which was much more pleasing and a more useful building. Loos' adaptations to his original designs were incremental and developed in context, and more importantly, in response to the needs of the house's inhabitants. The house build was based on the insiders' knowledge and the inhabitant's rhythm and movement from one room to another. In this way, Loos not only allowed light to illuminate and flow through each of the rooms of the house, but he also built a beautiful and welcoming home which was well loved by his sister.

This analogy serves to remind us that the concept of perfection, is merely that, a concept, it infers that perfection is a static, attainable and sustainable condition for a human being to achieve. A static condition which can and should be prescribed and described in terms of uniform standards which removes any evidence of work in progress, pragmatic decisions made in context, and more importantly, does not hint at the incremental narrative involved in making and continuing to make something good in practice.

Sennett (2008) tactfully reminds us, that the policy makers and politicians who write these policies and prescribe standards of practice and quality are charged with the responsibility of implementing new education reforms. Sennett (2008) notes that these educational reforms subscribe to a technical-rational world view which seeks perfection in a perfect education system. He points out that such models of educational changes and improvement are caught up in an unrealistic and impossible quest where teachers implementing the policy are required to act as if their experiences of implementing the policy in practice are not real. Policymakers and politicians who do not work in conjunction with those of us who are charged with the implementation of their policies are in fact, not allowing the rhythm, realities and practicalities of the reforms to move between policy and implementation and thus preventing the 'light' from illuminating problems in the policy implementation and educational reform process and ultimately, potentially locking education policy, as Sarason (1993), discussed above, warns us of predictable failure.

For Sarason (1993), a technical-rational approach to the policy-making process is disjointed and disconnected and does not allow an interplay between the policy maker and the implementer or educator charged with making the policy good in practice. This could be argued to be the central problem and the main source of the disconnect between policy making and policy implementation. Sarason, (1993) also suggests that education policy reformers have nothing resembling a holistic conception of the system they seek to influence. He criticises policy professionals for their lack of understanding of how these educational research and educational policies impact on educational practice. As researcher I have witnessed at first hand the relevance of the work of Sarason (1993) and Biesta and Burbules (2003) where they argue that educational policy and educational research cannot, and should not, be disconnected from front-line educational practice.

Sennett (2008) also cautions that a constantly "churning" quality driven process can result in reform fatigue and that within any quality reform or change there is a need for a constant interplay between tacit knowledge exercised in context, coupled with self-conscious awareness and critique in dialogue, in order to evince high levels of skill and craft in any form of practice. Sennett (2008) comments on the lack of regard and attention placed on the need to invoke curiosity within a craftworker (in this case, the teacher) in order to avoid marginalising (or worse still mediocritising) a whole profession. This is another reminder of the necessity to ensure that there is a supported and tangible dynamic between problem-finding, problem-solving and critique in approaches to the improvement of educational practice.

Sennett (2008:50) refers to how, '*In the higher stages of skill there is a constant interplay between tacit knowledge and self-conscious awareness, the tacit knowledge serving as an anchor, the explicit awareness serving as its critique and corrective'*. Here experience of what went before and how it is developed when tacit knowledge is balanced by explicit awareness of previous experience in similar situations. Combined with the critique of how these judgements might be improved in future light of the previous consequence. Sennett (2008) describes this as, 'the voice of reason' and the 'engine of improvement' (ibid).

Through Sennett's (2008) work our attention is drawn to the difference between how policies are expected be done and the realities of getting them to work in practice. He advises us to take context and local knowledge seriously as well as the importance of recognising the need for, and value of, good judgement in liminal spaces in ways in which the relentless and misguided pursuit of 'perfect forms' cannot admit.

This inquiry, therefore, is a practice-focused exploration of how improvements in assessment practice in the context of GCSE English in FE might be realised by drawing upon the direct experiences of teachers and learners and the exercise of local knowledge in context. Sennett reminds us that:

> *'To do good work means to be curious about, to investigate and to learn from ambiguity.'*
>
> (Sennett, 2008:48)

The intention of this study is to reconnect with the issue of the relationship between policy, research and practice in the interests of the development of a model of educational change and improvement in FE worthy of the name.

Regarding models of educational change and improvement, as a front-line teacher I have been afforded this opportunity to carry out this research study and explore an important and enduring educational issue in the context of my own practice. This is a relatively unique endeavour in that I have been, (in part), supported in this endeavour by the policymakers themselves, through early funding for my research provided by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) as part of the Foundation's National Practitioner Research Programme (PRP). It is therefore important to note how this joint practice development (JPD) community (Fielding et al, 2005) of policy professionals, University of Sunderland researchers and practitioner-researchers across the sector, is attempting to find new policy-research-practice relations capable of 'bridging the gap' between educational research, policy and practice.

If investigating and learning from ambiguity is closed off to us by a technical-rational world view of educational change and improvement, which cannot admit context, local knowledge and ambiguity itself then, the prospect of success in securing improvements in educational practice becomes ever more remote.

Chapter Summary

This Chapter explains that the purpose of this study is to deepen the understanding and interpretation of the experiences of teachers and students engaged in the provision and use of written formative assessment in my college in systematic and trustworthy ways. It also outlines how a secondary aim of the study is to explore if/how an alternative, multimodal approach to formative assessment based on dialogical including questioning. oracy, story and image might be put to work to help learners to 'close the gap' between their current and their potential levels of achievement in GCSE English.

Chapter 1 goes on to describe how a key intention here is to discover various forms of feedback and strategies designed to support students' deepening engagement in learning and improvement in education and activities that are a collaboration between teacher and learner in order to build learner confidence and 'arrest' learners' perceptions of themselves as being failures. Chapter 1 also highlights how, the FE College in which this study takes place, needs to develop different forms of assessment and feedback that mitigate the negative feelings of failure that beset many students as they begin their studies at college.

It is hoped that the findings of the thesis will contribute to the College's assessment policy and the strategies and pedagogic devices we use to support more appropriate and varied assessment strategies in the future. Additionally, Chapter 1 explains that an aspiration of the study is to improve the formative assessment processes and investigate how these processes can be more meaningful for, and useful to students.

This thesis chronicles the distance travelled and progress made by a sample of students participating in the research. It also reports the influence of their engagement in the multimodal formative assessment and pedagogic interventions employed in the study upon the students' levels of self-esteem, confidence and achievement. Chapter 1 concludes with a discussion of the research problem, the failure of written formative assessment in practice in relation to securing improvements in students' learning and achievement. It then links this problem to technical-rational models of educational change and improvement including their consequences in practice.

Contributions from literature in this field of research are explored and critically discussed in some depth in the next Chapter, the *Literature Review.* The work of Dewey (1933), which forms the bedrock of the pragmatic ontological and epistemological positions underpinning this study and the context in which it is set, are discussed and justified in Chapter 3, *Methodology.*

Chapter Two Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter discusses and critically examines peer-reviewed research and literature surrounding the use of the principles and practices of formative assessment in education in general and in FE in particular. It explores the potential of dialogical and storied approaches to formative assessment through a number of pedagogical interventions.

Firstly, through the provision of comments on students' work. Secondly, by engaging in dialogue with students about their experiences (stories) of learning GCSE English and thirdly, the use of oracy, story and image as pedagogical interventions for students in relation to their attitudes and behaviours to the study of GCSE English. As explained in Chapter 1, the thesis focuses and reports upon the experiences of post-16 FE students who are required to resit GCSE English examinations following exam failure in the same subject as part of their full-time Study Programme.

This chapter focuses upon the development of oracy skills as part of the adoption of innovative pedagogical interventions designed to deepen student engagement together with changes in curriculum design and assessment processes. These are intended to encourage and support the strengthen learner autonomy and increase learner achievements. An aim here is to halt, or at least mitigate, the potential negative behaviours and attitudes felt by many post-16 students who have failed GCSE English while at school.

As discussed in Chapter One, it is important to return to the concern that these students are required to resit an examination in a subject in which they have already been publicly deemed to be not good enough and as being in some way in deficit. Chapter One also explains how this research attempts to counter the negative feelings and adverse perceptions relating to GCSE English students who are required to retake GCSE English examinations in England directly after they have failed GCSE examination at least once while at school. Chapter One also explores how sharing lived experiences or 'stories' (Clandinin and Connelly 1998) of learning GCSE English Language might be used as a formative pedagogical intervention in the development of the use of oracy, dialogue, story and image in literacy and language development in the context of the teaching and learning of English (and potentially in other subjects).

This Chapter also draws upon and extends the discussion of the guiding principles of formative assessment and how they are being implemented (Black and Wiliam 1998; Clarke, 2001). As previously discussed, it explores key contributions to the discourse from literature and research surrounding the development of oracy, dialogue, story and image in literacy and language development in the context of GCSE English Language education. Dialogical approaches to the provision of formative assessment in the context of the teaching and assessment of GCSE English, including pedagogical approaches to the acquisition and development of English as a social practice are also examined.

Adopting the guiding principles of formative assessment as a purposeful pedagogical intervention has been advocated by the Assessment Reform Group (ARG) for over twenty years. Since 1998 (Black and Wiliam,1998) and various other members of the ARG have developed a number of guiding principles to support teachers in implementing formative assessment in their classrooms. These guiding principles have come to be collectively known as *Assessment for Learning* (AfL).

This Chapter also extends the argument introduced in Chapter 1, that the development of literacy in the context of GCSE English is a human right on the grounds that being literate enables individuals and groups to access their civil and other human rights. The rise and terrors of the phenomenon that Ball (2010) describes as 'performativity' in the form of narrow and instrumental outcomes-based measures of educational evaluation imposed upon teachers and students from the top-down, combined with the rise of managerialist cultures and technical-rational approaches to educational change and improvement in England are extended and critically discussed in this Chapter.

The embodied nature of human learning (Hyland 2018) including the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning (Bloom et al 1956), involved in becoming literate, together with the concept of metacognition are also discussed and critically considered in relation to students' motivation to write and their levels of engagement with the subject of GCSE English.

This study explores, if and/or how, the principles of formative assessment, combined with more dialogical approaches to the teaching of English might improve GSCE resit examination results. An aim here is to identify the extent to which AfL strategies, combined with a multimodal dialogic approach to the provision of both written and verbal feedback can contribute to improving student engagement and raise levels of student achievement in GCSE English resit examinations. By exploring the use of oracy and dialogue as integral aspects of formative assessment strategies and purposeful pedagogical interventions, designed to

secure active learning, this research seeks to better understand students' experience of learning English at GCSE Level. It also attempts to increase students' motivation to write and to improve the quality of their writing through the adoption and adaption of formative assessment interventions which purposefully encourage active learning.

As previously discussed in Chapter 1, this study is pragmatic both in spirit and in origin. It is connected to a real problem encountered by front line teachers of GCSE resit English in FE settings throughout the country, and on a daily basis. It is also firmly grounded in my own professional experience of being a teacher of GCSE English and those of my colleagues.

The enduring educational issue at the centre of this thesis is located in the field of assessment theory and practice. It is argued that problems encountered in implementing formative assessment theory and practice are inhibiting the realisation of good education in FE and possibly in other sectors of education. The persistence and prevalence of these problems tell us that something is wrong in either the theory/principles of formative assessment, or in the ways that these theories/ principles are be implemented in practice. Enduring educational issues and problems in educational practice should not and cannot be ignored and therefore warrant and deserve further investigation.

Front-line teachers often find themselves torn between academic and operational tensions and competing policy-practice imperatives. This is particularly the case for curriculum managers like myself, who can find themselves pulled between two 'educational worlds.' The world of educational values and its associated practices and a world of quality assurance systems and the imperatives of internal and external inspections. This tension manifests itself in the form of a well-intentioned college policy which requires staff to provide detailed, time-consuming and constructive written formative assessment to a body of students who often do not read, let alone act upon the detailed feedback provided to them, at such cost by their tutors.

This feedback provided in most cases, aims to encourage and monitor learner progress against their target grade. This feedback is intended to ensure standardisation of quality (as also discussed in Chapter 1), meet educational needs of students, as well as to fulfil the demands of audit and inspection requirements. The world in which demands are placed upon teachers to provide detailed, written, formative assessment feedback is undoubtedly well-intended. However, such demands also place a huge drain on tutors' time and energy. Tutors' time, in itself, is a precious and relatively scarce commodity. This is more evident now than ever in the current financial climate and the yet to be determined full impact of the recent global

COVID pandemic. The problem is further compounded by the 'more for less' pressures that all FE colleges are increasingly faced with and forced to shoulder as budgets are reduced in real terms year on year.

In this context, the question of how much time the learner spends reading and acting upon formative assessment feedback in comparison to the time, energy and expense it takes for the tutor to produce it becomes pivotal. It is also important to take into consideration the extent to which students do, or do not, use formative assessment feedback to feed-forward and close the gap (Clarke, 2001) between their current and potential levels of achievement. The balance between the time tutors spends providing formative assessment in relation to the low impact that the same feedback is having upon student learning renders the value and wisdom of current approaches to the provision of written formative assessment questionable.

To provide quality and impactful written formative feedback to learners makes a great deal of sense. The mantra of formative assessment is now a well-established part of the pedagogical landscape of teaching, learning and assessment in England today. Research and literature from the field of formative assessment (Black and Wiliam 1998, Clarke 2001) provide convincing evidence to support the claim that formative assessment can and does improve student learning and achievement.

Something, however, appears to be wrong between the guiding principles of formative assessment and their realisation in practice. This thesis aims to find out what. the nature of this problem in assessment theory and practice and to identify ways in which this problem might be addressed.

This Chapter draws and builds upon the work of the above authors and other academic scholars at the forefront of research in the field of formative assessment. It aims to evaluate and extend understanding of the principles of formative assessment as they are being applied in practice in the context of a GCSE resit English programme offered in a College of FE in Sunderland in which this study is set.

This thesis builds upon Dewey's pragmatic epistemology (1933,1938) discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, in order to work out and make sense of the nature of the educational problem encountered in this thesis and what might be done to address it.

The Lure of Techné

Dunne's work contests the notion first promoted the work by Bloom and his associates (1956), that all that is essential in education can be predicted, controlled and easily measured in a supposedly neutral (Behavioural-Objectives) model. By isolating in precise terms, the goals of the activity, Dunne argues that the Behavioural-Objectives model claimed to provide teachers with a 'royal road' to, or blueprint for, controlling efficiency in education as well as a straight-forward criteria for evaluating educational success. Dunne explains that:

> *It was reflecting on all this that the appositeness of the words of Wittgenstein … first struck me; one might teach by this model on ice but hardly in the rough ground of the classroom.*
>
> (Dunne 1993:5)

Dunne is critical of the fundamentally instrumentalist logic underpinning the Behavioural Objectives Model and how it seeks to separate the ends from the means of education, where all of the value that a teacher might accomplish is seen to reside in the ends of education (i.e., learning objectives). From this perspective, the job of the teacher is simply to find the most suitable means for the achievement of predetermined, instrumental, over-simplified ends.

According to the Behavioural Objectives Model, every classroom activity can be perceived as being predictable, easily measured and instrumentally controlled. From this standpoint, this means the purpose of education is taken to be neutral or even unimportant and all that is seen to matter, or to be of value in education, is the level of efficiency and economy of achieving predetermined and predictable ends. Through the work of Aristotle, (384-322 BC), Dunne distinguishes between the technical reasoning (*techné)* underpinning the Behavioural Objectives Model and the practical reasoning (*phronesis*) required in making wise judgements in context in the complex and unfolding *rough ground* of the classroom.

As teachers we can often find ourselves being drawn into a world which consists solely of preoccupations with technique. As discussed above, Dunne (1993) warns us to beware of the lure of *techné* (technique or technical reason) on the grounds that it's intuitive appeal may in practice disguise what John Henry Newman describes as a certain …:

> *"… flat-footedness in the myriad of cases where concrete matters are at issue and one must make the judgements as best on can according to one's lights".*
>
> Newman (1985), cited in Dunne, 1993:11

Here both Newman and Dunne draw our attention to the useful and important, but ultimately limited, role of *techné* as a form of knowledge. They emphasise how the application of *techné* in practice must always be accompanied by the exercise of other forms of knowledge including

phronesis (practical reasoning or practical wisdom) where human beings make wise judgements in context of the light of evidence of the consequences of their actions in practice and *praxis* where someone does the right thing at the right time for reasons not of self- interest but for the wider common good.

Literacy as a Human Right and a Civil Right

As argued in Chapter 1, it could be claimed that to deny someone the ability to read, communicate and write effectively with confidence and familiarity is to deprive someone of their human rights as well as their rights as a citizen. Put simply, it is difficult for a person to access their civil rights if they cannot read and write. This argument can be traced back to Socrates (469-399 BC). Some see Socrates as the original advocator of experiential education, where he encouraged experience and learning as means of promoting active citizenship. This ideology is also endorsed by Barton (2001) who links literacy and language development to social inclusion. Smith and Mannion (2006) refer to literacy as a powerful means through which an individual can achieve success in the global economy.

From an educational viewpoint Lee (1996), notes that developing literacy is something that is a necessary part of all learning for any individual and should not be taught in isolation from lived experience Literacy taught in separation from human experience is viewed by Lee (1996) as problematic and a deeply contested notion. Barton (1996) also supports this view and refers to the development of literacy as a social practice. Smith and Mannion (2006) offer helpful insights into the notion of literacy as social practice where they view literacy as a skill that should be developed in the context of an individual's everyday life. From this standpoint, literacy is not a set or a list of disembodied, decontextualised or atomised. skills which can be acquired and developed in isolation. Instead, they argue that these skills should be developed as part of meaningful and purposeful activity.

It seems appropriate at this point to draw upon the views of parents with regard to literacy development. When discussing this view, the work of Bailstock's (2002) is helpful, who reports that parents associate literacy with morality. Here literacy is not seen to be purely about reading and writing but part of a child's personality. Less of a skill and more of a personal attribute. Parents in Bailstock's (2002) study report that they felt that their child's ability to read and write fluently would ultimately impact on the social status and the economic well-being of their child and their life chances in the future.

Taking all of this into consideration, I am however, faced with the vivid reminder that too many young people in my region are leaving school without a GCSE qualification in English. The

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) underscores the importance of being functional literate in the 21st Century:

> *'Active, successful participants in this 21st Century global society must be able to develop proficiency and fluency with the tools of technology; build intentional cross cultural connections and relationships with others so to post and solve problems collaboratively and strengthen independent thought; design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes; manage, analyse and synthesise multiple streams of simultaneous information; create, critique, analyse and evaluate multimedia texts' and attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments.'*
>
> (NCTE, 2013 accessed December 2019)

This definition draws attention to the striking inference that levels of literacy for citizens in the 21st Century are not just about exam outcomes but about being able to learn how to learn and to lead a fulfilled life. More importantly as the report points out, these literacy skills should be acquired in such a way that students are able to transfer knowledge and skills gained. In other words, literacy skills should be able to be transferred from one context to another, including, social, economic and cultural contexts in order to actively engage individuals and groups in society. This engagement ultimately helps to secure students' employment opportunities and enable people to achieve their aspirations and life endeavours.

It could be argued, therefore, that pedagogical approaches in educational settings need to mirror these considerations and not overtly focus on instrumental, atomised and de-contextualised, technical-rational, mechanical or instrumental approaches to curriculum design, pedagogy and assessment which are reduced to the measurement of assessment outcomes or progress made against crude target grades.

With this in mind, it is helpful to explore the work of Trainer (2012) who takes the view that education has become lifeless. Trainer (2012) comments that education's primary concern surrounding student life is about exam scores which are set above concerns for meaningful learning. According to Trainer (2012), quantifiable statistics, are valued more highly than genuinely educational outcomes. Trainer (2012) shows how narrow technical skills and techniques are elevated over richer understandings of educational practice and educational values. Trainer (2012) refers to this as a so-called hidden curriculum where education is more to do with the values of the market and competition in a consumer-led, capitalist society than with genuine educational concerns.

This line of concern is also echoed by Fromm (1996) who suggests that our educational system is following a trajectory predicted by Marx, where citizens within society are preoccupied with purely economic activity, where the primary aim is profit. Fromm (1996)

argues and that in such circumstances, we become alienated from ourselves as we are sub-consciously find ourselves submerged in instrumental and alienating practices.

A similar view is upheld by Freire (1970) where he urges educators to challenge this position and we must see ourselves as the critical cultural workers, helping students to understand the socio-political functions of society. Freire (1970) sees these functions as being dominant in cultural values and norms. Freire (1970) supports the notion that the purpose of education is to encourage and enable students to challenge the status quo and the power relationships which perpetuate it. He urges teachers to constantly consider how they might contribute to the improvement of democracy. However, it is acknowledged that this aspiration held by Freire (1970) is not easy or indeed always possible when educators are governed by organisational and government imperatives solely concerned with the measurement of teacher and student performance in terms of narrow exam outcomes.

A critique of the tension between educational autonomy and high achievement is offered by Glass and Matthews (in Wilkinson 2007:269) who describe this as a polemic wrapped in numbers. Wilkinson (2007) suggests that as a society we continue to view an educational establishments' effectiveness in terms of academic attainment and that this can ignore the social and democratic functions of education in civil society.

This perception is often endorsed by the views of the general public, particularly parents, who review an educational establishments' suitability based on the basis of the most recent Ofsted grading which is awarded in terms of the institution's performance in public league tables and students' exam results.

This thesis suggests that it is these wider civic and social purposes of education including, the development of knowledge, skills and values which can nurture, moral, social and cultural behaviours that are becoming marginalised within the GCSE English curriculum and across education as a whole. They are being marginalised by the need for quantifiable evidence of immediate impact in the form of qualification outcomes, progress measure statistics, value added metrics, all of which aim to demonstrate student progress and ultimately, provide an audit trail of student success.

This tension between the pursuit of attainment in the form of narrow learning outcomes and the freedom to explore wider skills development in order to support citizenship is evident in many Governmental White Papers. For example, the Department of Education's White Paper (DfE, 1997) 'Excellence in Schools', demonstrates a commitment to 'standards and not

structures'. This White Paper gave schools the freedom to create their own ethos and granted relative autonomy in the management of their curriculum, in the interests of supporting more 'active citizenship' and offer a more 'rounded curriculum'.

Wilkinson (2007) explores this concept in more detail and argues that although the creation of the Trust Schools allowed institutions some respite from local government bureaucracy, the representation however of private interest groups embedded into school controls was not without its drawbacks.

These Trust Schools, with the involvement of external support, it was claimed would *'bring innovative and stronger leadership to the school, improving standards and extending choices'* (DfES, 2005a:4). Wilkinson (2007) however, argues that this rhetoric does not paint the full picture and this ideology was not necessarily reflected the reality of the situation, in that that the poor and disadvantaged would still lose out. This level of scepticism would appear to be endorsed by, at the time, Parliamentary party members who raised questions about the extent to which these measures are in the public interest. Peter Mandelson (2001) voiced this concern and reminded his parliamentary colleagues that the logic of shareholder capitalism means that the corporate animal is driven by the promotion of its own interests.

Exam outcomes, as discussed in Chapter 1, cannot however be completely dismissed as a measure of the impact of an education institution. Exam grades are a measure of public accountability and are used as established sifting devices by employers during their recruitment processes. As a result of this and for most of us, including society in general, qualifications are the widely accepted currency of academic proficiency. As a teaching practitioner, I too, want my students to pass their GCSE English exam and achieve, or indeed exceed their target grade. What is also unfolding, however, is that we do also have a responsibility to ensure that a formative and summative assessment process operates in a more holistic and genuinely educational way to ensure the development of our students as rounded and reasonable human beings and successful learners as well as active citizens.

This holistic view of education and the development of responsible, active citizens would also appear to be recognised in the new Ofsted Education Inspection Framework. The new Ofsted Framework places more significance on the quality of the establishment's educational practices and the quality of the curriculum design. In particular, the new Framework spotlights an organisation's commitment to educational research to support pedagogical approaches, together with a clear focus on the development of the wider skills of our citizens. The intention here is to ensure that these measures bring about a more holistic approach to the realisation

of curriculum intentions and not merely an instrumental focus on exam criteria and an ethos of ‘teach to test'.

The socio-political aspect of education, which draws upon the concepts of civic courage and social responsibility is referred to in the work of Giroux (2001). This form of holistic education nurtures the interrelated aspects of the physical, spiritual and cultural life of people. This affords our citizens the ability to acquire the necessary skills to not merely be utilised as machines in the labour market. This form of holistic education as described by Giroux (2001), enables students, as citizens, to critically examine the social and political status quo and to bring about the changes that they deem necessary. Giroux (2001) states that education should be properly ascribed to be referred to as a citizenship education, where all take seriously the connection between theory, practice, reflection and action.

The work of Ritchie (2009) also supports the notion of literacy as a civil right. Here Ritchie (2009), makes visible the hidden technical-rational agenda of increased accountability on quantifiable measures of literacy. Ritchie (2009) goes on to examine the possibility of alternative educational frameworks which reclaim education as a means of civic interest. These alternative literacy frameworks, Ritchie argues, can allow literacy educators to reclaim social justice and resituate this within the context of teaching for civic involvement.

Shulman’s (1987) observes how pedagogical content should not be driven solely by learning outcomes. For Schulman this should allow for the intersection of curriculum content and assessment and pedagogy for learning and teaching. In other words, in the context of this thesis, through AfL and other dialogic pedagogical interventions to support the wider skills development of our students. Murray and Porter (1996) are supportive of arguments that pedagogical content knowledge should be at the heart of the teacher educator’s work. In this way, they foreground the importance of multimodal and engaging pedagogy and assessment in the development of qualities of mind and character through vocational education in the FE sector.

When discussing literacy as a civil right, we turn again to the work of Freire (1970), who notes that the exercise of pedagogy should be problem-posing, democratising and especially conscientising activity. In essence, there is considerable support in the literature surrounding the use of dialogical approaches to education. Freire argues that he teacher and the student have to constantly undergo the process of communication through dialogue, which justifies the act of knowing as being properly dialectical. Freire (1970) also explores the theme of dialogical approaches to curriculum and the use of oracy. He suggests that dialogical

education is problem-posing, as it talks about the public sphere of life and heightens and supports awareness of inter-dependencies amongst its citizens.

Freire (1970), believes that designing pedagogical approaches in this way means putting man, i.e., the learner into the actual realm of existence and not outside of it. In-fact, he contends this frees human beings from '*the very structure of their thought that has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they find themselves and are. to some extent, shaped'* (Freire, 1970:27).

For the learners involved in GCSE resit English this damage to learners is amplified in the notion that they are simply not good enough or proficient in their own use of language. Failure to pass a GCSE English exam potentially signals to students that their literacy, the basic form of our communication channels as human beings, has been weighed in the balance and publicly found to be somewhat lacking. Learners have been told that their command of English is not at the required standard expected for someone of their age and that not only their English language but also, by inference, that they as human beings fall below the standards expected by employers.

This thesis argues that a strong focus on concrete knowledge and the narrowing of approaches to assessment which directly measuring learners' academic and cognitive skills in terms of atomised and decontextualised learning outcomes is potentially reducing UK citizens to objects in the form of a set of metrics and quantitative data sets. Much less common are the pedagogical efforts and educational value placed on measuring our educational citizens with regard to their experience, interactions, values and their approaches to study. These interactions also include students' attitudes and behaviours towards their subject of study and their ability to participate and to share these experiences in dialogue through the medium of oracy.

On the theme of experience in education, Freire (1970) draws our attention to the tyranny of imposed behaviour upon the 'oppressed' groups in society. He points out how forms of oppression create conditions for the imposition of failure which transforms the consciousness of individuals and groups and argues that these prescribed behaviours lead to economic and social failure/underachievement which become the hallmark of the oppressed. In summary, the oppressed create their own restraints and live up to (or perhaps more accurately, down to) the expectations and cycles of failure and disappointment. Freire (1970) believes that this learned behaviour plays a part in learners' motivation and actions of oppressed individuals and groups to break free from the cycle. In the context of this thesis, this suggests this cycle

of behaviour could be self-perpetuating for GCSE English resit students, and therefore they may well have become conditioned to believe that they are predetermined to fall into a destiny of a continuing cycle of failure. Freire (1970) reminds us that the central problem here is the acknowledgement that only when '*beings participated in developing the pedagogy of their liberation and discover they themselves to be the hosts of the oppressed can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy'* (Freire, 1970:30).

What would seem apparent is that lived experience and the story it tells should be taken seriously. Freire (1970) also supports the view that experience cannot be de-constructed from education, nor from the pedagogical approaches to curriculum design and assessment which frame it.

Freire (1970) sees the learner as no longer the spectator who sees the challenges of education from afar but the learner, for themselves, problematises them, a form of critical consciousness, which is properly human. The pedagogical approach adopted by Freire (1970) begins and ends with the widely held notion that as human beings we exist in both body and in experience in the world. Freire's argument here supports Dewey's (1938) foregrounding of the importance of the role of experience in education, which is also discussed in this Chapter.

Performativity in the Public Sector

Within the FE sector, teachers and society have experienced many reforms, all of which have placed a strong emphasis on the improvement of literacy, mathematics and science. Sector practitioners have also witnessed a plethora of changes in relation to assessment regimes, strategies and qualification reforms. However, one area that has remained relatively static is the continued emphasis on the assessment of outcomes alongside an unrelenting dependency on standardised end tests and examinations which aim to measure student outcomes and achievement.

Preoccupations with numbers, statistics and teacher surveillance are described by Ball (2010:215) as the struggle for *'teachers' souls and the terrors of performativity operating in the English education system today'*. Boyle (2001) makes a simple but very telling point regarding educational priorities. Boyle (2001) explains that as educators we have our collective pulse taken 24 hours a day. The constant use of statistics to measure educational achievement and impact Boyle argues, means that we in turn, start to understand our professional lives and our professional practice in that way. Boyle contends that the more figures we use as instrumental measures, the more the greater truths of education slip through our fingers.

As discussed above, Ball (2010:216) also draws our attention to the term performativity which he describes as a *'technology, a culture and mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change'*. This environment he points out, can ultimately create rewards and sanctions, both symbolic and material that encapsulate and represent the worth and quality of the educator within a field of judgement. More importantly he claims the control of this field of judgment determines what is classed as effective or satisfactory performance and what indicators of performance are considered valid.

Ball (2010) further argues that these ways of measuring the value and worth of educational practice can see teachers' educational values being challenged and questioned, and more importantly, threatened and displaced by *'these terrors of performativity'* (Ball 2010:216). In this climate of surveillance, he notes teachers struggle with their professional beliefs, commitment, creativity and professional integrity. This can in turn, Ball notes, lead to an internalised struggle and dilemmas for teachers torn between duty to self and duty to others. As Bernstein (1996:169) puts it '*value replaces values – commitment and service are of dubious worth within the new policy regime'*.

To counteract this concern, the work of (Seddon, 1997) is helpful, in suggesting that these incentives of performance are re-professionalising teachers and there is a possibility of becoming a triumphant self or becoming a new kind of professional and we can be more than what we were and better than others. However, as Ball (2010) reminds us, the work of the manager, the new hero of these educational reforms, or what Foucault (1979:294) describes them as '*technicians of behaviour*' are becoming the gatekeepers and wardens of such measures of performance. New banners and invisible pedagogies of management are continually raised, unfurled, realised, maintained and measured through frequent performance reviews, inspections, outcomes and appraisals.

Overall, these measures of performativity appear to contradict the need for the self-regulating professional autonomy of teachers as well the teacher's capacity for self-reflection, critique and improvement. Ball (2019) argues that this pushes teachers across the sector ever further towards positions and status of *'low-trust'* and situates them within the realms of constant and immediate surveillance and output comparisons (Ball 2010:219). Ball (2010) also indicates how as a result of this continued accountability and constant surveillance and bureaucratic recording instruments, these measures bring with them high degrees of stress uncertainty and instability for teachers and learners alike. (Ball 2010) identifies how teachers become,

ontologically, more insecure and question whether as teachers they are doing enough, doing the right thing, doing as much as others, or as well as others.

The work of Shore and Wright (1999) extends the concept of performativity even further. They argue that it is not always clear what is expected of teachers and that systems and processes are always (and arguably deliberately) kept, slippery, volatile and opaque. They suggest that policy imperatives can bring about unhelpful and sometimes damaging practices which satisfy performance requirements and not much else.

Shore and Wright (1999:570) point out that organisations can often place themselves in positions where they will do '*whatever is necessary to excel against these external measurements, however dubious'*. Smyth (2000) argues that such performative policy imperatives can also result in teachers internalising this labyrinth of performativity. In turn, they point out that this can generate high levels of self-doubt and personal anxiety, subdue teacher morale, deplete and divert the attention and energies of teachers and inhibit rather than encourage public debate and genuine educational improvement.

Oracy, Dialogue and the Language Instinct

Historically, one of the earliest traditions of oracy, is referenced to with the 'Augustan' traditions. This tradition had its roots in the 19th Century where the emphasis is placed upon both the aesthetics of oral performance, the recitation and performance of dramatic or poetic texts. It is believed that it is from this early tradition the core principles of the elocution class came. The participants of the Augustan tradition are expected to 'echo the voice of high culture, with clear, unambiguous and elegant expression' (Hewitt and Inghilleri 1993:310).

The actual term oracy was coined to specifically refer to listening and speaking skills required in first language educational contexts (Wilkinson 1965). The definition of oracy captures the combined importance of these two skills not only as a communicative competence but also as a means of thinking and learning the subject matter (Barnes 1998).

This study explores the interconnection between the spoken word and the power of dialogical feedback within the context of post-16 students. We are reminded by progressive thinkers such as Wittgenstein (1921) of the importance of oracy and its impact on our development and on our thinking as active citizens. Wittengstein (1921), upholds such concerns and shares with his readers the powerful observation that the limits of our language mean the limits of our world.

It is important to reiterate that this study is not wholly focused on student achievement. Ultimately, it seeks to uncover, through the use of formative assessment and the deployment of dialogical approaches to feedback, how the behaviours and attitudes of post-16 resit GCSE English students might be changed and improved. It explores not just the intellectual attributes of learners, but also the more complex issues relating to experiences of education, pedagogy, identity and social control (Bernstein, 1996, 2000).

Oracy focuses on developing spoken language proficiency and fluency and its links to the development of thinking. It is also concerned with making connections and building relationships. Critical dialogue and discourse, it is argued, can help to pose and solve problems, design and share information, and attend to complex situations in learning.

McConachie and Petrosky (2010) discuss the merits of 'disciplinary literacy and inquiry'. They define this disciplinary literacy as *'the use of reading, reasoning, investigating, speaking and writing required to learn and form complex content knowledge appropriate to a particular discipline'* (McConachie and Petrosky 2010:16).

McConachie and Petrosky (2010) note how the notion of disciplinary literacy points to attending to important considerations when compiling questions and discovering information about your students that grab their attention and arouse their curiosity. They particularly emphasise that these questions should be relevant to the students' lives and lived experiences. This underscores the idea that human experience is central to our development of functional literacy and cannot and should not be underestimated or ignored. That is why lived experience and learning from lived experience are key components of the data collection methods employed in this study.

Once again, this discussion returns us to the work of Freire (1970), in relation to oracy where he explores the essence of dialogue and the power of the spoken word itself. He notes that within the spoken word there are two dimensions, reflection and action. He contends that if one is sacrificed, even in part, the other immediately suffers. Freire (1970:69) identifies the spoken word as the '*means in which we achieve significance as human beings'*.

Beyond the development of oracy as a stand-alone skill, Williams and Roberts (2011) lend further weight to arguments which support the importance of oracy. They make the claim that the proficiency of an individual's speaking skill is the foundation of the development of thinking and written language. The main thrust of Williams and Roberts' (2011) argument is their observation that learners' oral verbalisation of thought is the pre-requisite to the development

of their motivation to write and their writing skills. In fact, the development of oracy highlights the connection and importance of all four key language skills. These comprise of speaking, listening, reading and writing where the link between speaking and writing is paramount.

Vygotsky (1978) also places enormous emphasis on the importance of listening, interaction and dialogue and the positive impact this can have on cognitive development (thinking) and writing. From a socio-cultural perspective Vygotsky (1978) argues that talking is necessary to encourage and develop thinking, clarify learning and support meaning-making in the development of thought and language in educational contexts. Vygotsky's socio-cultural approach to language acquisition and development reveals how pedagogical approaches to the use of oracy as a means of providing formative feedback warrant further exploration.

Noting Vygotsky's (1978) point, it is important to draw attention to how, as human beings, we speak before we write. In short, speaking helps us to think and thinking helps us to write. As discussed in Chapter 1, oracy it is argued, has always been a pre-cursor of literacy. As Vygotsky (1978) reminds us that the impact of socio-cultural factors in the development of language, thought and literacy are powerful and there is a dynamic relationship between all three.

The importance of dialogical pedagogical approaches to assessment is even more present in the use of spoken language in second language development. This connection is highlighted throughout the work of Goh (2014). Goh, (2014) states that oracy and spoken language development are highly valued in the context of second language development. In the same publication, Goh also draws attention to how speaking and listening are essential in structuring second language development and how this is crucial to second language proficiency.

Authors involved in the second language acquisition and development are strong advocates of the importance of speaking (Zeeland and Schmitt 2013) and the often, over-looked relationship between speaking and writing. Zeeland and Schmitt (2013) make the claim that learners utilise their vocabulary and knowledge of grammar to articulate their thoughts and to make meaning. More importantly when learners engage with others, they are pushed to use spoken language as precisely as they can to ensure that meaning is clear.

Goh (2014) reminds us of the value of listening and speaking and its role in the acquisition of oracy. Goh goes on to point out how oracy is therefore essential to academic learning and to creative and critical thinking. Goh (2014) draws attention to how spoken language development is an essential component in the process of language acquisition. Goh argues

that oracy strengthens learners' language, overall personal and their cognitive development regardless of their age or learning circumstances. The development of high levels of English language ability is particularly pressing for learners living in circumstances of acknowledged disadvantage and socio-economic deprivation. This is the particularly the case in the site of this research and is discussed in some detail in Chapter 1.

Goh (2014) further endorses the view that oracy should be included in more direct teaching through well-structured lessons arguing that meta-cognitive activities can also enable learners to become more aware of their learning processes and that this helps them to critically examine elements of language and discourse.

Hewitt and Inghilleri (1993), suggest that teachers should be encouraged to include oral group work, discussion and other forms of classroom talk which support higher order thinking and collaborative learning. The development of oral language itself they argue, should be foregrounded as a deliberate site of pedagogic activity. From this point of view, oracy can be seen as the golden thread linking curriculum design and multimodal pedagogical approaches to formative assessment.

One educational establishment which appears to have embraced multimodal pedagogical approaches to the development of oracy and dialogical teaching is the organisation 'Voice 21' (2016). The articulation of this organisation's mission has been realised and written into the fabric of the vision and ethos of the school. 'Voice 21' works with thousands of teachers and hundreds of schools to support and develop oracy both at classroom and whole-organisation level.

The work of 'Voice 21' (2016) underscores how oracy development should not be considered as a programme to be completed in one year and then removed from future curriculum planning. Nor should oracy be regarded as an enrichment activity which is made available to only some but not all students. What oracy development should be, 'Voice 21' argues, is an essential and integral facet of an effective, empowering, expansive curriculum and an inclusive educational experience.

The educational approach adopted by Voice 21 (2016) recognises that there is no one single or correct way to provide high quality oracy education. Members of Voice 21 are careful to acknowledge the importance of context and the recognition of the diversity and complexity of school and classroom contexts throughout the UK.

This report also draws attention to key concepts that underpin the potential of oracy development as a pedagogic approach. The Voice 21 report (2016) describes how at an individual level, oracy enhances the learner's ability to articulate ideas, develop understanding and engage with others through spoken language. The ability to question, to be curious, to reflect, to self-assess, to challenge, to defend and critique are all identified as being key traits of a successful college leaver. In foregrounding the value of oracy as a powerful tool for learning, the report argues that through high quality oracy education, students learn how to talk, to learn, rather that the very different concept of learning to talk. From this viewpoint, oracy is taken to be a powerful pedagogical approach, capable of deepening students' subject knowledge and understanding through talk in the classroom. At the core of this activity, is the belief that pedagogical approaches to the development of literacy through oracy need to be carefully planned, designed, modelled, scaffolded, integrated and structured into the curriculum in order to enable learners to know and be able to use talk in order to learn.

The ethos of Voice 21 (2016) is premised upon the resolute commitment that oracy skills are crucial to young people's success in school and in their life beyond. It is therefore vital that educators accept that an education which begins in oracy is the responsibility of every teacher and the entitlement of every learner. The same publication claims that the impact of high-quality oracy education can lead to an increase in student confidence and improved academic outcomes. This approach to oracy development is positioned as an integral component of the Voice 21 school's curriculum and oracy is at the heart of the school's educational endeavours. Advocates of this approach contend that it fosters well-being and equips students to thrive outside of school. They also attest that oracy can begin to close achievement gaps and promote social equity and justice for all learners.

Essentially, from this perspective oracy development is seen as an intrinsic part of the wider knowledge and skills agenda which involves developing a community of social practice. This also lends support to the work of Wenger (2002) who promotes the value of' communities of practice' as a means of supporting learning in different social contexts:

> *'Since the beginning of history, human beings have formed communities that share cultural practices, reflecting their collective learning, from a tribe round a cave fire, to a medieval guild… to a community of engineers. Participating in these 'communities of practice' is essential to our learning'.*
>
> (Wegner 2002:163)

Hewitt and Inghilleri (1993) also regard oracy skills as being crucially important to individual learning and intellectual development of students. The go on to identify the importance of talk

and narrative in self-expression and the value of civic attributes which are related to both the democratic process and the development of social capital in young adults.

In relation to social capital, the development of oracy is inextricably linked in this body of literature to a holistic learning experience and the development of a knowledge and skills sets capable of supporting future employment opportunities and life chances. Oracy, it could also be argued is directly link to the work of Hyland (2003), where he explores the rise of work-based learning, draws attention to the importance of social capital as well as the neglect of affective and psychomotor domains of learning in vocational education and assessment contexts. In the UK, high-quality work-based training is reported to be at the heart of the Government's 14-19 agenda (DfES, 2001:2). Hyland (2003) takes this further where he contends that high-quality work-based training is integral to all contemporary policy developments.

Returning to the importance of oracy as a pedagogical device, the work of (Hynds and Rubin 1990) points to how more attention needs to be given to the importance of talk and its relationship to thinking and learning in the classroom. They suggest that talk and its relationship to thinking can enculture students from all backgrounds into education-based discourse and dialogic norms.

In discussing oracy and dialogical approaches to feedback, it is also necessary to consider the role of metacognition. Metacognition, as defined by (Goh, 2014:4) is '*thinking about thinking'*. Goh (2014) makes the case that an individual's metacognitive ability through spoken language development allows the person to exercise control over their own learning by reflecting on, planning, monitoring and evaluating their learning processes. In addition, it could be argued that this process essentially involves paying attention to stages in the assessment feedback cycle.

Goh and Burn (2012) note how the role of metacognition can be seen as being particularly critical to oracy development on the grounds that many of the learners' mental processes during speech comprehension and production are hidden from teachers. More importantly, they argue the same processes are quite often hidden from the learners themselves. The same authors also note that learners may only have a vague feeling of what they are learning or a tenuous grasp of the problems and challenges they face in their learning and what they need to improve. It is important therefore to note that previously learners may also have limited opportunities to articulate these experiences.

It therefore seems appropriate at this point to suggest that teachers need to find more ways to help learners to articulate their experiences, share their understanding of them and manage their cognitive processes, emotions and ways of making sense of those experiences. This might be achieved through activities designed to raise learners' awareness and strategies which might be employed in supporting wider knowledge and skills development including speaking and listening.

Goh and Burn (2012) also support the view that by engaging learners directly through dialogue and oracy development, it is possible that teachers can also increase learners' metacognitive knowledge. Goh and Burn (2012) note the merits of dialogue and spoken language as students learn to comprehend and develop a repertoire of strategies to enable them to participate in oracy based pedagogic interactions.

Moving this discussion forward to an economic perspective and on a global scale, (Goh 2014) suggests that the ability to communicate orally needs to be recognised as a critical component of communicative competency in the 21st Century as every country is connected and plugged into the global economy. Goh (2014) argues that there is a need for employees to proficiently participate in aspects of critical thinking, collaborative problem-solving, innovation, cooperation and cross-cultural communication. Focusing on the importance of speaking and listening and its proficiency, Goh (2014) argues that this is now a key enabler for an individual's personal and professional success in the globalised world where English is the widely accepted language of international communication.

It is reasonably widely accepted that a citizens' ability to use oracy and spoken language to demonstrate these competencies is highly valued by employers. The acquisition of improved spoken language skills for young adults therefore should be an imperative within the vocational curriculum. From the above discussion, it also appears evident that the design scheduling and sequencing of Schemes of Learning and in planning and approaches to pedagogy and assessment need to reflect this.

Cribb (2002) reminds us that within the academic oracy agenda there are bigger debates surrounding what form of spoken discourse should be taught. Cribb (2002) describes this development of oracy as extended discourse. A discourse in which the speaker is required to produce a sequence of language with minimal interruption from the interlocutor. Cribb (2002) contends that the development of this knowledge and skills carries significant value for students in both their academic environment and also further personal development opportunities.

The work of the authors cited so far in this Chapter, help us to see that in society and as educators we should not rely solely on the printed word in the development of language and literacy. As educators we need therefore to acknowledge and recognise that within curriculum outcomes and in the processes of curriculum design, there needs to be a clear focus in improving students' speaking and writing skills.

Although in the new, reformed GCSE English specification, spoken language is included, a separate endorsement is given. However, no real significance is attached to the use of spoken language in terms of marks towards the exam-based outcomes. The overall GCSE English grade, therefore, is not influenced by, or accredited in relation to the spoken language element. This factor appears to corroborate the inferior status of spoken language in the GCSE English examination as well as evidencing a serious under-estimation of the role of oracy in language and literacy development. The Voice 21 (2016) report also notes that oracy as a pedagogical device is given scant coverage in the national curriculum, reflecting its reduced status in the GCSE new 9-1 grading specification. By excluding this element from the exam grading process and not allowing spoken language outcome to contribute towards the overall grade, despite research and rhetoric to the contrary, the GCSE English examination clearly devalues the importance of spoken language in favour of the written word.

As a result of its low status there also appears to be a lack of focus on oracy in teachers' initial and continuing professional development, coupled with potential missed opportunities within the assessment feedback strategies to utilise oracy effectively in the development of GCSE English language and literacy. As already discussed, the importance of oracy in the development of literacy is not to be underestimated and it is the responsibility of policy professionals, education leaders, teachers and Awarding Bodies (ABs) to understand how we can best enable every student to benefit from an education worthy of the name which recognises, values and employs oracy in the development of literacy.

Experience and Education

Dewey (1938) underscores the importance of experience in understanding human learning. He argues that all human action is meaningful and worthy of interpretation and examination. What Dewey (1938) offers us is an account of experience, where we exist in a world that is sensed and felt first rather than cognised. What Johnston's work (2014) draws our attention to is that inquiry begins and ends with experience. Experience supplies the impetus for inquiry

within the situations or events in which we find ourselves. In this way, inquiry is born of experience engaging us in careful thought and reflection.

Over one hundred years ago, Dewey highlights the virtues of learning by doing. In contemporary classrooms, learning by doing is seen as the 'gold standard' and a means of student engagement. Dewey urges to us that to *'give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is such a nature as to demand thinking….; learning naturally results*'. (Dewey 1916/2004:148).

Dewey's philosophical reasoning holds much relevance for us today. He continues to provide us with insights into the challenges currently faced by practitioners surrounding accountability, standardisation and assessment. It is recognised in the work of Dewey (1938) that externally imposed accountability measures can serve to pressurise teachers into becoming '*imprisoned in routine*' (Dewey, 1998:112) Similarly, standardisation and accompanying assessment can become '*dogmatic, lacking critical examination of their own underlying principles*' (Dewey 1938:22).

The conception of knowledge and education advocated by Dewey (1938) is holistic in the sense that it is embedded, and it recognises the inter-connection between mind and body, theory and practice. This holistic stance is central and needs to be conjoined to support learning of any kind. Indeed, Dewey's whole philosophy of education is underpinned by research and thinking in the field of how as humans we think and learn not in one dimension of education (cognition) but in all three of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor dimensions of how we learn … in experience. This suggests that 'talking' about literacy and lived experience and keeping this present in the conversation might help to identify and refine pedagogic devices which support formative assessment.

Dewey's (1938) acknowledges that the use of traditional and progressive experiential education is not an either-or philosophy. He urges us to understand and recognise that both traditional and progressive approaches to education have strengths and weaknesses in their pedagogic practices.
It seems appropriate at this point to take Dewey's (1938) advice onboard and to view progressive and traditional education as more of a compare and contrast activity which draws upon the merits and challenges of both schools of thought:

> *'The general principles of the new education do not of themselves solve any of the problems of the actual or practical conduct and management of progressive schools.*

> *Rather, they set new problems which have to be worked out on the basis of a new philosophy of experience. The problems are not even recognised, to say nothing of being solved, when it is assumed that it suffices to reject the ideas and practices of the old education.'*
>
> (Dewey, 1938:21)

What is apparent, here is that Dewey's (1938) experiential education is at the heart of his work. Dewey is considered, by many academics, as the philosophical father of experiential education. He is particularly critical of traditional approaches to education which do not attend to the role of education in contributing to society and enabling students to lead fulfilled lives. He holds the view that traditional education does not address learners' needs in terms of the planning and implementation of the curriculum and focuses too heavily on the transmission of past experience and traditions. According to (Eldeeb, 2013), traditional education is over-reliant upon predetermined and prescribed aims, methods of instructions and disciplines. Concepts which are handed down from the past to be transmitted in static and traditional ways which simply require evidence of the end product, with little or no attention paid to the educational appropriateness or value of the processes through which these outcomes were acquired.

In contrast, Dewey (1938) regards progressive education as offering an opportunity for students to learn authentically through experience. Dewey (1938) suggests that progressive education offers opportunities for the expression of development of individuality as well as a means of foregrounding the intimate and necessary relationship between the process of actual individual experience and collaborative educational activity. He does however caution us to remember that the discussion of progressive education can become too reactionary and take a too free approach without really knowing how or why freedom can be used usefully within an educational context. He goes on to point out that freedom for freedom's sake, is a weak philosophy of education. He suggests that educators should give students freedom guarded by proper discipline in a democratic way that will not hinder their future learning.

Dewey's (1938) theory of experience appears to arise from the interaction of two principles, continuity and interaction. Continuity means that each experience takes from the past and is having an effect on the future experience of the individual. Whilst interaction refers to the situational and educator's influence on students' experience, thus arguing that educators must first understand the nature of human experience. Dewey states that the value of an experience is judged by the effect that this experience has for the individual in terms of the learning they draw from it and how this learning impacts on the individual's present and future experience.

The value of the experience is also judged by the extent to which the individual is able and willing to contribute positively to society as a consequence of this learning.

Moving back to experience and education and more importantly to lived experience and it's narrative, I turn now to the work of Gregory (2009). He notes that experience is the narrative of our life, the story it tells. Gregory (2009) goes on to illuminate this further where he reminds us that as human beings we are shaped by stories and that we are indeed the subject of our own story:

> *"From the time we are born, the narrative cradle of story rocks us to the collective heartbeat of our species, ushering us across the threshold of consciousness and into the domain of humanity."*
>
> (Gregory, 2009:1)

Gregory (2009) highlights how stories are a vitally important component of the ethical development, qualities of mind and character. As human beings, he points out we engage with stories and they are an important component of every human being's education about the world. Moving this concept on further, the work of Midgley is helpful where she urges us to consider ourselves and our learners as *whole* people not disembodied minds and not as computers:

> *"The tabu on organic ways of thinking may now be lifting. It may even become possible for our species to admit that it is not some supernatural variety of Lego, but a kind of animal. This ought to make it easier to admit that we are not self-contained and self-sufficient either as a species or as individuals but live naturally in deep mutual dependence…We think as whole people, not disembodied minds, not as computers'.*
>
> (Midgely, M., 1996, pp.10-12).

When exploring the criteria of experience further, Eldeeb (2013) states that if we as educators believe in democracy then we will adapt to a progressive education model more easily. A progressive educational model is more in accord with the democratic ideal and its methods as it can admit and even celebrate and embrace the fallibility of the human condition. This is also coupled with a recognition of the need for open-mindedness and that in turn this serves to further enhance human experience. Eldeeb (2013) highlights how the merits of progressive education as it applies the principle of continuity, allows interaction and involves teaching students in a manner consistent with them becoming positively interactive, democratic and dynamic learners. Eldeeb (2103) claims that progressive education is helpful in ensuring a high degree of unity between the curriculum on paper and the curriculum in practice.

Dewey (1938) urges practitioner-researchers to move beyond binary paradigm wars between and competing ontological and epistemic positions. Instead, he invites us to appreciate that

what we need to acknowledge in theories of learning in education is the importance, value and place of the role of experience in the development of different forms of knowledge.

The Internal Goods of Education

Recognising the challenge faced by education providers who are measured by quantifiable outcomes, Baldacchino (2012) points to the need for an exit pedagogy which allows curriculum to break free from the capitalisation of education, or as Biesta describes as '*exam factories'* (Biesta, 2017:12). Biesta, (2010) goes beyond aspects of imitation in skills development. He points to the importance of developing the whole person, arguing that there are 3 functions or purposes of education. Biesta's first purpose is 'Qualification', gaining knowledge, skills, dispositions needed to go on and do something. The second purpose is 'Socialisation', becoming part of society, the existing ways of doing and being within culture and tradition. The third and final purpose is 'Subjectification', becoming more autonomous and independent, in thinking and acting (in essence, the opposite of socialisation), Biesta (2010:32).

Biesta's idea of subjectification resonates with the work of Sennett (2008) who draws attention to how acquiring a new skill should never be restricted to pre-determined skills and prescribed outcomes which is in stark contrast to the quantifiable measured outcomes of GCSE English exams.

Biesta's (2010) Subjectification therefore focuses on learning that does not consist of predefined content or competence in a way to provide students with space and time to challenge existing rhetoric so they can advance their existing practices achieve new perspectives of their craft, opening up opportunities for learners to explore their own rationale and position in relation to existing discourses, (Sennett, 2008).

Moving this discussion forward through the work of Dunne (1993) in relation to the discipline of Education as well as the work of Biesta (2017) who suggests that creativity and the arts have become re-defined from expression into a 'skill', which is deemed accomplished by a measurement of an external examination outcome. Both of the above authors are critical of the justification of the arts and creativity in terms of quantifiable outcomes steered towards a curriculum which is '*counted*' (Biesta, 2017:13).

This is not to discount the purpose and value of examinations completely. The curriculum is at the heart of a publicly funded education which determines what learners will know and be able to go on to do over time. Public funding also, of course, requires measures of public accountability. The content and design of the curriculum matters because it defines the

knowledge that learners will receive. However Biesta (2009), argues that a lack of attention to the aims and ends of education can potentially lead to a reliance on academic achievement which in turn can result in curriculum narrowing. Furthermore, Biesta (2009) cautions that curriculum narrowing can negatively impact on curriculum design, leading to a reduction in the time spent on pedagogy and curriculum content in order to mirror test-related content.

Formative Assessment - Theory and Practice

Formative Assessment, sometimes known as *Assessment for Learning* (AfL) has had a high profile for a number of years within UK schools, FE and in other educational providers. More importantly, rather than being yet another government-imposed initiative, formative assessment needs to be continually defined, refined and adapted by teachers as various strategies are deployed and reviewed. Teachers can and should continue to delve deeper into the practicalities of making aspects of formative assessment and the first principles of AfL, active learning, genuinely good in practice.

Over half a century ago, Ausubel (1968) suggests that the most important factor in influencing learning is what the learner already knows. It is the role of the teacher he argues to ascertain this and teach accordingly. This methodology appears to be straightforward. However, as Black and Wiliam (2001) point out the implementation of this prescription is far from simple.

Black and Wiliam (1998) review a range of literature in the field of formative assessment and summarise their findings in the publication, '*Inside the Black Box'* (1998). For Black and Wiliam, formative assessment consists of four basic elements, underpinned by confidence that every child can improve. The 4 basic elements are firstly, sharing learning goals, secondly, active learning, thirdly, questioning that evokes thinking, thirdly, self and peer evaluation and finally, useful feedback that requires and supports further active learning and improved achievement.

As a result of their work and in conducting a comprehensive review of research in the field of formative assessment practices, Black and Wiliam (1998) assert that the face of assessment theory and practice today has changed and still needs to change considerably. Their work is partly responsible for the widespread focus in education on the particular approach to assessment known as "formative assessment" a guiding principle of which is active learning.

It is apparent that since the original work of Black and Wiliam (1998) a clear conceptual framework was developed based upon a substantial body of peer-reviewed and published work in the field of formative assessment. This body of work has gained momentum and an

increasingly higher profile across education in the UK. Ultimately, this has encouraged some teachers to engage in action research designed to develop and refine practical strategies to improve the use of a first principle of Assessment for Learning in practice. These strategies deployed in AfL are intended to drive improvements in education forward. To drive forward with the aim of increasing the positive impact of teaching and learning by employing and refining the principles and assessment strategies underpinning the practice of formative assessment. Clarke (2005) notes that the original development of formative assessment is an inextricable a result of action research. She argues that its first principle of formative assessment is active learning – keeping the learner actively engaged in learning.

The work of Black and Wiliam (2001) is helpful in making us aware that students do not learn what they are taught if they are not actively and constantly engaged in the learning process. Even when a session is well-planned and delivered effectively, with all learners engaged, learning outcomes can often bear little relation to what was educationally intended. We are also reminded through their work that student learning is impossible to completely prescribe or predict, in advance. They argue that it is only through ongoing formative assessment strategies that a teacher can find out whether a particular sequence of instructional activities or learning intentions has achieved the intended or educationally desired learning outcomes.

Once again, through the work of Black and Wiliam (1998), it is apparent that two features appear to be particularly important in the design stage of formative assessment. The first is, that the evidence generated is instructionally traceable. Black and Wiliam (1998) explain that the evidence is more than information about the presence of a gap between current and desired performance. They argue that the evidence gleaned through formative assessment should provide information about what kinds of instructional activities are likely to further improve performance.

The second requirement of AfL is that the learner is obliged to engage in actions that improve learning and increase their levels of achievement. This may involve carrying out additional activities set by the teacher, for example asking a peer for specific help, or reflecting on different ways to move their learning forward. This view correlates with the work of Clarke (2005) who advises teachers to make time and space during class for students to act upon the teacher's feedback, therefore making inroads to closing the gap between each student's current and potential achievement.

As previously discussed, this thesis is not dismissing exam outcomes. This, quite rightly, remains an important part of a teacher's role and obligations toward public accountability and

as educators we should not apologise for this. It is the responsibility of any state funded education system and a natural and necessary part of public accountability. However, what should also be a key priority for teachers is to identify practical ways in which assessment of learning can become more of an active experience for students in FE contexts.

The work of Black and Wiliam (1998) helps us to see that the most educationally intended feedback is rendered useless if it is not acted upon. They also further remind us that feedback cannot be evaluated without also taking into account, the instructional context in which it is provided, and used. Deci & Ryan, (1994) and Boekaerts (2006) also offer insights into strategies which encourage students to be owners of, and accountable for, their own learning. This research also draws upon the metacognition and motivational aspects of learning linked to notions of feedback as self-regulating learning. As Boekaerts (2006) argues self-regulated learning is both metacognitively governed and affectively charged.

To reiterate, at the centre of the formative assessment process is the notion of the active learner. The role of the teacher shifts from controller to coordinator. By developing oracy and other forms of multimodal formative assessment and pedagogic devices as Clarke (2005) observes, we can begin to find connections between formative assessment activity and improvements in learners' achievements. She argues that the biggest difference to classroom delivery will be that the teacher will do less of the talking and the students will be more engaged in thinking and more importantly in articulating and acting upon that thinking.

Clarke (2005) also considers this model of professional development to be one of the most respected and most powerful ways of bringing about change within educational practice. She highlights how formative assessment has developed so quickly and it has become a *'living, breathing, evolving animal*' (Clarke 2005:2). She identifies key elements in unlocking formative assessment, based upon sharing learning goals, effective questioning, self and peer evaluation, formative assessment and practical and useful feedback. This directly corresponds with the key principles set out by Black and Wiliam (1998).

Throughout Clarke's (2005) discussion of formative assessment she repeatedly refers to how these four first principles of formative assessment must be underpinned by the teacher's confidence and their ability to ensure that the learner is an active participant in their learning and that the role of the teacher is to shift between controller and co-ordinator.

However, there is also a need for some caution surrounding the use of formative assessment as signalled in the work of Crooks (1988). His review of these practices focuses mainly upon

assessment surrounding test related subjects. Crooks (1988) concludes that too much emphasis is placed on the grading function and too little attention placed on the role of assisting students to learn. This viewpoint particularly resonates with my own experiences as a teacher of English where I have found an overly heavy focus upon progress against target grade within the GCSE English curriculum. Crooks (1988) also draws attention to this imbalance regarding the time spent on the grading function that could have been more helpfully and usefully on other genuinely educational activities. Crooks (1988) asserts that this evaluation practice is actually counter-productive, resulting in:

> *'Reduction of intrinsic motivation, debilitating evaluation anxiety, ability attributions for success and failure that undermine student effort, lowered self-efficacy for learning in the weaker students, reduced use and effectiveness of feedback to improve learning, and poorer social relationships among the students.'*
>
> (Crooks, 1988:468)

This level of caution is also echoed in the work of Perrenoud (1998), who directs attention to the low impact of written formative feedback and how students react to it as discussed in Chapter 1. The main point here is in terms of the time teachers spend providing written feedback which does not necessarily reflect the time students spend upon acting upon that feedback to improve their learning and levels of achievement. It therefore seems fitting that these tensions and contradictions in assessment theory and practice are further explored and developed in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Further investigation into the proportion of teachers' time, in relation to the proportion of students' time acting upon that feedback in order to improve their learning, is foregrounded in the work of Perrenoud (1998). This work acknowledges that the feedback given to pupils in class is like so many bottles thrown into the sea. '*No one can be sure that the message they contain will one day find a receiver*' (Perrendoud, 1998:87). We are also reminded of the consequence of this through the work of Deci & Ryan (1994), who suggest that the design of effective formative assessment cannot be detached from the learning environment and the circumstances and contexts in which it is undertaken.

Deci and Ryan (1994) also draw attention to how student motivation and self-perception as well as their self-assessment histories are all important influences on how assessment feedback is received. Once again, this reinforces the need to take the lived experiences of students seriously, including the impact that lived experience can have on future learning. As already discussed, this is particularly pertinent when dealing with students who are resitting a GCSE English examination for the second or third time.

From the above, we can see that insights into the importance of student perspective offered in the work of Black and Wiliam (1998) together with importance they place upon the role of the teacher chronicle how the guiding principles of AfL developed. What is clearly apparent however, is that what is offered is a set of emerging principles not a series of rigid rules. Changes in AfL practice in the classroom are central rather than marginal and these need to be incorporated by each teacher in the contexts of their own practice, in their own way for formative assessment practices to "work" in a wide range of contexts across the sector. Black and Wiliam (1998) recognise that this level of reform in the field of assessment theory and practice will inevitably take time and require continuing support from both education leaders, and practitioner-researchers.

Ensuring a balanced exploration of the potential of Assessment for Learning, we are drawn once again back to the work of Clarke (2008) who prompts us to understand that the term 'assessment for learning' carries with it some troubling misconceptions. The biggest of these is that formative assessment is about assessing what the students know, setting targets and deciding how and the extent of which these targets have been met. The key to impactful formative and summative assessment Clarke argues, is about deepening and furthering the learning, rather than simply instrumentally and mechanically measuring the student's performance against a prescribed and narrow set of assessment outcomes.

Exploring the work of Clarke (2008) in more detail, reveals a stark reminder that in unlocking effective assessment strategies, teachers should always be mindful of securing and maintaining the first principles of active learning. As teachers we must fully understand the implications of implementing formative assessment feedback. In doing so, we must be prepared and be able to measure what Clarke (2008) describes as 'process' or 'open skills' as opposed to closed skills, i.e., what a student can do, or not do. She also reminds us that teachers need to be mindful of the existence of a continuum of achievement and the notion that success must always be fostered and a 'not yet' approach actively encouraged as and when required. Clarke (2005) also reiterates the implications of feedback and discussion in open and closed skills assessment. Closed skills, she argues are in principle being able to do something or not.

Boud (2000), also advocates that students should be included as partners in the assessment process to allow them to make these processes their own, rather than ones to which they are subject. The giving and receiving of feedback on one's work mirrors the kind of informal assessment activities that take place in the world of work. It also seems appropriate at this

point to draw upon the work of Fullan (2011) who identifies an interconnection between learning and feedback, and that 'learning in progress' can be a critical driver for educational reform. Black and Wiliam (1998) highlight how effective feedback takes place within the processes of formative assessment and how, if effective, these can help to enable students to be lifelong learners.

Moving this discussion forward, Earl (2003; 2012) distinguishes between assessment as assessment *of* learning and assessment *for* learning. This is not a new concept, and it appears to be very much aligned to the question Hyland raises (discussed above) concerning the recognition of the importance of all 3 domains of learning in vocational education (and indeed in all sectors of education). Assessment *of* learning and assessment *for l*earning represent an attempt to strike a balance between the continual pursuit of learning geared solely to examination outcomes and the need to use formative assessment to measure progress in all domains of learning, including cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning.

We already know from the work of Hyland and from data derived from this study, that written feedback focuses heavily on the acquisition of the measurement of acquired knowledge. It has also been shared that within this FE establishment, we currently monitor progress against target grade and assessment schedules which currently do not focus on the holistic development of the student, Earl (2003: 2012).

AfL is traditionally viewed in formative assessment circles as a way to discover how much a student has learned (Boud, 1995). This is normally measured against a quantifiable outcome and external certification or, described by Knight (2002), as feed-out. This approach focuses on the amount of knowledge that has been accumulated by the student (Boud, 1995).

The purpose of AfL is to provide assessment feedback focused more on the measurement of the learners' achievements and to identify and take their next steps in a learning process (Gikandi, Morrow and Davis 2011). AfL is recognised as a potentially powerful strategy in promoting and enabling learning as opposed to just measuring it (Sambell, 2016, Laveault and Allal, 2016). Data from this thesis (discussed in later chapters of this thesis) point to a potential link between AfL, including its first principle of active learning, and the concept of enhancing learning through assessment in practice. Literature surrounding AfL foregrounds the importance of teachers being more student-centred and of finding and developing more multimodal ways of engaging students in the assessment process (Sambell, 2016).

It would appear that AfL begins from the starting point that all students are partners in the feedback process (Sadler, 2010). This aligns with more holistic views of assessments of student progress in comparison to an overt preoccupation with quantifiable outcomes.

Assessment *of* Learning and Assessment *for* Learning

Theoretically formative assessment is intended to be used as a way to discover how much has been learned (Boud, 1995). This is normally measured against a quantifiable outcome and external certification or, as described by Knight (2002) in terms of 'feed-out'. This approach focuses upon the amount of knowledge that has been accumulated and knowledge that could potentially be developed by the student (Boud, 1995).

A focus on exam outcomes remains an important part of a teacher's role and as discussed above, as educators we should not apologies for this. However, what should be a key focus are ways in which AfL can become more of an authentic and active experience for students.

Historically, the traditional process of assessment has involved deciding, collecting and making judgements regarding evidence relating to learner competency (Porno 2016).

The purpose of AfL is focused more on the measurement of the learners' achievements in a learning process (Gikandi, Morrow and Davis 2011). (Gikandi, Morrow and Davis 2011 suggest that there is a place for both Assessment *of* Learning and Assessment *for* Learning The same authors point to the need in endeavours to support student progress that concerns themselves with the many forms of narrative surrounding learner experiences of feedback together with a concern for a more balanced and holistic approach to formative assessment and the educational value of the student experience.

The concept of AfL is recognised as a powerful strategy to promote and enable learning as opposed to just measuring it in terms of the summative Assessment of Learning (Sambell, 2016, Laveault and Allal, 2016). Data from this thesis also point to a potential link between AfL and the concept of enhancing learner experience as an integral part of assessment in practice.

Literature surrounding AfL foregrounds the importance of teachers being more student-centred and of finding and developing more diverse, mutli-method ways of engaging students in the assessment process (Sambell, 2016). It would appear that Assessment for Learning begins from the starting point that all students and teachers are partners in the feedback process (Sadler, 2010). This appears to be more aligned with holistic views of student

assessment and progress in stark contrast with an overt preoccupation with quantifiable outcomes.

Black and Wiliam (1998) demonstrate how formative assessment strategies can raise student learning and standards of achievement significantly, particularly in relation to learners with a previous history of lower achievement. More importantly, Black and Wiliam (1998) extend this narrative to GCSE in particular to show this claim is evidenced in increases made to examination Grade outcomes.

Clarke (2008) urges us to remember that assessment techniques should not just focus on performance culture but effective assessment for learning techniques and that these need to be punctuated with process and product focused performance orientations. She encourages teachers to explore more subtle comparative pedagogic devices in their approaches to assessment, including positive body language, tone of voice and work ethic in more subtle and multimodal approaches to assessment.

Critical Discussion Surrounding Assessment for Learning

Discourses within the Literature Review has focused on the merits of Assessment for Learning, it seems prudent therefore to review and highlight those academics who air caution and give a valuable critique of Assessment for Learning in order to offer a balanced discussion surrounding the theory and assessment of AFL in practice.

As already discussed in the Literature Review, the work of Black and Wiliam (1998a, 1998b) demonstrates that assessment is vital to education and that both formative and summative assessment are effective strategies for promoting student learning. However, as Marshall and Drummonds (2006) note that some practices embody the spirit of Assessment for Learning, whereas others conform merely to the letter. Their research suggests that whilst the former can help prepare for future learning, the second is merely a tool for judging students' performance. They make it clear that there is a distinction between Assessment for Learning as tool for looking at past performance or helping prepare for future learning. Hence, they acknowledge that in some cases the emphasis of Assessment for Learning is so formulaic that it does little to move teachers and students from passively looking back at the past.

Klenowski (2009) and Stewart (2012) also note how this performance dichotomy started to emerge as AfL gained impetus and was subsequently approved and championed as part of Governmental larger national initiatives, particularly the case in England with the Assessment for Learning Strategy (AfLS).

Torrance (2007:282), agrees and coins the precise term '*criteria compliance'*. He suggests that criteria compliance has come to replace the teaching and learning experience because assessment procedures have begun to completely dominate the educational landscape and setting. Torrance (2007) goes on to argue that Assessment for Learning has become so technical in some institutions that in a very real sense, that the impact of Assessment for Learning has become deformative because the performativity and accountability agendas triumph.

Despite a plethora of literature on Assessment for Learning, it is becoming more apparent that the theory and practice of formative assessment appears, to be, as, Torrance (2012:2) describes as '*at a crossroads'*.

Torrance (2012) points out that in particular, formative assessment now finds itself at an impasse. He adds that despite the theoretical progress and validation over many years of formative assessment, the practice of formative assessment is often limited in terms of the execution of the full range of possible approaches associated with formative assessment, more importantly, it inclines to include '*fairly mechanistic forms of activity'* (Torrance 2012:2).

Other literature raising concerns surrounding the implementation of formative assessment as opposed to apprehensions raised regarding summative assessment includes the work of Scriven (1967). The concept of formative assessment was introduced originally by Scriven (1967) in the context of formative curriculum evaluation. This was later extended by Bloom (1969) in relation to the evaluation and improvement of educational processes, including teaching. More recently, the biggest advancement and landmark exploration of formative assessment is reflected in the works of Black and Wiiam (1998a and 1998b).

Sadler (1998:20) describes summative assessment as follows; '*Summative assessment is that, an assessment at the end to determine outcome'*. According to Sadler (Ibid), summative assessment measures what students have learnt at the end of their learning journey as well as creating opportunities for measures of accountability for student performance through testing (Sadler, 1998).

Returning to the discussion on formative assessment, and with reference to Bloom (1969:48), the purpose of formative assessment was to provide feedback and correctives at each stage in the teaching-learning process to support and improve student learning, whereas summative evaluation was used to judge what the learner had achieved at the end of a course. Torrance

(2012) notes that the emerging difficulty is that formative assessment is being reduced to regular classroom tests, which are used for monitoring student's progress to improve grade and test results. Shuichi (2016) adds their voice to this concern by highlighting the risk of using feedback as a means of simply 'telling the student a score or grade or whether their answer is correct or incorrect.

Ramprasad's (1983) work with regard to Assessment for Learning is described in the seminal work of Black and Wiliam (2009). Assessment for Learning is considered to consist of three key processes – Establishing where the learners are in their learning, - establishing where they are going, and - establishing what needs to be done to get them there.

Shuich (2016) points that in most cases problems arise when assessment is inappropriately applied in practice in ways which formative assessment is very often, misunderstood and misinterpreted. The 3 main establishing points of Ramprasad's (1983) work then fall short – where the learners are in their learning, where they are going and what needs to be done are often interpreted as – what level are the students, what is the next step in order to remedy where they are short and how to identify the next target. By referring to Ramprasad's example, we are able to see the success in learning is identified as attainting a target. As a result, the process of formative assessment becomes increasingly mechanistic, judging student performance in relation to the grade and telling the student how to reach the target rather than discovering what they are learning,

Many other researchers including Bennett (2011), Klenowski (2009), Hargreaves (2013) and Swafffield (2011) agree. They take the view that the most serious threat to the effectiveness of formative assessment occurs when it is made to conform into larger accountability systems and measures which have management consequences for teachers, subjects and curriculum areas considered to be underperforming and more pressure is applied to improve test performance. This viewpoint resonates strongly with the GCSE resit English agenda.

Torrance's (2012) supports the position set out by Ball (2010) where he points to the terrors of performativity as discussed in the Literature Review, whereby in such an accountability driven culture significant tensions exist, particularly between the practices of formative assessment and summative assessment. As a result of these tensions, formative assessment is often reduced to a mini-summative assessment or a series of teaching techniques instrumentally designed simply to improve students' test scores.

When exploring formative assessment in more detail, it would seem that all reported academics in this field recognise the rich potential of formative assessment, however the proposed threat stems from, what appears to be misunderstandings, misrepresentation and misguided applications of the theory and practices of formative assessment. Sadler (1998), notes that '*formative assessment is not well understood by teachers and is weak in practice, contrary to what might be expected, after several decades of research, there remains much that is unresolved and problematic and much still to do*'. (Sadler, 1998:78). Torrance, (2007) adds further weight to this claim and states that formative assessment practices are being used without a clear understanding of why and this can lead to the practice of criteria compliance. Compliance which is very much driven by Governmental strategies and the definition of a useful assessment being '*to identify barriers to pupil progress and using that information to plan and discuss the next steps in learning'* (DCSF, 2008:5). Dweck (2006) makes the point that Assessment for Learning should focus on effort rather than intelligence, or from her perspective, the absolute standard of the work must be related to recognition of the effort put into achieving it.

All of the above authors concur that formative assessment when deployed effectively is a vital function in identifying learning needs and adjust teaching to meet the diversity of the modern classroom. However, where the concern comes to the fore, is once again, based on the disconnect between the theory of formative assessment and formative assessment in practice.

Thought's Longest Journey

As discussed above, there is already an extant and extensive body of literature related to the background to and provenance of the taxonomies of thinking and learning. In the 1950s Benjamin Bloom and his associates began developing taxonomies of learning to categorise educational objectives. These learning objectives are developed in the form of a graduated hierarchy which claimed could scaffold learning. The outcome of this collaboration became known as what educators now term, *Bloom's Taxonomy* (1954). This taxonomy was offered in 1954 by Bloom and his associates as a blueprint for the science of education and a high road to the identification of a set of learning goals to be achieved in order to promote good education.

Bloom's Taxonomy (1954) originally set out to develop all three main domains of learning, the cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Firstly, the cognitive domain focused on learning and thinking with a strong emphasis placed upon cognitive knowledge, using the mind and intellectual abilities. Domains and levels in Bloom's Taxonomy are often expressed in terms

of the cognitive instructional or behavioural objectives that begin with command verbs. The affective domain concerns itself with emotional learning and feeling, i.e., attitudes, appreciations, interests, values and adjustments aspects of learning. Finally, the psychomotor domain concerns itself with physical aspects of learning and doing with an emphasis on speed, accuracy, dexterity and physical skills.

It seems appropriate when exploring and discussing different domains that careful attention is given to how and why the literature in this field of study came to be heavily focused upon issues surrounding the development of the cognitive domain to the neglect of the other two. This issue would appear to directly correlate with Hyland's (2018) acknowledgement that the affective and psychomotor domains have been neglected in the development of our understanding of the existence of, and important dynamics between, different domains of human learning.

Commentators have noted a neglect of the affective and psychomotor domains, (Hyland, 2018; Weare, 2004) which are primarily concerned with feelings, emotions, attitudes and values and different dimensions of sensory experience. These domains have been pushed to the margins of a discourse now dominated by almost exclusively by cognition. The is both troubling and deeply ironic in vocational education contexts where students are required to learn different forms of knowledge, including embodied knowledge in practices of all kinds.

Central to this suggestion is the work of Hyland (2018) who discusses how Bloom's Taxonomy of educational objectives became the '*first and last word*' (Hyland 2018:2) in the organisation and planning of teaching, learning and assessment. Hyland (2018) demonstrates that the taxonomy of the psychomotor domain was never completed within Bloom's Taxonomy. Hyland, (2018) is particularly critical of how Bloom's Taxonomy has come to focus too heavily on the cognitive domain.

Hyland (2010) draws our attention to the '*therapeutic turn'* (2010:517) of the affective domain. He notes that although there have been some critics, there appears to be a school of thinking that the traditional goals of pure knowledge and understanding are now concerned with enhancing and developing confidence and self-esteem in learners. Hyland (2010) accepts that although self-esteem and cognate concepts cannot provide the sole aim of education, the affective domain of learning cannot and should not be ignored in the acquisition and development of any form of practice.

The discussion surrounding thought's longest journey moves through the work of Vygotsky (1986) and Hyland (2010) to include the concept of mindfulness. Mindfulness, Hyland (2010) argues, can be very powerful and valuable as it is integrally connected with the centrally transformative and developmental nature of learning and educational activity at all levels.

Hayes (2003) advances a similar argument pointing out that preparation for work that has come about as a result of the changed nexus between work and education:

> *'Skills that are required in the workforce are sometimes referred to as emotional or aesthetic labour. If post-16 students are being trained in personal and social skills as well as in relationships, this training in emotional labour… training in emotional labour required and receives personal and wholehearted commitment to workforce values.'*
> (Hayes, 2003:54 in Hyland 2010:518)

This highlights the necessity of practitioners to ensure that the affective and psychomotor domains are given equal importance as opposed to the over-utilised cognitive domain in all educational contexts and in vocational education in particular. Indeed, as Ecclestone *et al* (2005) argue, education should play a prominent role in fostering students' emotional intelligence, self-esteem and self-awareness.

According to Fleener et al (2000) an additional learning domain exists - a fourth category, a lesser-known domain, the Conative Taxonomy, which focuses on the root of the why of learning. It seems, that from further exploration of this domain, conation is the point where cognitive knowledge, affective growth and psychomotor development intersect with human behaviour. Furthermore, as educational psychologist, Huitt (2007) states conative skills will be increasingly important for life-long, self-regulated learning throughout the 21st century.

Hyland (2017), in discussing the notion of mindfulness, draws upon the work of Siegel (2007) who suggests that '*at the heart of mindfulness is the teachable capacity for reflection*' (2007:259) and that '*resilience can be learned through experience*' (2002:215).

Both Spinoza and Wittgenstein suggest (as cited in Hyland 1985) that the importance of life is inextricably linked with educational development. In the context of moral education and the education of emotions, educators such as Dearden (1972) conclude that happiness cannot simply be the aim of education without qualifications, but it must be balanced against other '*final ends constitutive of the good of man*' (Dearden 1972:111).

Dearden (1972) offers a perhaps more moral stance to education and happiness and believes that it is something that should be valued, and an educational establishment should show a concern for it. Such a concern should take the form of providing students with a secure learning environment which nurtures their self-esteem and there should be some attempt made to teach students the nature of happiness itself. It is hard to consider a curriculum that could be designed, with this in mind.

Hyland (1985) offers a more balanced approach. He believes that a defect of utilitarianism is its failure to come to grips with unhappiness and have generally been content to concentrate exclusively on the pursuit of happiness. Hyland (1985) emphasis that attention needs to be given to areas of human life and experience that have been traditionally neglected, i.e., the roots and consequences of misery, disappointment and low self-esteem. In Hyland's argument, he appears to make a clear link between the concept of disappointment and failure, failure of an examination.

As educators, and with regard to AfL strategies and formative assessment, we might ask how can we expect students to engage with feedback, feedback, which in most instances, wholly focuses on progress against target grade, if we first do not explore and try to understand their lived experiences of studying GCSE English and also support student progress in both the affective and psychomotor domains as well?

According to Gokce (2014), the theoretical framework of the affective domain focuses on getting to know more about students' values and recognises that formative assessment based on exam outcomes, will reveal a student's progress to a given subject. However, the affective domain might help to uncover more about the students' motivation and interest. This thesis explores the extent to which there should be opportunities for students to reveal their judgements about important matters and show their values regarding a particular topic or subject in relation to the teaching and learning of GCSE English.

Hyland (2018) reinforces the view that all 3 domains of learning need to be conjoined and co-exist in order to provide an all-round, holistic learning experience in any sphere of educational activity. This suggests that assessment strategies can and should include the formative feedback process in all 3 domains of learning.

The notion that within the parameters of literacy and oracy development, the instrument in the broadest sense could be the pen which becomes the 'doing' aspect, 'dexterity' itself is the 'writing skill' with 'oracy' is the vehicle to support writing skills in the 21st Century.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 opens with consideration for the contribution to the discourse from the philosophy of education through the works of Aristotle (384-322BC). Dunne, (1995) and Wittgenstein (1953) are referenced with regards to different forms of knowledge, the nature of practice and the processes involved in how practice improves.

Chapter 2 then moves with a critical discussion of key contributions from peer-reviewed published literature in the field of formative assessment. The seminal works of Black and Wiliam (1998) and Clarke (2001) are used to frame key ideas, concepts and theories in this field of study. The discussion moves forward to focus on the importance of lived experience and how experience and education cannot and should not be separated. The works of Dewey is also cited in his contributions to this discourse.

It closes with a review of the works of Hyland (2010, 2017, 2018) regarding the neglect of the development of the affective and psychomotor domains of learning and points to the need to redress this neglect in pedagogic and assessment practices in vocational education and FE college contexts.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

Introduction

If we accept the position that research is science and science is essentially a social practice carried out by human beings, then we need to understand that human beings are present in the growth and development of science and that science is therefore a 'mind-making process' (Eisner 1993). More importantly we must also expect that what we do as scientists needs to be understood within the context of our human existence including the nature of human experience, human fallibility and our need to interpret the world. Maturana (1991) reminds us of this inter-play of human activity within educational research where he argues that:

> *'Science is a human activity. Therefore, whatever we as scientists do as we do science has validity and meaning as any other human activity does only in the context of human co-existence in which is arises.'*
>
> (Maturana in Scott and Usher 1996:9)

In arguing that educational research is a social practice, Scott and Usher (1996) draw attention to how the contexts in which educational research is conducted matter. Claiming that for educational research to be a social practice, makes it possible to examine research critically and to understand how research itself may be a critical and social rather than a neutral activity. This chapter focuses upon the philosophical underpinnings of research in education, specifically the epistemological and ontological assumptions in which different research traditions are grounded, the practical challenges associated with carrying out educational research and the methodological debates surrounding the status of social science research. Coe *et al* (2017), extend this argument further where they point to the necessity of attending carefully to the relationship between epistemology, ontology and methodology in the conduct of educational research.

Gregson (2019:10) notes that the origins of a '*quiet, justifiable revolution*' is taking place in relation to the status, credibility and trustworthiness of practitioner research conducted in the Further Education and Skills sector in England. She argues that it is becoming increasingly apparent that practitioners-researchers throughout the Further Education sector are carrying out systematic and trustworthy educational research and that a growing research community is emerging. For Gregson this signals an important shift in the way the FE and Skills sector and its practitioners engage with educational research. In response to the question of what contribution educational research can make to educational practice, Biesta and Burbules (2003) refer to the works of Dewey (1910, 1911) as follows:

> *'This, as we have seen, is why Dewey argues that the final reality of education science is to be found in the minds of educators, (which in turn implies the teachers and other educators are not simply passive consumers educational knowledge, but as much the creators of educational knowledge, even when they are drawing from research conducted by others, because their very act of problem-solving is a process of inquiry)'.*
>
> Biesta and Burbules (2003: 110-111)

An important advantage of practitioner research conducted by teachers is that it is able to access insider aspects of a research context which can be closed off to external research. Another advantage is that practitioner research often resonates more closely with the experiences of practitioners and therefore is more accessible and of more interest (and often of more use) to practitioners. In addition, research conducted in the Further Education and Skills sector, often has greater credibility among the many communities of its practitioners.

As Scott and Usher (1996) and Coe et al (2017) separately illustrate, it is important that any researcher is able to examine and defend their research position, as failure to do so can lead to the research merely being reduced to a technology, or technique, simply a set of instrumental methods.

Scott and Usher, (1996) also highlight how further exploration of the concept of educational research as a social practice uncovers a breadth of literature which categorises educational research into two main types. Firstly, there is technical literature which is concerned with the practical issues and problems of conducting research in education. Secondly, there is literature which reflects and documents the ongoing debates around methodological issues and controversies in the social sciences.

When considering this notion, Scott and Usher (1996) suggest that a focus on purely practical issues can lead to an over-reliance on methods and techniques, used and borrowed without the examination from the social sciences. They go on to propose that the consequence of a concentration on purely practical issues can lead to the '*trivialisation and technicisation'* (Scott and Usher, 1996:1) of educational research.

Conversely, Scott and Usher (1996) draw our attention to how a pure focus on methodological approaches in research can potentially reduce educational research into a meagre sub-species of social research. This relegation can in turn, lead to a neglect of the specific problems and enduring issues in education research.

Building upon the work of Scott and Usher (1996) and Coe et al (2017) the methodological approaches adopted in this thesis and discussed in this Chapter, acknowledge the relationship between ontology, epistemology, methodology and practice. It is argued that educational practitioners can and do, develop research skills through engaging in practitioner research, which enable them to become critical '*readers and writers*' of research (Scott and Usher, 1996:1).

In light of the above, this Methodology Chapter aims to present a thoughtful discussion and examination of methodological issues regarding the conduct and interpretation of data in this study. This includes an exploration of the ontological and epistemological positions that underpin different approaches to educational research.

This Chapter discusses the theoretical aspect of Methodology while Chapter 4 unpicks and expands upon the actualities and data analysis activities involved in this study. As described in Chapter 1, this research is aligned to and grounded in, student experience. It is carried out by front line teachers within the context of a Further Education establishment in Sunderland.

The Nature of the Research Problem - Researching Lived Experience

This study specifically explores the potential for spoken/dialogical approaches to supplement the provision of formative assessment feedback in improving the achievements of GCSE resit English students. This thesis builds upon a previous pilot study which suggests that students' lack of engagement with written formative feedback might signal an over-reliance on written formative assessment within the site of this study. The same study also indicates that assessment strategies are in some way lacking, in view of their low impact upon student learning and achievement.

In other words, the current assessment strategies employed within the written feedback process which aim to support students working towards GCSE resit examinations do not appear to be having the desired impact. The impact sought is to support the development of a feed-forward, assessment feedback culture in which student learning deepens and student achievement improves. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that current approaches are failing to bring about any discernible improvements in the achievement of students in their GCSE English studies.

If the findings of the pilot study are found to be more widespread, then it is vitally important to critically examine the theory and practice of formative assessment in the site of this study to clarify the nature of the assessment problem in order to begin to address it. Should the

problem be found to reside in an over-reliance upon written formative assessment and the strategies used to implement written formative assessment in practice, then other assessment strategies will need to be found to supplement/replace existing assessment practices.

It may also be necessary to consider ways in which teachers' understanding of the principles of formative assessment might be deepened to enable them to employ a wider range of practical formative assessment strategies in creative ways in relation to their approaches to teaching and learning.

Continual pressures for educational establishments to demonstrate in-year learner progress appear to have unintentionally evolved into an over-reliance of written feedback as a means to achieve improvements in student learning and achievement. This over-reliance of written feedback is found within the site of this research and potentially it could be inferred that it might be a problem that is more widely encountered across the vocational education sector. What seems to be missing in current pedagogical approaches, is an understanding of the impact, or lack of it, that existing formative assessment strategies are having on the learners. This raises questions of if, or, how, learners are using this feedback to improve their English and overall literacy skills and raise their achievements – and if not, why not?

Data from the previous study suggest that students do not necessarily spend the time, reading, reflecting, or indeed, acting upon the written formative assessment feedback they are offered by their tutors. As previously discussed, what also needs to be taken into account is the amount and cost of the time taken by teachers to provide, administer, collate and disseminate formative assessment feedback. As written formative assessment feedback supplied by the teacher is not always acted upon or reflected upon by the learners, this does not appear to constitute a cost-effective formative assessment strategy, nor does it constitute good use of teachers' time. In addition, the amount of time students spends feeding forward and acting upon the teachers' comments and advice is at best minimal and at worst, negligible or even non-existent.

As already argued, the enduring educational issue here appears to be located in the possible over-reliance of written formative assessment strategies. These written formative assessment strategies are deployed with the best of educational intentions and aim to enhance and measure GCSE resit English students' progress during an academic year. As discussed above, student progress is regularly measured against target grade performance. This target grade is set for the students and is based on their prior GCSE attainment from secondary school.

Student progress is measured continuously and is almost entirely focused on progress against target grade and presented in a written format. As an insider-researcher it is becoming increasingly apparent to me and my colleagues that grade judgements placed on learners who are already too aware that they have left school without the coveted GCSE English 'Grade 4', is potentially having unintended negative, and in some cases, very damaging consequences for learners.

As a result of the GCSE reforms, the new grading system for GCSE examinations for English and maths moved from the traditional A*-C grading system to the new 9-1 specification in 2016. The C grade equivalate for students is now the Grade 4. As already noted, the Grade 4 exam outcome marker is undoubtedly considered the seal of approval in terms of the pre-requisite qualification for progress into employment and entry into higher education This qualification is also regularly used as a sifting device by most employers as well as in many university admission requirements.

This situation is further compounded by the challenges faced by FE establishments as they struggle to ensure that they meet both internal and external quality audits. These audits are conducted with regard to robust and rigorous feedback which is taken to demonstrate in-year student progress. This imperative to operate within these 'worlds' and the tensions this causes are discussed in detail in Chapter 1.

A consequence of a preoccupation with student feedback which focuses on target grade performance and the impact this could have on future learning experience is a recurring concern in this thesis. This study offers an opportunity to explore the extent to which an over-reliance on written feedback exists and its influences upon student achievement.

To reiterate, what appears to be missing in the current assessment practices is a first principle of formative assessment which is active learning. The fundamental purpose of formative assessment is to keep the learner active. Ironically, what is currently happening in practice is that while the teacher is actively engaged in providing detailed comments and suggestions for further improvement, the learner's response to that feedback is passive or in some cases non-existent. Opening-up spaces for active learning in formative assessment activities forms the bedrock of this study. A particular focus here is upon an exploration of dialogical methods of feedback and the use of oracy as pre-cursors of literacy and wider skills development within the teaching, learning and assessment of GCSE resit English.

The Focus of this Study

As discussed above, this study explores aspects of human experience in relation to perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of learners and tutors towards formative assessment feedback in GCSE English. This research attempts to develop stronger learner autonomy and increase self-esteem for Post-16 Study Programme learners in the context of GCSE resit English within a FE setting.

Any FE establishment needs to develop forms of assessment and feedback that mitigate the negative feelings of failure that beset many students as they begin to re-engage in their GCSE English studies at college. As discussed above, this re-engagement with a subject in which learners have failed or in which they have been found to be 'wanting' is often associated with negative experiences of studying for GCSE English examinations at school. As a consequence of these experiences at school, learners are now faced with the daunting prospect of repeating this experience whilst at college.

As explained above, an intention of this study is to gain a better understanding of the extent to which dialogical approaches within the provision of formative assessment and feedback contribute to improved student achievement. This study also explores the development of the students' capacity for oracy and how this might inform different strategies for the provision and responses to formative assessment feedback in GCSE English in the future.

It therefore seems appropriate when discussing the merits of oracy to draw upon the work of Murray (2007) who expresses the belief, '*that in order to become proficient in a language, learners need to live in a target language community, and thereby immerse themselves in that language and culture*' (Murray 2007:45).

The development of oracy and its role within GCSE English Language formative assessment and feedback might prove to be a helpful vehicle to drive forward a more immersive educational experience for post-16 GCSE English resit students. With this in mind, this study seeks to discover how more immersive, discursive and dynamic educational approaches to formative assessment strategies deploying the use of oracy might encourage and support deeper levels of learner engagement and achievement. The research attempts to discover the influence and the development of oracy skills as a feedback tool to support the progress of literacy by utilising meaningful learning conversations to further influence the impact of formative feedback. These learning conversations are not just focused on progress against target grade and other quantitative measures they also include students' lived experiences of English and their levels of engagement with that feedback in the past and in the present. In

addition, an aim is to track changes to student behaviours and attitudes towards learning GCSE resit English. This intention is to find out how students' experience their learning, their experiences of assessment, both within the context of resitting GCSE English examinations, and their development of literacy and, more widely, in their lives. The views and perceptions of students are based upon their experiences, the beliefs and values of teachers as well as my own beliefs and values as am insider practitioner-researcher responsible for the conduct of this study.

The Ontological Position Adopted in this Research: The Form and Nature of the Social World

When justifying the methodological position adopted for this research, it seems appropriate to draw upon the work of Waring (2017), where he prompts the researcher to begin with a consideration of ontology.

He points out that ontology seeks to establish the form and nature of the social world in which the research is conducted. Warring (2017) represents this view by drawing upon the image or concept of a continuum, moving from left to right, with a realist ontology positioned on the left and constructivist ontology positioned on the right.

As this research is a study of human experience, the ontological starting point for the thesis is therefore constructivism. No separation is made between mind and an objective world, since the two are inextricably linked together, '*the knower and the process of knowing cannot be separated*' (Waring, 2017:18). From an ontological perspective, reality is considered to be neither objective or singular. Therefore, an investigation into the experiences of providing, receiving, and acting upon, formative feedback provided through a variety of different media supported by a number of pedagogical strategies is appropriate in the context of this study.

As explained in earlier chapters, the impetus for this research is essentially pragmatic, in that it begins with a real-world problem which I encountered in my own practice located in the field of assessment theory and practice. The research problem is concerned with significant numbers of GCSE English resit students who do not always engage with, let alone, act upon the formative assessment feedback provided by their tutors. To reiterate, the main point to note here is that this written formative assessment feedback is provided by teachers at a considerable expense in terms of staff time and resources as it is both costly and extremely labour-intensive.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the assessment schedule and the teachers' marking schedule is based on an average of 100 students and 5 key assessment points during one academic year. This equates to, on average, 500 scripts for teachers to mark and upon which they are expected to provide formative written feedback. When faced with this stark statistic, it is clear that questions surrounding the effectiveness, sustainability and overall impact and student experience can and should be raised.

The Epistemological Position Adopted in this Research: How Can we Know What is Assumed to Exist?

When considering the epistemological position, the Methodology Chapter in this thesis draws upon an aspect of the work of Warring (2017) where he notes that epistemology relates to the question of *'how can what is assumed to exist, be known'*. (Waring 2017:16).

As this research is a study of human experience it is also methodically grounded in an interpretive epistemological position and can be justified in the sense that it involves the interpretation of human experience. This study concerns itself with the lived experience of students studying GCSE resit English and the experiences of the teachers who are responsible for providing their students with formative assessment feedback. Waring (2017) observes that '*as that person brings along with them the 'baggage' of their previous life experiences and knowledge base to any research context, it is this very amalgamation which constructs their competence and credibility*' (Waring 2017:17).

As this study adopts interpretivist epistemology, it does not seek direct knowledge or pursue certainty. Instead, it acknowledges and that the research draws upon accounts of lived experience and observations of the world. This '*worldview*' (Waring et al, 2017:16) provides indirect indications of phenomena in the world and therefore knowledge is developed through a process of interpretation.

Waring (2017) goes on to point out that from a constructivist, epistemic perspective knowledge is subjective, transactional and interactive:

> *'The investigator and the object of the investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the 'findings' are literally created as the investigation proceeds. Therefore, the conventional distinction between ontology and epistemology dissolves.'*
>
> (Waring 2017:18)

Present within the epistemological position adopted in this research is a recognition of the importance of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity. As this study seeks to uncover, through the

data collection methods, subjective and inter-subjective experience, there is a reinforced understanding of the necessity for a constant inter-play between researcher and the researched.

Moving Waring's (2017) concept on further, he notes that if we accept the variable and personal nature of social constructions, then this suggests that individual constructions can only be drawn out and refined through interaction between and among investigators and respondents. He explains that methodologically, interpretive techniques are used to collect, compare and contrast different perspectives through critical dialogue and discussion. Here it is not a matter of eliminating conflicting or previous interpretations, but to distil a more sophisticated and informed consensus through construction.

In view of the above, we can see that different people can perceive the truth differently and that multiple realities are constructed by both the researcher and the researched. It seems fitting therefore to draw on Waring (2017) once more to highlight the connection between the researched and researcher. This connection, surrounding the researcher's own perceptions are incorporated into the research design and analysis of data. This study recognises that this could be considered an issue or flaw in the methodological approach, and this is addressed and is further justified later in this Chapter.

This study recognises and accepts that the research findings are not '*true or untrue'* in any absolute sense but are more informed, trustworthy and sophisticated in their construction (Guba and Lincoln 1994:111).

In order to explore students' experience of English an 'Outcome Star' is used as an initial focusing device in the study. The Outcome Star is used as the vehicle to engage students and teachers in more meaningful learning conversations surrounding the students' behaviours and attitudes towards GCSE English. The Outcome Star incorporates key traits and characteristics surrounding students' behaviours and attitudes relating to GCSE resit English and was constructed in collaboration with other GCSE teachers. The Outcome Star tracks the students' experience alongside their progress against target grade which is provided in the form of written feedback. The aim here is that the use of conversations surrounding the Outcome Star may have the potential to give a more detailed and balanced account of learner progress.

Progress is measured not through statistical evidence but through the criteria for progress. The aim is that over time, everyone involved in the study, '*formulates a more informed and*

sophisticated constructions and becomes more aware of the content and meaning of competing constructions' (Guba and Lincoln 1994:113). In this case, the constructions in question are experiences of giving and receiving formative assessment as well as experiences of learning English.

The adoption of an ontological approach located within the interpretivist paradigm, does not just focus on what happened but why a person believes something happened. It therefore captures the way in which people view, understand, interpret and make sense of their experience. This represents an attempt to arrive at a better understanding and acknowledgement of how lived experience impacts on teaching, learning and assessment.

This study does not therefore seek to present an objective account of experience. Instead, the focus is on the way people have interpreted what they have encountered in their experience of learning GCSE resit English Language. This means eliciting and focusing not just on the thoughts of people but also their emotions as they learn English at different points in their lives (Chase 2005).

Dewey (1938) reminds us that from a pragmatic epistemological point of view we must understand the problem or 'disturbance' before we can take intelligent action to address it. For Dewey (1933, 1938), how we think is as important as what we think. Therefore, the ways in which we think about a problem and how we hold our understandings of it are crucial factors in enabling us to understand the troubling 'disturbance' in order to clearly see a potential solution. To strengthen this point further, Eisner (1993) highlights the connection between identification of the problem or disturbance and its potential resolution. He reminds practitioner-researchers that '*what we think matters and how we think about what we think matters more*' (Eisner 1993:5)

Following Dewey (1933, 1938) and Eisner (1993), in the context of this research, the problem or 'disturbance' that I encountered in practice was the way in which formative assessment was being realised in practice in my college. However, it took a great deal of careful thinking to arrive at the point where I could see the consequences of this disturbance in practice and that instead of encouraging students to be active in their learning, our use of written feedback was in practice discouraging not encouraging active learning.

Methodology

It is important to note that the methodology or logic at work here is this thesis is inductive. Inductive in the sense that the development of understanding moves incrementally from particular cases and tentatively toward what may be plausibly inferred to be a wider consensus. The knowledge uncovered within the epistemological approach adopted in this study is not to be found 'out there' but constructed within a social context. This research is therefore a study of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity. It acknowledges and accepts that different people can perceive the truth differently.

Critique of The Ontological and Epistemological Dichotomy: Challenging Binary Thinking

Waring et al, (2017) emphasise and unpick this position further and remind us that educational research is complex. The same authors note that there will continue to be a wide range of opinions and debates around the nature of the educational enquiry and the associated methods. This notion is further supported when we observe how the philosophical intentions of educational research have been the subject of debates for thousands of years. When considering this perspective, it seems appropriate at this point to return here to the work of Scott and Usher (1996).

Scott and Usher (1996) reassure us that it may be impossible to adopt an absolute conventional stance in relation to different research positions and therefore it is impossible to achieve complete '*neutrality and impartiality'* (Scott and Usher 1996:2). When considering this viewpoint, it is helpful to turn once again to the work of Waring et al, (2017) who state that regardless of the educational enquiry adopted, all researchers need to understand, respect and appreciate how their enquiry is framed around assumptions concerning assumptions about ontology, epistemology, methodology and associated research methods.

What is, however, of paramount importance is '*that there is no doubt that the correct use of appropriate methods is accorded a significant place in all types of research*' (Scott and Usher 1996:10). Therefore, this Methodology Chapter discusses how each of these positions are taken seriously and how they fit within the context and problem of the study as framed in Chapter 1. With further reference to Scott and Usher (1996) it is understood that it is impossible to achieve absolute neutrality and impartiality and therefore it is important to note that no research position is 'perfect' and this study is not naively adopting the interpretative paradigm without careful consideration for other methodologies. (Coe et al, 2017) note that careful consideration of other methodologies is a prerequisite to carrying out any research.

Moreover, they remind us that '*you cannot do or understand research unless you are clear about the fundamental philosophical issue of ontology, epistemology and axiology'* (Coe et al, 2017:5).

Competing Paradigms in Educational Research

As a beginner researcher it is sometimes difficult to determine when an ontological position ends, and an epistemological position starts. As Waring (2017:18) notes, from an interpretivist epistemological perspective:

> *'The investigator and the object of the research are assumed to be interactively linked so that the findings are literally created as the investigation proceeds. Therefore, the conventional distinction between ontology and epistemology dissolves'.*
>
> (Waring 2017:18)

Paradigmatic dichotomies are acknowledged by Coe et al, (2017) who remind us that allegiance to a particular paradigm may not always be possible. For some it is a fundamental commitment, however others can see and acknowledge the merits of both sides of the argument and opposing views. It is therefore possible to move between paradigmatic positions and back again. As part of this broader paradigmatic debate, Biesta (2010), presents an account of mixing research methods in education where he outlines the context and nature of mixed-methods research.

Paradigms as argued by Guba and Lincoln (1994:107) represent a '*worldview that expresses, for the holder, the nature of the world and the individual's place in it'*. Based on this approach and as a front-line teacher practitioner-reseacher immersed in pursuing the pragmatic educational issue of addressing a problem in assessment theory and practice, it appears more appropriate for the purposes of this research to draw upon a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm.

The interpretative paradigm employed in this study demands the establishment of a sound and authentic relationship between the researcher and the participants. This relationship is achievable as the context of this research is implicitly linked to my own front-line practice and those of my colleagues in the context of our work. This study is therefore fully immersed in the front-line practice of GCSE English and is very much part of that every-day practice in the site of this research.

The merits of practitioner research are further supported by (Guba and Lincoln 1989), where they raise a key question, to which the researcher should be able to answer 'yes'. The

question is that for a research study to be credible and trustworthy and in order to regulate the interpretive knowledge, the researcher must undertake prolonged immersion in their field. Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that '*the reality of the interpretive paradigm is captured in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions which are shared by individuals and knowledge is therefore created as a result of the interaction between the investigator and respondents'* (Guba and Lincoln 1994:111).

One of the reasons that this study is aligned to, and adopts more of an interpretive research paradigm, is that it attempts to mirror the work of Connelly and Clandinin (1990). They note that from this methodological standpoint, we are not necessarily looking for validity or objectivity in educational research, but more importantly, seeking trustworthiness, authenticity and credibility.

According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), trustworthiness, authenticity and credibility are developed through approaches to research which involve narrative inquiry and accounts, and the explorations of experience. This study aims to bring to light how realities of teaching, learning and assessment in GCSE English are experienced and interpreted. This is one of the key reasons why this study is aligned to and adopts a more an interpretive research paradigm.

The Interpretative epistemic paradigm applied to this research study seeks to enhance the understanding of the life-worlds of students in the context of the research. Interpretative research places great emphasis on the researcher's subjectivity and intersubjectivity in the process of interpretation and this is a key part of this inquiry process. This supports and compliments the reflective attributes of this piece of scholarly research. It also subsequently addresses issues around insider research and its justification.

Moving the discussion forward, the Interpretative and Hermeneutic paradigms when applied to education, engage teachers as reflective practitioners in educational situations. It could, therefore, be argued that reflection resides at the core of teachers' professional values and affords the teaching profession the opportunity to be self-regulating. Schon, (1983) supports this view where he reiterates that the reflective practitioner status which we hold as professionals, is the means in which we set ourselves apart from other professionals. Our profession's commitment to self-reflection, he argues, is the way in which we attain self-regulating professional autonomy.

By recognising self-reflection, we are in turn, acknowledging the importance of lived experience. Within this in mind, the Interpretative/Hermeneutic approach is argued to be the most fitting approach for this study. Usher (1998) adds further weight to this justification where he confirms, '*that confining research to the observable or empirically 'given', as a positivist/empiricist' might potentially miss out on the most important dimension in social enquiry*' (Usher, 1998:18). According to Usher (1996), the most important dimension of research is that '*in order to understand the world, we need to make sense of it, and in order to construct this understanding, we do this by interactive human behaviour*' (Usher 1996:18).

The interpretive research paradigm also brings to our attention the work of Denzin and Lincoln (2005) and the very important concept of 'representation'. These authors give weight to the fact that:

> *'What goes on in our minds and hearts is not directly accessible to the world outside us. There is no window in our heads that allows another person to look directly into our minds and see exactly what we mean, the best we can do is represent our thoughts and feelings through various means of communication.'*
>
> (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:8)

Forever present in the interpretative paradigm and underpinning this study is the idea that '*interpretation, meaning and illumination and not generalisation, prediction and control*' (Scott and Usher 1996:18) are central to a study such as this.

In Narrative Inquiry, De Vreis (2014) notes that methodology strongly features people as people and actions as actions within the interpretivist paradigm. The approach that Stauffer and Stauffer (2009) adopt regarding narrative inquiry, is viewed, '*variously as a story or mode of knowing and constructing meaning and more recently, as a method of inquiry, and at times is all these simultaneously'* (2009:7). The engagement of Narrative Inquiry will be discussed in more detail later in this Chapter.

The Interpretative Standpoint Underpinning this Research:

The inclusion of quantitative data could be argued as being necessary to the creditability of the study. It is important to acknowledge the necessity to draw upon statistical data as a means of navigating and negotiating the quantitative world that exists within FE in terms of qualifications achieved. In the FE sector, we cannot ignore that statistical 'hard' data which are inter-woven into the fabric of our accountability measures and therefore including some positivist/empiricist data add further relevancy and currency to this study within the Further Education sector.

Moreover, it is necessary to consider that a positivist/empirical approach can run the inherent risk of over-simplifying the problem within the ontological world of an external realist, or positivist. More importantly, a positivist/empirical approach would not be inextricably connected to human experiences of encounters within the research problem or the context of the research story. With every simplification something is gained but something is also lost. As a means of defending my decision to adopt the Interpretative and Hermeneutic ontological approach, this study aims to engage the researcher as a reflective practitioner. This concept, it is argued, should be at the core of educators' professional beliefs and therefore cannot be removed from the methodological process. More importantly, as this research is based on lived experience, it would not be appropriate to adopt a more positivist/empirical approach completely and does not solely focus on quantitative data. This could potentially exclusively reduce the research collection and data analysis of purely hard data and deductive logic. This view is shared by Eisner (1993) who extends human experience as the '*bedrock upon which meaning is constructed and that experience in significant degree depends on our ability to get in touch with the qualitative world we inhabit*' (Eisner 1993:5).

This interpretive paradigm also correlates with Ofsted's new Education Inspection Framework. The new EIF framework could be interpreted as the adoption of different pedagogical approaches to measuring the quality of education. The new Education Inspection Framework does now acknowledge that outcomes for learners are not the only measure of students' success but now, under the new Framework, the quality of the education experience and the overall intention of an establishments' curriculum is now considered equally important. The new Education Inspection Framework launched with Ofsted in September 2019 may signal that the interpretivist/hermeneutic paradigm is now more relevant and current than ever in today's current educational climate. The new framework is structured to provide a sound 'evidence base' that underlies each of the four key judgements of the new framework. These four Ofsted key judgements are, Quality of Education, Personal Development, Behaviours and Attitudes and finally, Leadership and Management.

This viewpoint is not adopted as a naive perspective, but these are significant changes within with the Education Inspection Framework which may signpost some form of educational shift from the previous positivist/empiricist methodological approach. The new Ofsted Education Inspection Framework focuses more on the intention and quality of education, which could in turn, be defined as a more interpretivist/hermeneutic tradition. The quality of education and the curriculum intention of your educational establishment is critiqued against a 'curriculum lens' perspective and a deep dive approach is adopted by looking at the students' learning journey holistically.

This interpretative, humanistic paradigm is described by Taylor (2011) as the most appropriate as it is strongly influenced by the need to understand experience and the human condition from the inside. This is to 'stand in their shoes' and 'look through their eyes'. This inter-subjective approach enables the study to build a rich local understanding of the life-world experiences of students and teachers, the cultures of the classroom and the GCSE English Language community. Crucially Taylor's (2011) interpretive orientation is essential for teachers wishing to adopt more student-centred pedagogies to teaching and learning that stimulates teachers' creative thinking about designing curriculum and assessment activities that are student-centric and socially responsible.

With regard to the interpretive paradigm, it is acknowledged that there are many questions around the nature of educational research and research intentions, whether that be in pursuit of 'transparent' decision making in the data analysis process, an 'evidential' base for any claims made or a contribution to a 'theoretical' framework. Coe et al, (2017) encourage us to avoid the polarised arguments about paradigmatic differences but focus our identification of what is considered to be educational research as follows:

> *'By identifying as 'educational' any research that seeks to understand inform or improve the practice of education.'*
>
> (Coe, 2017:11)

The Methodological Approach Adopted in this Research: Inductive Logic

This study investigates the experience of students and how, or if, dialogical approaches to feedback can help students learn, think about, and act upon formative assessment feedback. Essentially, the aim of the study is to support students to engage with 'learning to learn from feedback'. The study also encompasses the experiences of teachers and gives professional space to think and reflect upon on their own practice. It provides an opportunity to explore and unpick current formative assessment practices and potentially inform future pedagogical approaches.

This thesis is therefore aligned with the critical theory paradigm on a number of levels as it seeks to change current practices. On one level, it engages me more deeply with the research context. This is particularly relevant in how I have viewed, reflected and acted upon the feedback received from writing this study. The learning that is unfolding by critical analysis, reflection and synthesising the feedback and acting upon this undoubtedly supports Eisner's view discussed above that '*what we think about matters*' (Eisner 1993:5).

As an 'insider' in the research process, I am aware of the possibilities and problems that accompany the positioning of this study. Being fully immersed in the context of this practice and working directly with students and tutors has brought me and my colleagues to what Dewey (1938) describes as a 'disturbance' to the fore. Something is wrong with our educational practice regarding our use of formatives assessment in GCSE English resits and, as yet we do not know what the problem is. More importantly, this study is deeply connected to the context and problem and my own axiology and educational values.

The research is, in the first instance, a descriptive account and an interpretation of experience. It examines the paradoxical relationship between the time-consuming provision of written feedback by tutors and is confounded by students' lack of engagement with that feedback. In essence, it is thereby rendering the whole process of providing formative assessment to students redundant in value. The formative feedback cycle ultimately attempts to improve students' achievement in GCSE English examinations, however the amount of time that is spent on giving feedback needs to be interrogated and justified. In turn, this needs to be weighed against the amount of time students use making sense of and the use of the written feedback to improve their future work and therefore raise their educational achievements.

As a practitioner-researcher faced with and connected to this problem, a first step in this research is to try and describe what is actually happening in practice. Bringing the educational disturbance to the forefront of the discussion, allows me to understand and report the problem more clearly. It also affords me the opportunity to identify potential ways in which the problem might be addressed in order to drive forward new actions. With these methodological issues in mind, this research is inextricably linked and connected to a realistic and pragmatic problem and an enduring educational issue faced by front-line teachers involved in supporting GCSE English post-16 resit students in England through formative assessment.

The intention of this research is therefore to explore this problem in educational practice through the lens of human experience (Dewey, 1938). It aims therefore to bring to light my experiences as an educational-researcher as well as the experiences of the 'researched' in this study in the hope of '*addressing and investigating educational issues and problems found in everyday practice'* (Usher 1996:10).

As this research study is practice-focused, the thesis is based on my experiences of my own professional practice in the context of my work as well as those of my colleagues and students. At this point it is worth reiterating that the key focus of this study is upon subjective and inter-subjective experiences of the researched which includes students, teachers and myself.

This research offers an opportunity to develop an enhanced understanding of the life-worlds of tutors and their students. It is influenced by an anthropological tradition i.e., an investigation into the study of human cultures. Furthermore, as interpretative researchers this study acknowledges that all human action is meaningful and should be interpreted and understood within the context in which it takes place (Usher 1996). This deeper understanding involves a broader focus on social, historic and experiential forces that could potentially shape the pedagogies, curriculum design and educational intentions in which teachers and learners in this study are immersed. An interpretivist approach can therefore help teachers to adopt and share interpretations and co-construct meaning. (Connolly and Clandinin,1998).

It is therefore important to re-emphasise that this research is not necessarily looking for a definitive answer, only a better understanding of the problem in context, together with some insights into how the problem might be addressed. Over four decades ago, Stenhouse (1975), who could now be considered a progressive thinker, made an extremely bold declaration regarding research. He claimed that research should be educative, to be geared directly to improving educational practice.

For Stenhouse (1975) and Carter (2000) the aim of professional inquiry in education also aims to explore how insider research might contribute to the question of curriculum design and approaches to assessment and pedagogy. In this case, the delivery of GSCE English curricula and approaches to formative assessment therein. More importantly, this practitioner-led research study strives to demonstrate that this piece of educational research not only offers to contribute to new knowledge but also contributes to the improvement of educational practice. (Carr and Kemmis, 1986).

Research Methods

Connelly and Clandinin, (1990) remind us of the importance of the relationship between the researcher and the research participant in selecting the research methods to be used in the research. Narrative Inquiry, they argue, is relational work between the researcher and the research participant. They go on to point out that this results in the creation of stories that are co-constructed between the researcher and the research participants. Others may judge the authenticity and trustworthiness of this research and the strength of the warrant of its findings in terms of their relevance to, and usefulness in other contexts.

Connolly and Clandinin (1998) urge researchers to engage with Narrative Inquiry as a means to '*test out the epistemological assumption that we as human beings make sense of random*

experience by the imposition of story structures' (Connolly and Clandinin, 1998:207). Stories they argue, not only play an important role in our lives as human beings but, are considered the rhetoric of our lives and as some scholars would argue that '*our lives are stories and one way to understand human experience is to document these stories'* (Murray, 2007:45).

The creation and use of the 'Outcome Star' as a focusing device and the vehicle to instigate learning conversations clearly focuses on the lived experiences of students' behaviours and attitudes towards GCSE English. The Outcome Star is the stimulus for the starting point of the Narrative Inquiry in this study. The Outcome Star is conducive to '*documenting the changing conditions of lives and the impact these new conditions can have over time on all aspects of an individual's life, including language learning*' (Murray 2007:47).

Narrative Inquiry is developed in this study to tease out the early indicators uncovered by the Outcome Star pedagogical intervention. Informal interviews are used to discuss students' approach to English in order to generate a deeper understanding of their experiences of using the Outcome Star and their attitudes and behaviours towards learning English.

Some opposers of story structures as a credible form of research (Josselson and Lieblich 1999) have questioned their relevance. However, Murray (2007) robustly defends Narrative Inquiry (2007) as a relevant methodological approach and brings to the fore that '*a story can be research when it is interpreted in view of a field of study and this process yields implications for practice, future research or theory building*' (Murray 2007:47).

Conversely, Bruner (1990) reminds us that our life story is constantly changing as new events in our lives unfold and as a result of this, our sense of self is therefore ever-changing. This could however be argued to present an opportunity, as Polkinghorne (1998) points out that Narrative Inquiry is a means of configuring personal events into an historical unity, which includes not only what a person has been but also anticipation of whom a person will be.

In the light of this new understanding of story structures, this study therefore draws closely upon the experiences of a small number of students in order to explore some key questions more extensively. For example, 'why do students think that they are not very good at English? Why do they think this and on what grounds? How do they learn GCSE English? What are the students doing when they learn GCSE English? This information is gathered by the use of Narrative Inquiry and the introduction of a literacy Storyboard which attempts to uncover key considerations from students' lived experience of their literacy development.

More importantly, Narrative Inquiry which focuses upon the experiences of students and teachers and includes the development of better informed, learning conversations draws some parallels with the work of Cole and Knowles (2001) and 'life history research'.

Cole and Knowles' (2001) position narrative accounts and interpretations within a broader context. Therefore, in order to make sense of the stories and narratives we collect, they argue, we also need to understand and respect the social, cultural and historical contexts in which they are situated. Narrative Inquiry they contend, can be more considered a life history research study. With this in mind, the Literacy Storyboard attempts to explore the earliest recollections of students' experiences of literacy development including primary and secondary schooling and reflections of their experiences of GCSE English examinations.

One of the first steps of real-life history research is to ensure that the researcher and the researched establish an authentic relationship which is based on mutual respect and trust (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

Murray (2007) argues that life history research can provide insights into learners' assumptions and beliefs about how they learn. More importantly, life history research affords researchers the opportunity to gain insights into learners' identities, including motivation and can provide valuable information about who the learners are and how they learn. One of the more compelling arguments to support life history research is made by Benson (2004) who states that is allows individual voices to be heard, especially those who have been disenfranchised or marginalised. This could very easily be relatable to GCSE resit students who have already been found lacking or wanting in a subject that they are now forced to re-take after leaving school.

It is hoped that these observations of students' learning, together with their accounts of what they are doing when they learn GCSE English will lead to the building of more authentic accounts of their experience of reading and writing and the discussion and representation of these accounts.

The term representation resonates particularly within the work of Eisner (1993) who indicates a deeper meaning within the term representation. For Eisner (1993), the term representation is not the mental representation explored in cognitive science but the process of transforming the contents of consciousness and experience into a public format so it can be inspected and shared with others. Furthermore, Eisner (1993) recognises that different kinds of experience lead to different meanings and in turn, make different forms of understanding and

representation possible. When considering this concept within educational research, the interpretive paradigm enables a synchronisation of characteristics of Eisner's approach and therefore could help researchers to form a better understanding of the life world experience of students, teachers and classroom cultures.

Engaging in a research process such as the one adopted in this thesis allows the potential for *'dialogue, consensus and confluence'* to occur, (Lincoln, et al in Waring et al 2003:20). Through the work of Usher (1996) it is emphasised that this dialogue could potentially lead to a better understanding of the learning experience between the researcher and people and the phenomena they are trying to understand. This thesis therefore fundamentally concerns itself with the pursuit of transparency and authenticity.

In order to understand lived experience, I understand and accept that a smaller cohort of learners will need to be selected as a sample. However, this form of deep dive approach to a select number of students, affords the opportunity to work more intensively with students involved. It supports more in-depth interpretations of experience to provide insights into a different world view and present an accurate account of the learners' stories.

As this research is steeped within the problem and context described in Chapter 1, it is very much part of a real educational issue within an FE setting. The deployment of the Outcome Star and Literacy Storyboard as a media to support Narrative Inquiry, in this study adopts aspects of a Critical Theory tradition. Information gathered and obtained through Critical Theory grows and changes through a - '*dialectical process as it erodes ignorance and misapprehensions and enlarges more informed insights'* (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:114).

On another level, Critical Theory offers the possibility for teachers to unlock established ways of practice, to question and challenge current formative assessment practices and finally to potentially 'free' learners from dysfunctional educational behaviours and long-standing habits and approaches to feedback. Essentially my aim is to help students to - learn how to learn from formative assessment feedback.

In addition, the Critical Theory tradition focuses upon emancipatory knowledge which identifies and exposes the systems that hold 'the researched' back, making them more aware or more conscious of the mechanisms of the systems and mechanisms of their oppression.

The term knowledge within Critical Theory refers to subjective knowledge and contests objective knowledge. Scott and Usher (1996) argue that an individual's knowledge is always

socially constructed and based on their world experience. Critical Theory traditions posit that being objective is not a matter of having the right research methods but of having the right argument. Critical Theory suggests that for any research to have relevance and use it needs to firstly understand the context in which it is set and be immersed in the problem, otherwise it raises the question of how can the right argument be formulated?

Critical Theory foregrounds how 'the researched' interpret their situation, formed around a variable view of human experience that fronts the reality and truth of those being researched and how they view their world. Coe et al (2017), emphasise how these methodologies are central to the position we adopt as researchers and how this in turn determines the type of research that is worth doing and frames the kind of questions to be asked and the methods to use.

Although the Critical Theory tradition is not being adopted in its entirety in this thesis, its methodological contributions support some aspects of this study. This is in terms of the ways in which engagement in the research may emancipate students and teachers from their taken-for-granted assumptions, dysfunctional habits and patterns of behaviour surrounding the giving and receiving of formative assessment feedback in GCSE resit English.

The Critical Theory tradition, challenges both positivist/empiricist and hermeneutic/interpretive traditions of research. It is, however, more critical of the positivist/empiricist tradition than any of the others. Critical Theory denotes the identification and detection of the beliefs, practices and perceptions which are linked to the world views of a particular individual(s).

It would appear that the aim of Critical Theory is the '*critique and transformation of human-kind*' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:109). This thesis recognises that Critical Theory adopts a radical stance and as Lincoln (1991) reminds us, that transformation should be reserved for those who lives are most affected … the participants themselves.

As this thesis explores the behaviours and attitudes of GCSE English resit students it hopes to engage them with dialogical approaches to formative assessment feedback. The focus here is upon the students' lived experience. It seeks to find a balance and place the participants' experience and lived stories at the heart of the methodology adopted in this thesis. The '*transformation' occurs when 'misapprehensions give way to more informed insights by means of dialectical interaction'* (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:113).

Data Collection Techniques

As GCSE English teachers immersed in this curriculum, the enduring educational issue of assessment is very much a part of the professional narrative I share with other teachers of GCSE subjects.

The tendency and culture to focus solely on learners' progress against exam outcomes rather than the process within formative assessment is strong. An unintended consequence of this is a lesser focus on the measure of progress related to positive student experience and changes in their behaviour and attitude towards learning the subject of GCSE English.

This formative assessment schedule currently operating at the College is also heavily loaded with written formative feedback which again, is largely focused on progress against target grade and the close monitoring of student progress against students' likelihood of the achievement of a Grade 4.

Despite good intentions to support student progress, instead of improving student attainment, the current written feedback measures repeatedly do not appear to be achieving the desired outcome. It could be argued that the current total focus on progress against target grade appears to be serving to limit or even decrease student achievement. Student achievement has potentially been narrowed to a purely quantifiable measure of achievement. The current formative assessment processes may potentially be missing opportunities to capture the impact on students' experience of education included in a qualitative study such as this. The inclusion of qualitative data therefore can potentially illuminate the findings surrounding the student experience and support educational improvements in pedagogical approaches with regards to oracy and formative assessment feedback.

This thesis is already increasing the professional curiosity of GCSE teachers in addressing issues related to how we might make better use of the principles of formative assessment in practice. This is leading to opportunities to explore a more collaborative approach to the initial assessment process for GCSE English resit students. As a team we are looking to incorporate an assessment instrument that focuses on both students' prior achievement as well as their feelings and experiences of resitting GCSE English whilst at college.

As a result of our academic ambitions in this field of study, part of the data collection methods employed in this thesis include the Outcome Star and the Literacy Storyboard.

The development of the 'Outcome Star' is employed as a means of capturing and tracking students' attitudes and behaviours towards GCSE English. This assessment instrument is used as a focusing device and self-assessment activity in the first instance. This is revisited during various intervals in the academic calendar to attempt to capture and chronicle important changes in students approaches to learning and achievement. The Outcome Star operates in conjunction with current and new approaches to the provision of written and verbal feedback to students. The outcome of this intervention attempts to trace changes in learners' feelings, attitudes and behaviours towards English over the course of this research.

The Outcome Star aims to act as a stimulus for the collection of the stories and experiences around the students' perceptions/feelings/beliefs of GCSE resit English. The data gathering process uses the Outcome Star to capture students' behaviours, perceptions and attitudes towards English and explore whether students' perceptions are reflected in their actions.

The deployment of the Literacy Storyboard focuses on the lived experiences of students with regard to their accounts of their literacy development. The Literacy Storyboard focuses students' attention on their earliest recollections of reading and writing. It also seeks to uncover both positive and negative experiences of learning English, together with their recollections of reading and the book or story which has had the greatest impact on their life. Students are asked to recall their earliest recollections of writing and spelling together with an insight into critical incidents and experiences in secondary school.

More importantly, the Literacy Storyboard invites students to discuss and reflect upon their lived experiences of learning, to share a particularly good learning experience in which they are successful, enjoyed and found the content interesting. Conversely students are asked to share a negative experience of learning and learners' reasons why it was such a negative experience.

The key focus of the Literacy Storyboard surrounds lived experience but also pays particular attention to focusing on the learning aspects of their lived experience and not the teaching or the teacher. This student-centred approach to learning to learn is pioneered and supported in the work of Gibbs (1981).

Together, the Outcome Star and Literacy Storyboard are the focusing devices for the Narrative Inquiry. They raise discussions around lived experiences of literacy development together with behaviours and learners' attitudes towards GCSE resit English.

However, this also raises the question of if, or how, the extent to which a student thinks that they are not very good at studying English and how this influences their learning and achievement. (Kemmis in Carr, 2005) corroborates the notion that it is only through entering into a cycle of interpretation with others, that we can hope to come to some kind of understanding of practice and that is situated precisely and reflexively within our individual context.

In addition, adopting both written and dialogical approaches to formative feedback aims to provide a space for learners to reflect upon their learning and actively learn from the formative assessment feedback offered by their tutors. This is very much informed by the guiding principles of formative assessment described in the work of Clarke (2001). The merits of Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies and the work of Clarke (2001) are discussed in greater depth in Chapter 2, Literature Review. The learning conversations that take place between teacher and student also form part of data collection methods. These learning conversations attempt to develop a critical discourse between teacher and student are planned and conducted.

Other research methods also include a sample of questionnaires from GCSE students, together with student and teacher interviews. The interviews with students are deployed using the Outcome Star and Literacy Storyboard as the vehicles to support Narrative Inquiry. These case studies and observations include actual practices carried out by a sample of GCSE teachers. These methods are used to ensure that a range of qualitative data are collated which can be used for the purposes of triangulation and to strengthen the warrant of the findings of the research.

Qualitative and Quantitative Data

The methods employed in this study are largely qualitative, as they seek to understand the experiences of learners and teachers engaged in the study of GCSE resit English and to explore how these experiences and this learning might be improved.

Merriam (1988) notes how qualitative data focus upon meaning and are primarily concerned with how people make sense of their lives, experiences and their structures of their world. As this study is linked to ‘lived experiences’, then presenting the data in a qualitative format is the most appropriate data collection method.

Qualitative data are used to illuminate and interpret experience and to frame the findings of this study. There is a key focus on qualitative data as it is used as a measure or indicator of impact. These indicators of impact surround the introduction of the pedagogic interventions employed in this study. They aim to improve approaches to curriculum design and the use of formative assessment and dialogic pedagogy in the teaching and learning of GCSE English.

The qualitative data sets when collated attempt to find out how students, teachers and myself as the researcher perceive their experiences of the teaching, learning and assessment of GCSE resit English. In acknowledging that different people will have different experiences and that my own experiences beliefs and values are incorporated into the research design and analysis, this study is essentially interested in the interpretation of human experience. A key aim here is to discover how approaches to, and applications of, formative assessment and the use of oracy as an instrument of assessment feedback might become more educational in practice in the context of this research.

As discussed above, it would be, of course, unwise to ignore or discount all forms of empirical data. Achievement rates, high grades, progress measures, retention and attendance rates are all destination outcomes for learners and should be represented, and indeed, acknowledged. As (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) argue, there is always a heavy emphasis on quantification, as mathematical science is often considered the Queen of Sciences and therefore any form of hard data cannot and should not be entirely side-stepped.

Sources of hard data are called upon during the analysis and interpretation of other data from this research. Some statistical hard data are necessary in order to triangulate and provide a different dimension of data rather than risk an over reliance upon the qualitative data of this study.

It is also recognised through the work of Guba and Lincoln (1998), who lend further weight to the limitations of quantitative approaches as quantitative data collection methods where they point to the inherent risk of 'context stripping' in detracting from the relevance of research. Guba and Lincoln (1989) go on to point out how qualitative data can *'redress that imbalance by providing contextual information*'. (Guba and Lincoln 1994:106).

This discussion now draws us to the work of Taylor (2011) who directs our attention towards the importance of maintaining high quality standards in qualitative research including levels of trustworthiness and authenticity. Criteria of authenticity are reflected in the relationship

between the researcher and the participants with regard to matters of fairness, trustworthiness and transparency.

Ethical Considerations

As discussed above, the ontological perspective underpinning this thesis is framed in constructivism and explored in this chapter. It recognises that ethics are '*intrinsic*' to this paradigm (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:115). With this in mind, the constructivist paradigm appears to be the most appropriate as research ethics are an integral component. Moreover, ethical considerations are central to the constructivist paradigm as it places the inclusion of the participants' values at the epicentre of educational research. The main thrust behind Guba and Lincoln's (1998) position with regard to the ethical perspective is based on the premise that constructivism is working towards increased information and sophistication in the meaning-making processed involved in this research.

Throughout the research it is imperative to remember and have an understanding and awareness of the power-relations and ethical and moral issues that are implicit in the research methods, data collection and processes of analysis employed in this study. Together with (Cohen and Manion, 1994) and in line with BERA Guidelines (2018) this research reinforces the importance of confidentiality being adhered to at all times. Self-awareness brings with it a great deal of responsibility for a beginning researcher such as myself in ensuring that these obligations of research ethics are met and that respect is afforded to all of those involved in, or affected by this research.

Robson (1993) points out that informed consent is necessary before any research can be undertaken from the participants and authorisation particularly from the organisation or gatekeeper is essential. As a researcher, I need to acknowledge therefore that I cannot expect access to the organisation, my peers and students as a matter of right. As a beginning researcher I need to position and frame my research in order to present the rationale for my research and demonstrate that I am a credible and worthy gatekeeper to this research study (Robson 1993).

Informed consent from the organisation, from teachers and students from the main research population is obtained Informed consent is also accompanied by research participants' awareness of their right to withdraw from the study in accordance with the BERA Guidelines (2018). What this type of informed consent does offers me as the researcher is the opportunity to present my credentials as a serious and credible educational researcher. This gives me the opportunity to establish my own ethical position with respect to the study of my students,

my colleagues and the organisation for which I work in obtaining and accessing the acceptance of my conduct of this research (Cohen and Manion, 1994).

By and large, scientific research is mainly concerned with inanimate substances but ethical considerations surrounding educational practice, concern people. Taber (2014) reminds us that contrary to chemical research which involves the manipulation of inanimate material, where people are involved, the research tends to involve observation of the outcomes of an intervention. This concept, adopted by Taber (2014), supports the rationale and the methodological approach adopted in this study.

Taber (2014) also reiterates that educational research is at its core, about teaching and learning. Learning is something that takes place in the minds of people and therefore we must understand and acknowledge that people are complex. People are more complex than samples of materials and substances and they also have inherent rights that materials and chemicals do not. As human beings "the researched" are entitled to expect to be treated with dignity and be well respected in order to determine their decision to be involved in the research (or not). Taber (2014) further reminds the researcher that the ethical consideration of research where people are involved, goes far beyond what is expected in the research of materials and samples within a laboratory environment.

A key factor within Taber's (2014) work is the imperative not to do '*harm*' (Taber 2014:3) to "the researched". This refers not only to physical harm, as not all risks are physical in nature but to any harm that may negatively impact on an individual's wellbeing. Research in an educational context commonly involves observing in teaching and learning contexts involving the participants in the research process through interviews, direct observation or questionnaires. Ethical considerations are therefore of paramount importance to ensure that research participants are not overly stressed by the intensity of the data collection activities. More importantly, "the researched" are not confused or doubt their adequacy of knowledge and understanding of their rights to comfortably participate in or withdraw from the study.

I am also reminded through Taber's (2014) work of the need to ensure that ethical considerations surround the design and implementation of the research data collection and storage methods to avoid the potential damage to a person's motivation, self-efficacy and confidence.

Understanding the Limitations of the Study

At this point it feels appropriate to acknowledge and reflect on the limitations of this study. It would be remiss of me as a researcher not to explore any potential bias of this small-scale practitioner-led research and it feels appropriate to declare this.

As this research is positioned in alignment with a constructivist-interpretivist-pragmatist paradigm, it relies on the interpretation of people's lived experience and therefore it is important that the fallibility and subjectivity of human existence and expression is acknowledged. The research conversations and interactions reported here present opportunities for students and colleagues to share their experiences of GCSE English with me and with you, the reader. On one hand, the work of (Winwood in Lambert, 2019) draws attention to the potential of open and purposeful conversations where the participants of the study have the opportunity to examine and discuss relevant issues, it is also important to note the associated risks identified by (Kara, 2012), whereby important issues can be missed and you can run the risk of these research conversations '*degenerating into a general chat'* (Kara, 2012:122).

The work of MacKieson ét al (2019) also opens up an interesting discussion with regard to qualitative research methods, which have traditionally been criticised for lacking rigor and for presenting impressionistic and biased results. However, as MacKieson ét al (2019) reminds us, as qualitative methods have been increasingly used in social inquiry, subsequently the efforts to address these criticisms have also increased.

It cannot be ignored that there is also the recurring criticism regarding the subjective nature of data collected through naturalistic methods. These naturalistic methods call into question the validity and reliability of human experience and interpretation and this is acknowledged in this thesis. However, the adoption of a constructivist-interpretive-pragmatic paradigm, described and justified in the methodology chapter of this thesis chooses to view personal narrative and lived experience as an opportunity to, and not an obstacle to the study - a form of '*storytelling*' (Tummons and Duckworth, 2012:69).

As a qualitative, practitioner-researcher I have attempted to adhere to the principles and scholarship of educational research in a systematic way in order to ensure that this thesis can be considered trustworthy, authentic and credible. I hope that I have reported the findings of this study with fidelity and in a balanced way. As an educational researcher, conducting a small-scale qualitative research study my intention is not in pursuit of objectivity nor a single

truth but an opportunity to report the lived experiences of those who have shared this research journey with me.

By acknowledging the limitations of the study and as a qualitative researcher, I have applied '*questioning of practice'* (Bell, 2014:187). I have tried to adopt a critical attitude towards the interpretation of the data to attempt to protect against the dangers of bias. By adopting a '*critical attitude'* towards the interpretation of the data (Bell, 2014: 187) the key findings, shared in Chapter 6 strive to respect, honour and do justice to the experiences of the research participants and the key findings and subsequent recommendations report here and not skewed to align purely with my own axiology and experiences.

Chapter Summary

This Chapter draws upon contributions from the various authors and disciplines in the field of methodology and methods in educational research. It appears that one common denominator running throughout the reading of methodological approaches is prevalent. That is that all authorities on this subject concur that educational research is complex and that there are a wide range of perspectives and debates surrounding the nature of educational research and the associated terminologies and methodologies.

As Waring et al, (2017) remind us, however, the researcher should have ownership of the process. By doing so, this allows the researcher to be aware of the inter-relationship between ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods which in turn serve to enhance their ability to understand their research position.

The purpose of this study is to understand students' lived experiences of studying English and formative assessment and to consider different approaches to formative assessment that consider how to address resit GCSE English '*differently*' (Gadamer in Scott and Usher 1996:19). This research comprises of a circular, process of interpretation, subjective experience, dialogical approaches to formative assessment feedback and the learning and achievements of post 16 GCSE English students.

This research also attempts to position itself with the hermeneutic tradition and aims to '*fuse horizons*', (Gadamer in Scott and Usher 1996:21) of the experiences of various participants in the study, including my own. This study is embedded in a practice-focused perspective that strives to offer insights into assessment theory and practice in FE contexts. This includes insights into how educational practices surrounding formative assessment feedback and dialogical approaches can be used more effectively within post-16 GCSE resit students.

Consequently, this research attempts to ultimately broaden horizons for both the researcher and “the researched”.

Literature surrounding this field of study constantly reminds us that the methodological landscape is complex and inter-woven and there appears to be no single answer to the most effective or appropriate methodological approaches to be adopted. (Taylor, 2011) argues that over time, the paradigm wars give way to the paradigm dialogue in which researchers come to accept the differences and realise that every research paradigm is important. No research paradigm is more relevant or indeed superior to another, but each has a specific purpose in providing a distinct means of producing unique knowledge, insight or interpretation of experience in relation to different educational research problems and issues and different research questions.

This Chapter acknowledges and understands that methodological approaches are not prescriptive and there is no one right or best way of carrying out educational research. It feels appropriate, at this point to draw upon the philosophical approach to methodology of Wittgenstein when summing up the theoretical landscape of research methods and methodologies, where he points out that:

> *‘If I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination – And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation. For this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction.’*
>
> (Wittgenstein 1953:127)

It is hoped that the methodology employed in this research will enable me as the researcher to undertake uniquely powerful and insightful inquiries that contribute to *‘transforming the landscape of theory and practice in vocational education*’ (Taylor, 2008:885).

Ultimately this study is a journey of lived experience and following it, is an attempt by me to try to represent the development of mind (my own and those of others) and the forms of knowledge and representation through which the contents of our minds are made public. Like, (Eisner 1993:5) ‘*how my ideas about these matters evolved, is a story I want to tell’*.

Chapter Four: Data Collection and Analysis

Introduction

This chapter explores and presents the accounts of the experiences of assessment encountered by GCSE English students in my college. The primary purpose of the study is to illuminate the lived experience of learning and assessment. This is through the analysis of qualitative data and other indicators of impact of the pedagogic devices employed in the study to support formative assessment and increase active learning.

It is recognised through the work of (Nowell et al, 2017) that qualitative research is becoming increasingly accepted and more valued by the research community. However, in order for qualitative research to receive even greater recognition, credibility and validation, it must be conducted in a rigorous, systematic and methodical manner in order to yield meaningful and useful results.

Woods (2006), acknowledges that qualitative researchers face a real challenge when it comes to illustrating the processes involved in the analysis of data. Issues that surround the acknowledgment that qualitative data analysis is a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, challenging and fascinating process. Marshall and Rossman (2011) add further weight to this argument where they suggest that qualitative data analysis does not proceed in a neat linear fashion and the data are not as clear-cut, succinct and easy to manage as quantitative data.

Denscombe (2017), reassures us that to deal with this challenge, qualitative researchers need to accept the fact that is not feasible for researchers to present all of their data. He highlights how researchers need to be selective in the data they present and how they act as '*editor*', identifying key parts of the data analysis and prioritising certain parts over others, which is a highly skilled and demanding activity, (Denscombe 2017:325).

(Nowell *et al*, 2017) also remind researchers that for qualitative research to be accepted as trustworthy, qualitative researchers must demonstrate that the data analysis is conducted in a transparent, careful and consistent manner. Lincoln and Guba (1985) reinforce this point with regard to the need for qualitative research to be seen as being credible. They argue that it is not possible for qualitative researchers to prove in any absolute way that they 'got it right'. However, they go on to justify how the term credibility is more appropriate in relation to the measures undertaken in the verification of the qualitative research than the pursuit of any claims to validity.

This Chapter discloses the methods of data analysis employed in this study in detail so that the reader can determine the extent to which the processes of data analysis reported in this study can be regarded as being trustworthy and credible.

Data collected in the conduct of this research offer insights into how approaches to assessment first advanced in the work of Clarke (2001), might support deeper levels of GCSE English students' engagement in their studies in FE contexts. The intention here is also to examine the influence of dialogical approaches to the provision of formative assessment, including the use of oracy as an assessment instrument to encourage active learning, develop stronger learner autonomy, increase learner engagement and attainment, as well as raising levels of learner confidence and self-esteem.

Data Collection Methods and Processes

The data gathering methods and processes employed in this study are based on a sample of post-16 students studying GCSE English. It is acknowledged through the work of (Ross, 2005) that sampling in educational research is generally conducted in order to permit the detailed study of part, rather than the whole of a research population. It is further acknowledged by the same author that the information and analysis derived from the resulting samples are employed to provide useful insights and offer wider inferences regarding the general research population.

Ross (2005) discusses the sampling frames adopted in the data collection process and, as in the case of this study, *'cluster sampling'* (Ross 2005:11) is used. Ross notes that while cluster samples may vary in size, selected groups from the research population are reflected in the data collection process. The cluster samples employed in this research consist of a selection of classes from 16-18 Study Programme GCSE English students. The data gathering processes are demonstrated below, together with an account of the realities of the data collection process.

Summary of the Research Questions and Research Aims

As shared in Chapter 1, this practitioner-research begins with a problem which stems from the troubling lack of impact of current formative assessment practices were having on GCSE resit English in my college. The research began with an initial investigation into the benefits of employing the use of oracy and dialogue as alternative pedagogic device in current formative assessment practices.

It seems pertinent at this point in Chapter 4 to briefly summarise, the key research questions, together with the over-arching aim of the study and also the five data collection methods that were used. These have been discussed previously, in detail in this thesis:

Research Questions

- Why are teachers spending so much time preparing written feedback to meet quality and audit standards which students seldom read and rarely act upon?
- What is wrong with Assessment for Learning, why is there a disconnect between the theory and practice of AfL?
- How can the practice of formative assessment be sharpened so there is a more holistic approach to AfL which takes seriously the lived experiences of young people?

Aim of Research

- Explore the disconnect between the theory of Assessment for Learning and AfL in practice and if, or how, the practice of formative assessment can be improved and if the research could suggest more active learning approaches to formative assessment.
- To identify the extent to which Assessment for Learning strategies (AfL), coupled with more multimodal and holistic approaches to formative feedback, (which employ both written, verbal feedback and other sensory modes of assessment), can contribute to improving student engagement and achievement as well as enhancing learners' perseverance and resilience and increasing learners' self-confidence.
- To explore the influence of oracy as a pedagogic device in the provision of formative assessment and the development of language skills within the feedback processes involved in the study of GSCE English, in order to deepen learner engagement, increase learner autonomy and confidence as well as foster positive behaviours and attitudes towards learning.

Data Collection Methods

- Student Questionnaire
- Outcome Star
- Case Studies -Outcome Star
- Literacy Storyboard (Narrative Inquiry)
- Teacher Interview

Actualities of the Data Collection Methods

Not all of the data collection instruments initially adopted in the conduct of the study yielded 100% returns. The unprecedented global COVID-19 pandemic inevitably impacted on the return rate of responses from research participants and halted face to face contact. This in turn impacted on the return rate of the Narrative Inquiry and Teacher Interview sample.

Planned Sample	Data Method	Actual Sample
35	Student Questionnaire	30 (88%)
20	Outcome Star	20 (100%)
4	Case Studies -Outcome Star	4 (100%)
6	Literacy Storyboard (Narrative Inquiry)	3 (50%)
2	Teacher Interview	1 (50%)

However, the range and scope of data are carefully evaluated, and the judgement made is that sufficient data have been collected to support the systematic data analysis. In particular, the teacher interview, although limited to one member of staff provided such rich data that it is included in the data analysis.

The purpose of data analysis processes are to progress the information in the form of raw data from its isolation from context and interpretation as referred to by (Robson, 1993). In order to tease out meaning in the data it is necessary to identify recurring categories and themes by using appropriate data reduction techniques. These techniques assist in unpacking the research aim, supporting or contesting relevant literature and adding authority to the interpretation process.

To ensure a sequential and systematic structure, Chapter 4 Data Analysis and Findings is divided into logical elements:

Student Questionnaire (Appendix 1)

The first data collection method to be discussed starts with the Student Questionnaire. This questionnaire was fairly brief and asked 6 key questions about students' experiences of the teaching, learning and assessment of GCSE English from when these young people were at school.

The decision to explore lived experience is discussed in some detail in Chapter 3. As discussed earlier, Waring (2017) cautions that human beings bring along to every new experience their previous life experience and the knowledge they have acquired in their lives to date to any research context. The Student Questionnaire aimed to capture each student's experiences of teaching, learning and assessment in GCSE English while at school in order to better understand how these experiences might be influencing their current approaches to the subject at college.

The first two questions within the student questionnaire are based on a sliding scale of 1-10, 1 being least important and 10 being most important. The scores were calculated, and the average reported in the analysis contained in this chapter. To demonstrate that the analysis of the data was carried out in a transparent way as supported by Nowell ét al (2017) Appendix 4 shows the calculations as a practical example and average for questions 1 and 2.

The first question asks the students - 'How important do you consider GCSE English to be'? 30 respondents answered the question, and the average score was calculated at 8.3. This

suggests that most students in the sample recognised the importance of GCSE English to their lives. However, their reasons for attributing this level of importance to the subject may of course be varied. It is also worth noting how almost 20% of the same sample did not consider GCSE English to be important. It would be interesting to understand their reasons for saying this in a subsequent study.

The second question asked the sample group - 'How seriously do you take the subject'? Again 30 students scored their response, and the average score was calculated at 6.9. Here we can see an interesting disparity between the higher score attributed by the students to the importance of the study and the lower score of how seriously they take the subject. Although beyond the scope of this study it would also be interesting to understand why this is the case.

Before moving on, it is important to give some context to some of the other questions in the questionnaire. The third, fifth and sixth question asked the participants to answer by giving some written responses. The range of writing and the quality of detailed responses varied from learner to learner.

Initially when analysing the raw data from Question 3, 5 and 6, it became extremely apparent that theoretical saturation (Denscombe, 1998) had occurred. There was a plethora of raw data which had been generated from the students' responses to these questions, but it was difficult, 'to see the wood for the trees' and I struggled at times to see any themes or patterns emerging from the data.

In order to overcome this challenge a coding schema as recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1990) was applied to the comments collected. Appendix 4 gives practical examples of how recurring words and phrases began to emerge and also the number of occurrences, this is also shared in the table below:

Question 3 asks the students - 'What do you feel are the main issues around studying GCSE English'? The themes that emerge from Question 3 are:

Don't enjoy writing (24)	Don't read (18)	Not interested in subject (22)	Not relevant to real life (24)
Exam pressure (26)	Students messing about (11)	Lesson delivery (8)	

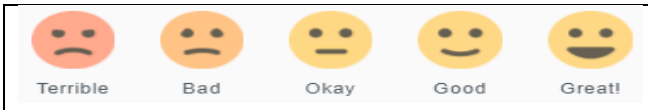
The application of a coding schema enables core elements and recurring words/phrases within the raw data to be identified. This is shown in the table above, the number contained within the brackets indicates to number of times this sub-theme occurred. These data reduction

methods as discussed by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) ensure that the novice researcher can create the codes and concepts by approaching the raw data with an open and unbiased mind as further supported in Strauss, (1987).

Here we can see that for some students the main issue is that they do not enjoy writing. For others, it is their feelings about reading. While for another group it is the fear and pressure of exams that are at the heart of the issue. A further group of students declare that they are just not interested in a subject which they do not see as being relevant to real life. While for a final group the issue is the quality of lesson delivery (teaching) and the teacher's ability to engage and manage all of the students in the class that is an issue.

Each of the above raise important but different challenges for educational practice in the teaching, learning and assessment of GCSE English. The implications of these issues for curriculum design, pedagogical practices and formative assessment are discussed in some detail in Chapter 5.

Question 4 used emojis to ask the students – 'How enjoyable was your experience of English at school'? All 30 students responded and the analysis of that data shows the scores and this is also illustrated in Appendix 4 and shown in the table below:

				
3	6	14	7	0

Here we can see those 9 students in total, 30% of students in the sample had a 'terrible' or 'bad' experience of learning English while they were at school. We can also see however that 21 out of the 30 students (70%) in the sample had a 'good' or 'okay' experience of learning English while in compulsory education. This suggest that in any one group of students, while the majority of students may have had a reasonably good experience of learning English prior to coming to college, approximately one third of the group may have had relatively poor or very negative experiences of learning the subject.

As a result, they may understandably come to FE College feeling personally and intellectually diminished or even 'damaged' or 'scarred' as a result. The implications of these issues for curriculum design, pedagogical practice and formative assessment are discussed in some detail in Chapter 5.

Question 5 focuses on the barriers to English and asks the students (30 students responded)

– 'What barriers do you feel you faced at school that prevented you from getting a Grade 4'? Again, using a coding schema technique the recurring ideas and phrases were collated into a number of sub-themes and the number of times these present themselves in the data are shown in the brackets in the table below. Practical examples of this are shared in Appendix 4.

The sub-themes that emerged from Question 5 are:

Lack of writing skills (19)	*Panic in exams (14)*	*Stress and Anxiety (14)*
Student behaviour (12)	*New ways to fail (23)*	*Remembering everything (8)*
Don't read (14)	*Exam pressure (14)*	

By identifying recurring words/phrases there is a strong emphasis on the impact of exam failure. In particular, an example of a direct quote from a student illuminate this further – "*finding new ways to fail*". There are also connections to exam preparation and reflection which will form part of the discussion in Chapter 5.

The final question, question 6 asked the students - 'What changes or suggestions would you make to improve the experience'? This produced the most 'nil' response from all 6 questions with only 20 students responding.

Once again, recurring words/phrases/ideas were identified and are shown in the table below, together with the number of occurrences displayed in the brackets. Practical examples of the data analysis can also be viewed in Appendix 4.

What emerged from the students' comments in Question 6 are:

Mindset and wellbeing (9)	*Better writing skills/boring (4)*	*Better prepared for exam (14)*
Continue to fail (4)	*Improve Reading (6)*	*Acceptance of failure (9)*
Stop being afraid of failure (14)		

Once again, the skill of writing figures in students' responses, a number of students commented on their lack of writing skills and particularly how writing has been restricted during lockdown. Students acknowledged that they engaged less in writing activities as most of their activities have been carried out electronically and using online resources during the pandemic.

Other students refer to issues of self-regulating (well-being) and metacognition (better prepared for exam) in the final question, particularly surrounding the notion of failure and its

impact. This suggests that once again negative qualities of mind may be prevalent influences in these responses indicating a need for the more virtuous qualities of mind to be nurtured to support student well-being and also positive mind-sets when approaching the exam.

Dunne (identifies the following examples of qualities of mind and character that an education worthy of the name should aim foster. These include:

> " *… an ability for independent thought and reflection, a habit of truthfulness, a sense of justice and a care and clarity and expressiveness in writing and speech.*
>
> (Dunne 1993:6)

As we have seen from discussions with students it is all too easy and understandable for students to fall into this continuous cycle of failure and ultimately self-perpetuate a downward spiral of disappointment, defeat and despondency. The implications of these issues for curriculum design, pedagogical practice and formative assessment are discussed in some detail in Chapter 5.

The 'get better at failing' comment, shared in the Student Questionnaire, sounds an even more troubling note of despondency and even despair and this therefore warrants further discussion. Several students commented on experiences of failure and how difficult it is to overcome the negative emotions that accompany these experiences. Two comments, resonate in particular and to quote the learners' words verbatim - "*I always find new ways to fail*". Another learner commented: *"I need to accept failure more and not be scared to fail*" (See Appendix 4). Even though both of these responses refer to 'failure' their sentiments are quite different.

The comment from the first student "*I always find new ways to fail*" suggests that the student has labelled themselves as a 'failure' and that they feel that failure in GCSE English (and perhaps in education in general) is for them predetermined or innate. They have convinced themselves that no matter what they do, or how hard they try, success in the GCSE English resit examination, will always elude them.

While the comment from the second student carries a ring of hope of having the determination not to be defeated by lack of exam success and finding the courage to take risks and try strategies for exam success in the future, there is still a note of resignation sounded. The comments from these students indicate the very different ways in which these students are thinking about their learning of GCSE English.

Eisner (1993) and Dunne (1993) generally refer to these aspects of how we think and what we think with and how we think as qualities of mind, and character which they argue can enhance the human condition (virtues) or diminish it (vices). For the first student, the vices of resignation and self-defeat have come to dominate their thinking and their being, including their approaches to learning GCSE English. However, for the second student, the virtues of finding the hope and courage to persist, overcome fear and take risks in order to pursue exam success in GCSE resit English (or at least not be crushed by lack of success in the exam). This is also coupled with a predetermination that their past experiences will not be a predictor of their future thus reflecting how they are thinking about themselves and their learning of GCSE English (Bernstein 1996).

The theme of the development qualities of mind and character in education is discussed in more detail as a key finding in Chapter 5.

Outcome Star (Appendix 2)

The Outcome Star pedagogical intervention is developed and used in the study as a focusing device and assessment tool to capture and track students' behaviours and attitudes towards their GCSE resit English studies. Designed and implemented in conjunction with other English teachers the 10 key components or characteristics of the Outcome Star were mutually agreed at an early stage in the research by the tutors involved in the study.

The 10 key characteristics/components of the Outcome Star mutually agreed with English tutors involved in this study are:

- I enjoy reading
- Reading out-loud
- Comfortable with my writing skills
- Accurate spelling for my age
- English is important to me
- I take English lessons seriously
- I get involved in English lessons
- I am always prepared for English lessons
- Use English skills away from college
- I enjoy creative writing

While these characteristics/components are perhaps more context-specific and instrumental than the qualities of mind discussed above, they are deemed by the tutors to be the criteria for successful student behaviours and attitudes towards GCSE English and key factors in exam success and study. These attitudes and behaviours are actively acknowledged and encouraged by tutors in their teaching and the use of the Outcome Star formed part of their formative assessment processes.

The Outcome Star is deployed as a focusing device to attempt to encourage and open up a conversation and introduce a language to support richer learning conversations between students and teachers. It aims to foster honest, open and constructive dialogue in order to encourage the development of stronger learner autonomy and raise levels of learner confidence and self-esteem.

In summary, the Outcome Star was implemented on a 3-stage approach. The first was a self-assessment by the student, the second an assessment by the teacher, and the final stage, a summative review by both the teacher and student in the form of a discussion. The stages will be discussed in more detail during this chapter.

It is recognised throughout this thesis, and it is also well documented in some detail in Chapters 1 and 2, that preoccupations with measures of student achievement which overtly focuses on outcomes and instrumental progress against target grade can have a detrimental impact on student confidence. The Outcome Star was also developed as a formative assessment instrument to capture more open processes of learning and developments in attitudes and behaviours towards GCSE English over an extended period. As advocated by Clarke (2001), data from the Outcome Star were collected from November 2019 until February 2020.

Through the work of Hyland (2018), Chapter 2 also notes that pedagogical approaches under-utilise the affective and psychomotor domains within subjects and disciplines. Therefore, a focusing device and assessment instrument which explores not just exam performance, but also considers explicit criteria and learning processes which contribute to the development of successful behaviours, attitudes and values towards exam success in GCSE English are regarded by all of the tutors involved in this study as being an appropriate formative assessment device and a useful method of data collection regarding subtle aspects of student learning and progress.

The first stage of the Outcome Star is a student self-assessment activity. The students provide their summative assessment on how confident they see themselves as being in relation to the 10 key characteristics/components listed above. The students grade themselves based on their own levels of confidence against each characteristic/component, 10 being very confident, to 1 being low confidence.

The second stage of the Outcome Star is carried out by the teacher and considers the student's scoring. The teacher discusses with the student each characteristic/component and gives their scoring during the learning conversation. The discussion and dialogue that takes place is part of the formative comparative assessment process. The dialogue between teacher and student which demonstrates formative comparative assessment is captured in the Case Studies. These Case Studies are shared by teachers and are presented and discussed later in this Chapter.

The final review aims at arriving at a negotiated score and a justification for each key characteristic which is discussed and agreed upon mutually between the teacher and student. This comparative assessment is again, born out of aspects of dialogue and discussion.

The analysis of the Outcome Star scores will form the majority of the discussion around this data collection method and this will be shared below in this chapter. It is worth noting that from the data analysis some 'key points of interest and discussion points' were noted and these are shared in Appendix 5.

As this thesis presents accounts of lived experience and attempts to illuminate the storied lives of students studying resit GCSE English, these key points of interest were recorded in the researchers' notes (see Appendix 5).

Some extracts from students' comments include *"too much focus on what we got wrong, always focused on negative"*. For the purposes of transparency, Appendix 5 also gives an insight into the researchers' thought process, where the researcher has posed some key questions and points to consider.

Analysis of the data generated by the 20 students involved in the Outcome Star sample are reported on the next page. Each student is represented by the term 'S1-S20' and each key expression is clearly shown, together with the student self-assessment, teacher assessment and final review.

	Enjoy reading	Reading out-loud	Writing skills	Accurate spelling	English is important	Attend and be on time	Involved in classes	Prepared for lessons	Use English outside college	Enjoy creative writing
S1 - Self Assessment	4	3	3	4	6	8	6	10	5	5
S1 - Tutor Assessment	4	2	3	4	7	7	6	10	5	5
S1 – Final Review	4	4	3	5	8	9	7	10	6	5
S2 – Self Assessment	9	1	7	5	10	10	9	10	10	10
S2 – Tutor Assessment	10	3	7	5	10	10	9	10	10	10
S2 – Final Review	10	4	9	6	10	10	10	10	10	10
S3 – Self Assessment	7	1	5	4	7	10	7	7	5	9
S3 – Tutor Assessment	8	4	5	7	9	10	9	9	6	10
S3 – Final Review	8	5	7	8	10	10	10	9	7	10
S4 – Self Assessment	4	3	6	5	7	10	8	9	6	7
S4 – Tutor Assessment	5	4	7	7	9	10	9	9	6	7
S4 – Final Review	5	5	9	8	10	10	9	9	7	7
S5 – Self Assessment	10	5	7	9	8	10	5	10	6	9
S5 – Tutor Assessment	10	7	7	10	9	10	8	10	8	9
S5 – Final Review	10	9	9	10	10	10	10	10	9	10
S6 – Self Assessment	4	3	5	6	5	7	5	6	3	5
S6 – Tutor Assessment	5	3	6	7	8	8	6	6	5	5
S6 – Final Review	5	7	7	8	9	9	7	7	5	6
S7 – Self Assessment	1	1	4	4	6	7	5	6	4	5
S7 – Tutor Assessment	1	1	4	4	6	9	5	8	5	5
S7 – Final Review	2	1	5	4	8	10	7	9	6	6
S8 – Self Assessment	1	7	5	7	5	8	7	8	9	6
S8 – Tutor Assessment	8	8	4	7	9	10	7	9	9	7
S8 – Final Review	8	9	7	8	9	10	8	7	9	7
S9 – Self Assessment	2	6	5	6	6	7	6	7	5	5
S9-Tutor Assessment	3	3	6	7	7	7	8	8	5	5
S9-Final Review	4	5	7	7	8	8	8	8	5	6

S10 – Self Assessment	**6**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**9**	**8**	**7**	**7**	**8**	**5**
S10 – Tutor Assessment	**6**	**6**	**5**	**6**	**8**	**8**	**7**	**9**	**8**	**6**
S10 – Final Review	**7**	**6**	**8**	**7**	**9**	**9**	**8**	**9**	**9**	**7**
S11 – Self Assessment	**4**	**1**	**8**	**8**	**6**	**9**	**6**	**8**	**7**	**7**
S11 – Tutor Assessment	**5**	**2**	**8**	**9**	**8**	**9**	**7**	**8**	**7**	**8**
S11 – Final Review	**6**	**4**	**9**	**9**	**10**	**9**	**8**	**9**	**8**	**8**
S12 – Self Assessment	**9**	**5**	**8**	**8**	**8**	**8**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**7**
S12 – Tutor Assessment	**9**	**6**	**8**	**9**	**9**	**9**	**6**	**8**	**8**	**8**
S12 – Final Review	**10**	**7**	**9**	**9**	**10**	**10**	**9**	**9**	**8**	**8**
S13 – Self Assessment	**3**	**1**	**8**	**8**	**7**	**9**	**7**	**7**	**4**	**5**
S13 – Tutor Assessment	**4**	**2**	**8**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**8**	**9**	**7**	**6**
S13 – Final Review	**5**	**5**	**9**	**9**	**10**	**10**	**9**	**10**	**8**	**8**
S14 – Self Assessment	**2**	**2**	**5**	**2**	**4**	**7**	**6**	**5**	**3**	**7**
S14 – Tutor Assessment	**3**	**2**	**6**	**5**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**7**	**6**	**7**
S14 – Final Review	**5**	**5**	**7**	**7**	**9**	**9**	**8**	**8**	**8**	**8**
S15 – Self Assessment	**1**	**1**	**5**	**6**	**5**	**5**	**5**	**5**	**4**	**4**
S15 – Tutor Assessment	**3**	**4**	**5**	**7**	**7**	**7**	**6**	**7**	**6**	**6**
S15 – Final Review	**4**	**5**	**7**	**7**	**8**	**8**	**9**	**9**	**7**	**7**
S16 – Self Assessment	**3**	**2**	**6**	**8**	**4**	**9**	**7**	**9**	**7**	**1**
S16 – Tutor Assessment	**5**	**5**	**6**	**8**	**8**	**9**	**7**	**10**	**7**	**3**
S16 – Final Review	**6**	**7**	**7**	**8**	**10**	**10**	**9**	**10**	**8**	**6**
S17 – Self Assessment	**4**	**6**	**4**	**7**	**5**	**5**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**1**
S17 – Tutor Assessment	**4**	**6**	**5**	**7**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**6**
S17 – Final Review	**7**	**7**	**7**	**8**	**7**	**7**	**7**	**7**	**7**	**7**
S18 – Self Assessment	**5**	**3**	**6**	**8**	**8**	**9**	**8**	**8**	**7**	**6**
S18 – Tutor Assessment	**6**	**5**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**9**	**9**	**8**	**7**
S18 – Final Review	**7**	**6**	**8**	**8**	**10**	**10**	**10**	**9**	**8**	**8**
S19 – Self Assessment	**5**	**3**	**6**	**7**	**5**	**5**	**5**	**4**	**5**	**7**
S19 – Tutor Assessment	**6**	**5**	**7**	**8**	**5**	**4**	**4**	**4**	**5**	**5**

S19 – Final Review	**7**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**5**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**6**	**7**
S20 – Self Assessment	**3**	**1**	**3**	**4**	**4**	**5**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**1**
S20 – Tutor Assessment	**3**	**1**	**5**	**5**	**3**	**4**	**4**	**3**	**3**	**4**
S20 – Final Review	**4**	**2**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**5**	**5**	**3**	**5**	**4**

What emerges from the analysis of data from the Outcome Star analysis is the recorded low scores on the students' self-assessment in relation to 'enjoy reading' which showed 15/20 (75%) scored 5 or lower on the Outcome Star together with 17/20 students (85%) who are confident 'reading out-loud'. The subject of reading and lack of interest in this activity is also a prominent recurring theme in the analysis of data from the Outcome Star self-assessment activity.

From this we can see that there seems to be a connection between levels of engagement with reading and the students' self-confidence. This calls into question whether it is the actual skill of reading that is lacking for the students, or the pedagogical approaches that are deployed to engage students with reading as well as the skills needed to understand text and infer meaning from reading.

This leads us to question whether the most appropriate pedagogical approaches are currently being used in schools and FE colleges to engage students in reading and more importantly, to help students to enjoy and make sense of what they are reading. This involves establishing the extent to which current approaches to the teaching of reading at GCSE Level are in need of examination/improvement and how and/or to establish if it is the actual activity of reading that is the challenge.

We can also see that students and staff repeatedly refer to student confidence and the negative impact that past learning experiences have on students' levels of confidence. This is signalled in the raw data collected from the Outcome Star and Outcome Star Case Studies as shared in Appendix 5 and hopefully evidences the authentic process of data analysis, together with the formation of key ideas/thoughts from the researcher.

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 it is not surprising that confidence levels of students and their qualities of minds and character is negatively impacted upon when learners are placed in a position where they have to repeat a subject in which they have already been deemed as failing or publicly assessed/regarded as being not good enough or deficient.

What the data are suggesting is that if students lack self-confidence, they are even more likely to lose interest and understandably not see the subject of English as being important or

relevant to their lives. This leads us to question that if this knowledge, experiences and these insights are not being recognised and taken seriously or well enough understood by teachers to be put to work in ways to support appropriate curriculum design and the development of more appropriate pedagogical approaches to assessment, then many of these students are being predictably locked into ever more demoralising experiences of educational failure.

When the data are triangulated with the 30% of students from the study who had a 'terrible' or 'bad' experience from school, we can see how this experience runs the real risk of being repeated and leading to repeated and predictable failure in their English GCSE resit examinations taken at FE College. This suggests that in any one group of students a third of resit GCSE English students will start their FE college experience feeling personally and academically diminished and vulnerable regarding their self-belief in their capacities to improve their knowledge and skills in English at GCSE Level.

It is also worth noting a puzzling anomaly in this study. This anomaly relates to the behaviour component on the Outcome Star which is titled, 'attend and be on time'. From the 20 respondents in the sample 16 out of the 20 students (80%) scored themselves at 5 or above for being on time and attending their GCSE English. The same behaviour, 'attend and be on time' when assessed by the teachers, found that 85% of the teachers' assessment scored 5 or above.

However, these higher scores, when triangulated against quantitative College data, do not correlate. College-wide attendance for GCSE English is well below the College attendance target of 90% and currently stands at 79% average attendance for GCSE English across the college.

This disparity could either suggest some lack of self-awareness from students and teachers of their day-to-day practice or a contradiction in the data. Appendix 5 poses that very question as it emerged from the data analysis and gives an insight into the thought processes of the researcher. This inconsistency is included in the thesis to demonstrate that the data sets are being presented in a transparent way and not omitted to demonstrate that interventions or adaptions of the findings have not been manipulated thus supporting the credibility the data analysis processes employed in this study as advocated by Lincoln and Guba (1985). As this finding is outside the scope of this present study it is noted but could warrant further investigation in a subsequent study.

Returning to the findings, the Outcome Star data analysis also draws our attention to the challenge faced by students in relation to creative writing. Out of the 20 respondents, 11 (over

50% of the sample) scored 5 or below regarding their enjoyment of the teaching and learning of creative writing skills. When this analysis is triangulated with the themes drawn from the Student Questionnaire, we also see writing skills are repeatedly seen by students as a challenge.

What is important to note here is that the sample of students in the Outcome Star report that they do recognise that English is an important skill. When asked to rate this characteristic, 18 out of the 20 respondents, (90%), scored 5 or above in the self-assessment but 70% acknowledged that they do not engage with writing outside of their lessons.

The data also point to the need to develop writing techniques as this also emerged from the analysis of the Student Questionnaire as being area for improvement. In addition, students recognised that their writing skills are limited to school activity, however this data only came to the fore during discussions with the students during the Literacy Storyboard pedagogic intervention.

One of the most negative experiences cited by students is the repeated spelling tests they are subjected to while they are at school and the constant focus placed by their teachers on what they 'got wrong'. The focus on what they 'got wrong' suggests that students want and need their feedback to be more than just a critique of what spelling and subject knowledge they have yet to develop but a more rounded approach which recognises their achievements and progress made to date as well next steps.

Analysis of data from the Outcome Star, Student Questionnaire and Narrative Inquiry (using the Literacy Storyboard), indicate the need to improve students' experiences of writing and to increase their motivation and confidence in writing. The students signal, through the data from the Literacy Storyboard, that they have ideas surrounding creative writing but find planning and starting points difficult. This has important implications for pedagogical approaches and curriculum planning to encourage and increase motivation to and confidence in creative writing.

The implications of this finding are again linked back to the relevance and quality of literacy teaching, particularly regarding reading and writing and the pedagogical practices adopted in the teaching, learning and assessment surrounding these aspects of literacy acquisition and development. The data here point to the need for a more immersive and engaging experience of these literacy techniques. These are discussed further in Chapter 5.

Outcome Star Case Studies

As part of the data analysis process, two teachers who supported this study, selected two learners each to monitor and log progress over the 3 key stages of the Outcome Star. This observation period took place from the time of students' self-assessment to the tutor assessment and final review. The teachers involved in this study used reflection and note-taking to capture their experiences of employing these interventions.

These case studies have been summarised from the discussions with the teacher and students. All parties concerned were given the transcripts contained within this chapter to ensure that they were a true account of these discussions. These transcripts were formed from notes taken by the researcher. For the purposes of transparency these notes and analysis are shared in Appendix 5.

Case Study 1, Teacher 1, Student MB

MB – A new learner to college at the start of the academic year, MB had narrowly missed out on a Grade 4 at school and was put forward for the November resit. MB is a quiet and reserved learner who prefers to sit alone and work independently. She has been a model learner and always comes to lessons well prepared and gives her best efforts in class. Her ***commitment has not waivered*** *since completing the November 2019 resit and she continues to attend and give her best efforts even though the result of the November resit is still pending. She is studying a full-time Salon Professional course as her main Study Programme.*

When reviewing her 'Outcome Star', I did agree in principle, with many of the ratings she had given herself, although in each of the key expression, I scored her at least one point above her self-assessment. For example, MB only awarded herself 4/10 for her enjoyment of creative writing, however, the high quality of her work would suggest otherwise. MB is quiet and reserved and rated herself as 1/10 for reading aloud. This is a skill that she is able to demonstrate and is quite a capable reader though she is not comfortable doing this in front of her peers and I believe this ***is more to do with self-confidence, than ability****.*

The different ratings gave me an opportunity to engage in more meaningful conversations regarding MB's ***perceptions*** *of the subject and also address some of the self-confidence challenges that MB has around her English Skills. This has definitely made a difference in how MB sees her skills now and I feel that she understands where some of her negativity comes from and is able to manage this a little better. I compared some examples of her work with example answers from learners who had achieved Grade 4 or higher previously on the same papers. As a result, MB could see that her work was of an equal, if not higher quality in some instances, this appeared to* ***boost her confidence****.*

MB has a strong desire to achieve her English GCSE and this is reflective of her work ethic, she does however, lack confidence in her ability and this could potentially impact on exam performance. She can be a ***little negative at times*** *but this stems from* ***her lack of achievement*** *in school. By talking about this aspect of her English experience, MB is now able to recognise this and look at strategies to move forward.*

MB recognises and understand how literacy skills will be applied in an industrial context for hairdressers and by having these informed learning conversations. I am able to plan more effectively and understand MB's needs more and try to contextualise topics where possible. During the 'Meet and Exceed' weeks I am able to focus on her performance against target grade but also talk about attitudes towards English and I am seeing progress in terms of her more positive outlook.

Case Study 2, Teacher 1, Student RM

RM is a construction learner who is new to college this year. He performed lower and below target-grade in his initial assessment and often struggles with motivation and effort. In class RM is particularly weak in terms of effort and engagement. This is a persistent problem in all areas of his Study Programme. He is by no means disruptive and is quite personable and friendly.

When we started the 'Outcome Star', I rated him lower in many aspects with regard to his attitude and behaviour towards English. For example, RM had assessed himself as 7/10 for his enjoyment of creative writing, however his work in one of the key assessments had been seriously lacking in effort so it was hard for me to agree with him in this respect.

RM also rated himself as 5/10 for involvement in English session, I did disagree with this also as he has been so difficult to engage in lessons. Using the 'Outcome Star' as a stimulus for our learning conversations, I was able to ***positively challenge these perceptions****. More importantly I explained the reason why my scores differed from his, he was genuinely surprised. This led to better, more fruitful conversations where I was able to present evidence of where I had drawn my conclusions from, and he was able to discuss my reasons.*

RM is going to be more of a challenge in terms of behaviours and attitudes, however it is important that I challenge and address not only his academic progress but also his attitude towards English and to support a more holistic approach to student development.

Case Study 3, Teacher 2, Student CB

CB is one of the college's Public Service students, on her initial 'Outcome Star' completion she rated herself quite highly across a number of areas, she identified particular strengths as 'being prepared for lessons (10/10)' and 'attend and be on time for English (10/10)'. Over the course of the year this has proven to be an accurate assessment. CB is always prepared for sessions both practically and academically, she always takes notes and is always ready and eager to learn.

What was surprising was her self-assessment of 'reading out-loud (5/10)' and 'I get involved in English lessons (5/10)'. My initial impression was that this seemed quite low given the supporting scores around it. Over the course of the year, I have noticed a definite disparity between CB's original grading and the behaviours and attitudes she has so far exhibited.

*Despite CB only awarding herself a 5/10 for 'reading out-loud' she has so far volunteered twice to read out the full source material to the class. She approached this willingly and executed the vocalisation in a confident and fluent fashion. In relation to 'I get involved in English lessons', it is evident from every session that we have had so far that CB thrives on getting involved, she is always keen and eager to answer questions****.*** *From discussions with her though she has explained how she is supporting and working in collaboration with her younger sister to complete English revision whilst at home, which is very promising.*

Speaking to CB about ***her experience of English at school*** *may go some way to offer a rationale for her initially low scores. CB explained that whilst at school she felt that she was* ***ignored and never actively encouraged to share her opinion or get involved****. This information has afforded me the opportunity to "unpick" some of her barriers to learning. I have involved CB in a number of student-led discussions to help* ***build confidence****, allowing her the opportunity to express her opinion in a supportive and friendly environment, taking the lead (where appropriate).*

*I have encouraged CB to "****find her voice****" in class. I am setting the sessions up in a way that encourages more structured debate and ensures that every learner gets the chance to answer questions and develop responses. Varied questioning techniques ensure this is possible. Knowing the background to each learner and the challenges they face allows for individual stretch and challenge activities to be employed.*

Case Study 4, Teacher 2, Student JD

JD initially graded himself as an 8/10 for 'attend and be on time for English', and whilst this is quite high it is worth pointing out that at this stage of the academic year, he has 100% attendance and 100% punctuality.

The learning conversations that take place give me the opportunity to share this information and challenge ***his lower perception*** *of his commitment to English. In addition, JD scored himself rather low at 5/10 for 'English is important to me' and my discussion with JD outlined that perhaps his* ***perception was a little skewed****.*

I was able to reinforce to JD that 100% attendance and punctuality is ***not indicative*** *of someone who does not see the importance of a subject. Alongside this JD also graded himself a 7/10 for 'reading out-loud', and 1/10 for 'I enjoy reading'. Within the class he is the only member who volunteered to read aloud, he performed admirably in this task reading both fluently and confidently. JD has shown that he is capable of producing some very good work, it is important with a learner like JD that* ***we show him where his strengths lie, in order to help build his confidence.***

What is Apparent

From analysis of the Case Studies is the recurring theme relating to what I am referring to in this thesis as Qualities of Mind and Character (Dunne, 2005). We repeatedly see phrases in the data which include the terms, 'self-confidence', 'confidence', 'work ethic', 'collaboration', and 'positive outlook' (some key terms highlighted in yellow). What is also apparent in the data is that some of the students in the sample discuss these positively, whilst others reflect how their negative past experiences of learning English are impacting on their current and potentially future studies.

This finding correlates with the analysis from the Student Questionnaire and points to the suggestion that in any one group of students, teachers will be presented with students who have varying perceptions and often widely different lived experiences of studying English at school and while at college and that these will impact variously upon their current approaches to learning GCSE English. It is also clear in the data that some students display high levels of despondency and in some cases, despair, as they find themselves resigned to more failure in their study of GCSE resit English. This is in direct contrast to other students who demonstrate more positive qualities of mind, such as self-confidence, perseverance, resilience and tenacity.

What is emerging from the analysis of the Student Questionnaire, Teacher Case Studies and behaviours from the data reflected in the Outcome Star, are the existence of a far from homogeneous group of students who have very different experiences and how these experiences can impact on current and future learning and engagement.

We are reminded from the analysis of the Student Questionnaire that one third of students had a very poor experience and therefore it points to the realisation that in any group of resit GCSE English students, over 30% of these learners may have had very negative experiences of learning the subject which could negatively impact on the development of their qualities of mind and character in relation to learning English and possibly to other subjects.

Data from the Case Studies also suggest that the importance of talking about learning and the use of oracy as an assessment instrument I appear to make a difference in encouraging students' capacities to develop more positive qualities of mind and character. The same conversation also seen in the teachers' notes from the Case Studies demonstrate how these conversations enable teachers to develop a more in-depth understanding of their learners, together with deeper insights into the lived experiences of students and a greater awareness of the subsequent impact of previous experiences of learning on students' behaviours and attitudes towards their learning of GCSE English in the present. What is also evident from the Case Studies is the invaluable insights this provides for both the teacher and student as well as the ways in which it helps to strengthen their relationships with each other.

This leads us to question, how, as practitioner-researchers, the future merits of how a dialogical assessment instrument which tracks progress in the affective domain can open up the time and space needed for transparent, safe and productive discussions, including a greater sense of holistic student progress and how this can nurture and sustain present and future learning experiences for students.

This also points to the need to reflect on what is meant by student progress. For example, are we attending only to progress which simply measures learning outcomes in the cognitive domain of knowledge and progress against a target grade, or the need to find ways to encourage the development of a more holistic qualities of mind and character to support progress in the affective and psychomotor domains of learning in the pursuit of increased success and higher levels of achievement in education as well as contributing to the leading of a fulfilled life?

This presents us with the stark reminder of the need for a balanced approach to the provision of assessment feedback in GCSE English contexts to when students, particularly when we note the impact of students' experiences from school upon both their learning and their qualities of mind and character. For this group of students, these experiences of school appear to have focused heavily on what students did not know and could not yet do and not necessarily on what they already do know or can do well.

From the Case Studies we can also see that there is more of a willingness from the students to share and engage in the discussion and become an active participant in the formative assessment process using talking to learn as the vehicle to support this process. The use of oracy as an assessment instrument and pedagogical approach is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Narrative Inquiry: The Literacy Storyboard (Appendix 3)

This research explores active learning approaches and the use of oracy as a medium to support this through the use of the Literacy Storyboard as a dialogic pedagogic intervention. It is appropriate therefore to employ the techniques of Narrative Inquiry in this research with learners to explore their lived experience of English. Initially 6 students were selected from two different vocational areas consented to participate in this aspect of the study.

The realities of the data gathering process soon became visible. As a novice researcher I naively assumed that all participants in the research would be comfortable using spoken language as a medium of communication. The shortcomings of this naive assumption became very apparent to me early in the research when talking to post-16 students.

At this point in the study, society was experiencing the full impact of the global pandemic and as a result of the country's lockdown, face to face contact had completely ceased. Trying to generate a discussion via Teams/telephone communication with students and attempting to generate a meaningful discussion was extremely difficult. It was also very apparent that this medium clearly made students feel very uncomfortable, making meaningful communication very difficult and yielding little, in terms of data.

As a new researcher this provided me with an opportunity to reflect critically upon the usefulness and conduct of this method in the research, underscoring the importance that Nowell's (2017) view that positions the need for reflexivity in the development of trustworthiness in data analysis in qualitative studies such as this as being of paramount importance. The concept of trustworthiness is grounded in pragmatic issues regarding the accessibility and usefulness of the research methods initially selected and the transparency of data analysis processes.

As a result of this reflection, I decided to replace the video links with the idea of a Literacy Storyboard. I thought that this medium might encourage and stimulate dialogue and discussion by focusing the inquiry upon individual student's oral and visual accounts of their experiences of learning English Language to date.

Data from this research suggest that the Literacy Storyboard pedagogic device gave a focus and dialogic impetus and energy to the discussion. This is in a similar way as the Outcome Star, enabling the tracking of learning processes behaviours and attitudes and providing a vehicle to support and encourage honest open conversations surrounding students' experiences of learning English.

The Literacy Storyboard was provided to each student prior to the conversation as a stimulus to support the discussion. Data from this intervention suggest that the Literacy Storyboard produced richer responses from students and the use of individual telephone calls made students more comfortable rather than the video links I had used previously. These richer responses were recorded by the researcher in handwritten notes and these have been included in this thesis for authentication purposes, refer to Appendix 6.

The challenges faced by students in talking about and discussing their experiences confidently, is in itself worthy of interpretation and is included in the data analysis section later in this Chapter. Findings from this study suggest that using oracy as a formative assessment instrument requires careful planning. A sound grasp of pedagogical approaches to support and stimulate the opening up of safe spaces is needed where students could share their experiences in open and honest dialogue with teachers and in circumstances where teachers can encourage student response and monitor student progress in multimodal ways across all three domains of learning.

Making the assumption that more dialogic approaches to formative assessment simply involve more talking in a classroom setting or that group discussion of a topic will automatically generate meaningful conversations and increased student engagement is not supported by data from this study. When dialogical approaches are used either to track attitudes or behaviours or indeed, to explore lived experience of English, the analysis of the data points to the need to carefully consider the medium used to stimulate thinking, support talking and that careful consideration needs to be given to pedagogical approaches which ensure that a safe shared space is created in which to talk, and to encourage 'talking to learn' in the classroom.

Simply having the expectation as a researcher that conversations will flow naturally is naïve, as I the researcher discovered to my cost. The need to carefully consider pedagogical approaches and curriculum design to ensure that students have a suitable vehicle for talking about learning as well as an approach which gives the students' self-confidence and security when or if their voice fails them is vitally important. This is of paramount importance in any

attempt to improve the use of formative assessment in practice in the teaching of GCSE English.

Data from this research suggest that the Literacy Storyboard employed in this study provided the vehicle to support such open discussions with the students and to focus on key questions surrounding students' lived experience of English. Each discussion point was formulated into a question contained within the Literacy Storyboard. The Literacy Storyboard was used as a prompt. The students were able to make notes and these notes were used to develop conversations further.

All students expressed their right to anonymity and this has been respected when sharing the data, the students have been identified only by a letter. The key discussion points were recorded by myself, the researcher and Appendix 6 gives a summary of the note taking and also gives practical examples of thought process, where key points of interest have been identified and highlighted (see Appendix 6).

For the purposes of the data analysis these students are identified as student 'X, Y and Z'. The themes for the discussion are based around:

What book has made a real impact on you and why?

Student X - "I remember Mice and Men from school. I liked it about because it was about two friends, one of them had something wrong with him and the other looked out for him. They moved around America looking for work and a better life. The book was about hope and dreaming about making a better future for themselves. It was about life, funny and sad at the same time and about two friends".

Student Y - "I remember Saving Private Ryan. It was about the war and how a family had been ripped apart by the death of their children. The main character, I can't remember their name, was the only remaining son and the Army wanted to bring him home. It was about family and what people are capable of doing to save someone and do the right thing. I liked it because it was about real life and you could also watch the film which helped to understand the plot and the characters".

Student Z- "The book that has made an impact on me is Lord of the Rings. I have read all three of them, including The Hobbit. I liked the Lord of the Rings books the most, it was just an epic adventure. I read them in order as well, Fellowship of the Ring, Two Towers and the Return of the King. The first one was my favourite and I wanted to read them all as I felt it was a real achievement to read the trilogy. They are about a place called Middle-Earth and the Dark-Lord, Sauran, wants to rule and he needs the ring to do that. This ring is with Bilbo Baggins. It is about good versus evil and it is an epic adventure. I also liked how the book came to life through the films".

What is your earliest recollection of writing and spelling?

Student Y - *"We wrote loads at school, always descriptive pieces but I never write outside of school. I remember spelling tests all the time in primary and I didn't like them because they always focused on what you got wrong, and you were always marked against each other. I remember never getting good scores and always feeling less bright than the other kids in my class even though I still made the effort. I still hate spelling tests now.*

Student Z *- "I remember spelling tests from school, I was quite good at them but we could practise before and I did well. Funny enough I was a better speller at primary than I am now, I have become*

a little lazy now because the computer does it for me. I don't write a lot and even less when we were in lockdown. I only really write when I am at school or here".

***Student X** - "I find writing hard, especially getting started, I'm ok when I get started. I'm the same I haven't done much writing during lockdown it's not something I think young people do now. I remember writing at school, particularly for my GCSE exams. My earliest memory is from primary, learning how to do joined up writing. I also hated spelling tests at school because I don't think I'm a very good speller and I always got low scores. I have loads of ideas but it's harder putting them down in writing. It is always about what you don't know, not about the stuff you got right".*

Describe your exam experience

***Student Y** - "I have had a couple of attempts at GCSE English. I have had exam experience and also the one this year where our grades were decided. I thought I would prefer someone else making the decision, but I didn't. I prefer doing the exam, which I didn't think I would admit to but at least I know that I wasn't good enough by my own efforts not someone else's opinion of me. I have found a new way to fail now, can't pass on the exam and now I can't pass with the teacher's opinion either. I would still prefer to pass or fail by my own efforts; I still prefer to take an exam".*

***Student X** - "I was gutted I didn't get a chance to do my exam, I think I perform better in exams, but I don't really enjoy the lessons and I know that my effort isn't there all of the time. That's probably why I didn't pass. I felt cheated, I would much rather be in control and have had the opportunity to take the exam and find out what I can do".*

***Student Z** - "It's not how I thought that my last year at school would be, overall pretty rubbish. I felt ok about not taking my exams at first because I had worked hard but then everyone was talking about the Government and their systems, and I worried about what this mean to my grade. I never thought I would hear myself say this, but I want to take an exam now because I need to know. Everything you do at school is about your GCSEs it is about the end exam. We have been talking about this since we started the 'comp' and then it doesn't happen, it was a right let down". I want to prove myself the way loads of other kids have had to. I want to do the November resit and take my exam and see whether I'm good enough".*

Describe a good experience of learning English

***Student Y** - "I enjoyed lessons when it wasn't one huge task. I like when there are plenty of different activities to do. Not just about keeping busy but something that keeps me interested. I get bored so easily and if I have to take ages doing something then I switch off". I like to build up to doing something rather than go straight into writing a large piece".*

***Student Z** - "I like when you don't just use words all of the time but images, photographs, movies, music. Something that helps bring the words to life. I like a lesson when the teacher breaks tasks down into manageable chunks and explains to me why I am doing this and why it is important".*

***Student X** - "I think the same, I need to know why I am doing something. I like to know the reason and why this will help me. I want someone to take the time to explain and not rush. We seem to rush through a lot of stuff as if there is a checklist of things to be done and the teacher needs to get through it. I also like to find out information in other ways not just words, so a film, picture or music. I enjoy when there is a build-up to something."*

Think about a poor experience of learning English

***Student Z** - "We had a nightmare at school as we kept getting different English teachers as our main one was always off sick. We ended up doing the same activities over and over again, and then we got people who were not English teachers, and we knew it was just about babysitting us. We didn't learn anything. When our teacher came back, it was too late then, and I had lost interest. I need to be kept interested.*

***Student X** - "Always rushing through things, like I said before, like a checklist of things to be done. I hate it when the teacher doesn't explain and just hands a worksheet to do. I don't like when there is not a build-up or stages to what we are doing. I like to do things in smaller chunks otherwise I get*

bored. Boredom is a big factor for me, when I'm bored, I mess around and I know when I mess around, I don't learn anything."

Student Y *- "To be honest for me, it's the teacher, if they are not interested in me, I'm not interested in what they have to say. I know the subjects that I did well in it, and I had a good relationship with the teacher. The subjects that I failed, I didn't connect with the teacher, and they were not interested in me".*

Discuss what themes are coming through from your positive and negative experiences

Student X *- "Brining something to life. I like when there is a story attached to what you are doing and there is a sequence and order. That makes me feel comfortable and settled".*

Student Z *- "Different ways to read and write, not just words and paper but music, or films, something different".*

Student X *- "When there is no build-up to the task, just straight into the work, that just switches me off. I like when there is a build-up time to understand and ask questions".*

Student Y *- "Tasks which are too long, if something is huge then I get bored and won't make the effort, smaller manageable bits make it more achievable."*

Analysing the data from the Literacy Storyboard we can see that students engaged more with English development when they participated in a more immersive, dialogic, multimodal learning experience. The students shared their views on the books that made the biggest impact on them, and we can see that all the literature shared had made the transition to the big screen. Appendix 6 highlights how books and film bring people to life as shared by student Z. This was also apparent when the students discussed their memories of good lessons, they comment upon English not just being about words but the use of photographs, movies and music and other media that bring English to life.

The lack of interest in reading and writing is shown in responses to the Outcome Star analysis and is also one of the themes drawn from the Student Questionnaire, particularly relating to question 5 of the questionnaire. However, what we can see from the analysis of the Literacy Storyboard that students could confidently recall the book which had made the biggest impact on them in detail, giving details regarding the storyline and characters.

This suggests the need for careful consideration of content, material and pedagogy when introducing reading as a theme in GCSE English resits. It is vital that students can make sense of what they are reading, and also use other media, such as music, ICT and films to bring the words and story to life. The recurring sub-themes surrounding reading, writing and relevancy are shared in the transcripts from the Literacy Storyboard discussion (refer to Appendix 6).

Approaches to learning and how to learn a subject including having the confidence to learn using effective study skills and talking to learn are also drawn from the analysis of the Literacy Storyboard. These are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. From analysis of the Literacy Storyboard we can see that it is important for students understand what they are doing, its relevance to their lives and how engaging in this learning will benefit them in the future. It also appears to be important that the learning activities are manageable and do not overwhelm students to the point where they become bored and disengage.

Clearly, how teachers articulate and narrate tasks is very important to students and how they deem the task to be relevant to them. This again points to the implications for curriculum design, pedagogical practice and the relevance, immediacy and usefulness of formative assessment methods.

The data sets from this study indicate that students find writing challenging, particularly getting started and planning, again data in Appendix 6 highlights this. Students repeatedly comment on how tasks can appear too big to cope with and this can overwhelm and demotivate them. Findings from the Literacy Storyboard also draw our attention to students' comments surrounding ways of bringing English to life, making it interesting and relevant to students in multimodal ways. The recurring theme of relevance was also supported by data from the Student Questionnaire.

Students openly admitted and shared that starting to write and developing their writing skills is particularly difficult for them and once again, this repeatedly points to the importance of curriculum design and developing pedagogical approaches which address the 'fear of the blank page' encountered by most of us in our student and professional lives'.

Teacher Interview

The final data collection method used is the Teacher Interview. Initially it was planned to interview 2 members of staff, however due to staffing challenges, including sickness during the pandemic the decision was taken to focus on one member of staff.

Although the return rate is only 50%, the data gathered are primarily focused on lived experience and the engagement of oracy and as this study is immersed in experience and the use of dialogical approaches, it is felt justifiable to include the findings from this interview as it offers another rich layer of data. Usher, (1996) reminds us that '*in order to understand our world we first of all need to make sense of it and we do that by interactive human behaviour*'

(Usher, 1996:18). Adding another dimension of data derived from the interactive teacher interview therefore seems warranted.

Teacher 1 explored pedagogical approaches to the use of oracy as a formative assessment tool. The discussion that took place between the teacher and the researcher was free-flowing and the discussion was based around the professional interest of the teacher and the use of oracy as a pedagogic approach.

The transcripts shared in this thesis was born from the notes taken by the researcher during the professional discussion. These notes, in their raw and original form are evidenced in Appendix 7. The final transcripts shared in this thesis were formulated from these notes and its authenticity and accuracy were approved by the teacher before its inclusion in this chapter.

This account is shared below:

The use of podcasts has been something that has interested me for some time now and I'm keen to develop oracy skills within my lessons. Through my teaching I have observed the constant reluctance from students to read and as a result of this observation I was keen to explore the use of teaching approaches that can help encourage this.

I also noticed that students struggle to formulate opinions or take part in critical discourse. From these observations of spoken language skills within the classroom it would seem that students are more likely to give simplistic responses to either agreeing or disagreeing with a statement. In a vast majority of cases, it was also seen that students would tend to give opinions which were formulated from the mass consensus of the group/class.

To encourage oracy, I recognised that this skill required more time in order to attempt to make oracy an integral part of lesson delivery and therefore explored the use of oracy, in the first instance, through podcasts.

I identified some appropriate reading sources from the Scheme of Learning and with the support of a Technologist, recorded voices to read over the source material. This enabled the students to read along with the audio and I was able to observe more in the classroom. I think this took pressure off the learners and sections could be replayed which helped with their understanding of text, meaning and vocabulary.

Another benefit of this resource is that it can be used to support attendance issues and students who have been off sick.

There were some challenges in relation to technology, having to get familiar with new software is not without its stresses and accessing the necessary equipment was at times difficult. This did make the installation of this a little more stressful than anticipated for me.

As my confidence grew, I decided to record the lesson, particularly aspects of the session when formative assessment was taking place. The students appeared much more relaxed and comfortable with being recorded and did engage more than in previous sessions. The feedback was recorded which students could access after the lesson.

Since introducing this approach, I have found the process much easier and can now record the podcasts with ease and know how to pace it correctly, speak clearly and edit it accordingly. Verbal feedback from the students has been positive and students have commented that they find recordings easier to process than a long list of instructions.

One direct quote from a student - "A podcast seems a lot easier to understand because I can understand better when it is explained to me rather than reading instructions because when I read instructions, it confuses me."

Another student added - "Yeh, it's good having the podcasts there because it keeps my knowledge up to date."

The teacher's observation of their practice clearly identifies the students lack of engagement and confidence with regard to reading. This lack of interest in reading correlates with the findings from the Student Questionnaire, Outcome Start and Literacy Storyboard.

When the use of podcasts and the introduction of oracy as medium to support reading was introduced by the teacher, we can see that this approach is creating a more engaging, immersive learning experience and environment for the students.

The data here suggest that the use of podcasts and the use of pre-recorded spoken language as a pedagogical tool is a way of having an additional support mechanism in the classroom, a teacher's assistant in essence. The teacher comments that the pressure was removed from the learner and the reading activity was more supportive. This also gave the teacher more opportunity to support and observe students, rather than being the narrator of the session, thereby freeing the teacher's time to assess students and support rather than focused on the activity of reading to the students.

Interestingly, the teacher commented how the use of oracy and the recorded dialogue enabled more opportunities for students to recap outside of the lesson, particularly for any students who have missed the lesson. We can see from the data included in the Outcome Star that attendance of GCSE English lessons is a constant challenge, and the use of pre-recorded lesson delivery could be seen as an approach to combat lost learning and the pre-recording can be used for student revision, self-reflection and accessed outside of the classroom.

What is apparent once again, which we have repeatedly seen throughout in the data, is the topic of self-confidence. This refers to the self-confidence of the students with regard to reading and understanding text and also the self-confidence of the teachers with regard to the use and execution of technology.

Finally, the teacher shares their experiences of using oracy as a formative assessment instrument and recording this part of the lesson. Students have commented that having a

recorded session allows them more time to understand and can follow instructions more easily. They also have a permanent record of the session to which they can refer to later.

The opportunity for students to reflect on past learning and revisit topics, seems even more relevant and important as the country felt the impact of a National Lockdown 3.0 and classroom delivery is all remote as face-to-face delivery was suspended.

The Prism of the Crystal – Triangulation

Data collection sources employed in this study were triangulated in ways which provided opportunities for students to reflect on past learning and revisit past experiences of learning English. The data methods used in this study include:

- Student Questionnaire
- Outcome Star
- Case Studies from Outcome Star
- Literacy Storyboard
- Teacher Interview

As a result of triangulating the data collection methods a coding scheme (Strass and Corbin 1990) is used in the process of data analysis to help to identify recurring categories and commonalities across the data. As the researcher has immersed themselves in the data (Nowell ét al 2017) recurring words, phrases and ideas in the raw data began to emerge and practical examples of these have been shared in Appendices 4-7 and discussed in this chapter.

It is also important at this point to explore the meaning of the word, triangulation in more detail. When initially thinking about the triangulation process, the commonly accepted image of a triangle, a triangle with 3 sides can be a useful focusing device. However, Richardson (2000) points out that when validating qualitative research, it is recognised that there are more than 3 sides from which to approach the world.

Richardson (2000) offers qualitative researchers, an alternative metaphor, or as Sallis describes, *'crystallisation provides the researcher with a varied and in-depth perception of the experiences'* (Sallis, 2008:10). As crystallisation recognises that there is no set formula or prescribed stages to follow in the data analysis process and as Richardson observes '*in looking at the data through the prism of the crystal, we can acknowledge that there is no one*

truth, and instead see a series of reflections and refractions, each creating different colours, patterns and arrays, casting off in different directions' (Richardson 2000:934).

The crystallisation as referred to by Sallis (2008) and there is 'no one truth' as shared by Richardson (2000) resonates with myself as a new researcher as my interpretation of the data sets are purely that, my interpretation of students' lived experience.

A prism disperses light and can modify the direction of light with its many facets, and as a facet is often described as a window, the data and raw data examples shared in Appendices 4-7 illustrate how this researcher shines their light onto the subsequent analysis and how the analysis of that data is merely a window into the lived experiences of students and teachers of GCSE English.

I understand that someone else may see something different in the data, however by sharing examples of the raw data in Appendices 4-7 it will hopefully illustrate and irradiate how the researcher sees the story emerging from the differing accounts of experience which have emerged in the analysis, interpretation, meaning and illumination of the data as described by Scott and Usher (1996) and that these approaches have been developed in a trustworthy, authentic and credible way. (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990).

In the end, this study is a journey of lived experience and as we are reminded by Guba and Lincoln (1994) represents the nature of their world and the individual's place in it. Just as a crystal has been many facets, a kaleidoscope of differing colour and light, the analysis of the data and examples of the raw data seek to capture the mental constructions shared by the students and the analysis and interaction between the investigator and respondents (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Hopefully this chapter and the accompanying Appendices 4-8 shared in this thesis offer some structure and process on how the analysis has unfolded and how the very important concepts of 'representation' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:8) has been communicated.

As this research adopts a constructivist-interpretivist-pragmatist methodological approach it seems appropriate to remember, as Richardson (2000) reminds us, that the crystal is still structured and it is during its deconstruction of normative understanding we can then accept that knowledge is situated, complex, dynamic and unfolding and:

What goes on in our minds and hearts is not directly accessible to the world outside us. There is no window in our heads that allows another person to look directly into our minds and see exactly what we mean, the best we can do is represent our thoughts and feelings through various means of communication.'

(Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:8)

Chapter Summary

Drawing this Chapter to a close it is important to note that the data analysed focus on lived experience and that the data have been analysed within a qualitative context. As discussed above, qualitative research has become increasingly recognised and valued through the work of Nowell et al (2017) and others. It is essential, therefore, that this Chapter makes transparent the methodical and systematic manner in which data analysis processes in this research are being conducted in order to yield meaningful, trustworthy and useful results, Attride-Stirling (2001).

Finally, Thorne (2000) characterises data analysis as the most complex phase of qualitative research. This Chapter highlights how this process adopts a rigorous and systematic approach to thematic analysis in order *to 'systematise and increase the traceability and verification of the analysis'* (Nowell, 2017:1).

Chapter 5: Discussion of Emerging Themes

Introduction

This thesis presents accounts of the storied lives of the human beings whose experiences (students, teachers and myself) are reported in this study. This chapter further interprets, reports and extends discussion of 9 themes emerging from data analysis in Chapter 4.

In order to continually frame this study and to adopt a sequential approach to this thesis it is appropriate at this point to summarise in diagrammatic form the process of data analysis together as supported by Strauss and Corbin (1990) the sub-themes which emerged from the data collection methods. Appendix 8 gives a practical example of how these sub-themes gradually coalesced and aggregated into the 9 key themes which are discussed in this chapter.

Student Questionnaire

Sub-themes – lived experience matters/finding new ways to fail/teachers only interested in exam performance/curriculum design is important (English is boring/not relevant)/Think about assessment/too much focus on the finish line/lack of confidence.

Outcome Star and Outcome Star Case Studies

Sub-themes – confidence and self-esteem important/talking and having conversations can help/perception is not the reality/time for reflection and dialogue very important/curriculum design must be relevant/learning conversations can develop better relationships/planning and curriculum design important/talking about past experiences of English matters/English has to be relevant.

Literacy Storyboard

Sub-themes – Make Literacy come alive/bring Literacy to life/exam pressure/English is not just about words/Not about what you get right, about what you get wrong/Resources used are important/Need to be relevant to life/take experience seriously/talking about learning and thinking.

Teacher Interview

Sub-themes – Talking and learning are connected/careful planning when using talking/helps with student reflection/talking to learning/builds confidence/supports meaning making.

My intention in this Chapter is to present the emerging 9 themes in an authentic and trustworthy way and with enough fullness to warrant what Geertz (1973) describes as, 'thick description'.

To arrive at these 9 key themes was not without its challenges. Initially I began by bringing together the key points of interest from each of the data collection methods and began by asking myself 'what is the data telling me'? More importantly, 'what did I see'? and I was strongly influenced by the need to understand the students experience from the inside, to stand in their shoes and look through their eyes (Taylor, 2011). Appendix 8, can hopefully share this thought process and illustrate how these 9 key themes emerged but more importantly, effectively demonstrate that '*what we think matters and how we think about what we think, matters more'*. (Eisner, 1993:5).

Even now, writing this chapter, and having some time away from the data, I can see other themes emerging from the raw data analysis already shared in Appendix 8. Indeed, the dichotomy of sharing lived experience as objective reality, when in itself, lived experience is just that, based on personal experience and therefore subjective.

Maybe it is distance itself that helps us to see what is really going on. Or maybe the voice of the student is becoming quieter and the voice of the researcher is growing in confidence and becoming heard. This is something that may warrant further discussion in the final chapter and has the possible merits for a future study.

Moving back to this Chapter, it strives to bring the events and experiences that myself, fellow teachers and students encountered in the conduct of this thesis to life and the meanings we have made from them. Following Peshkin (1985), I invite you, the reader, to look where I looked and to see what I saw.

This Chapter offers and discusses a systematic and coherent framework of themes derived from the analysis of data generated in this study. The 9 key themes are drawn from the analysis of accounts and representations of the lived experiences of assessment in the teaching and learning of GCSE resit English reported in this study are considered in some detail. Practical examples of this are shared in Appendix 8.

Even though the approach to the 9 key themes was systematic, it was also problematic, something that the researcher has alluded to in previous chapters and the formation of the themes was not without its challenges. It was, indeed, difficult and in some instances, 'messy'.

I can, however, take comfort in the word 'messy' as Van Maanen (1998) notes that to see a story emerge from human experience is described as the messy reflections of human experience and explains '*the impressionists' tale unfolds event by event in irregular and unexpected ways'* (Van Maanen, 1998:105).

Inter-connected themes in educational research, as noted by Braun and Clarke (2006), coalesce to form an over-arching framework of interpretations. This chapter shares and discusses the 9 key themes and in the final chapter, we see these themes formulated into the main findings of the study. Subsequent recommendations are then offered, which in turn, extend and support meaning-making in relation to the data reported in this study.

I hope that the 9 themes which are the key focus of this Chapter will be both understood and useful to other teachers of GCSE English and that my experiences, and those of my students and fellow teachers, may resonate with the experiences of others working in FE Colleges and other vocational education contexts (see Appendix 8). I also hope that other researchers working in other sectors of education and in other educational contexts different to my own, may also find this thesis of interest and of use.

To summarise, the 9 themes discussed in this chapter and which form part of the key findings and subsequent recommendations in the final chapter are:

- Theme 1 – Policy Implementation and Assessment in Practice
- Theme 2 – Formative Assessment in Human Form
- Theme 3 – The Relationship between Assessment and Success in Education – Seeing the Bigger Picture
- Theme 4 – Bringing Literacy to Life and Life to Literacy
- Theme 5 – Oracy and Pedagogy and the Connection Between Talking, Reading and Writing
- Theme 6 – Do Not Assume – Right Time, Right Place
- Theme 7 – Reflection and Dialogue
- Theme 8 – Living with the Burdon of Failure and Breaking Cycles of Failure
- Theme 9 – The Good, the Bad and the Ugly – Accounts of Experience

Guiding this Chapter is a concern for the understanding and interpretation of human experience and how meaning is arrived at and shared through each of the data collection methods employed in the study. Eisner (1993) draws our attention to the fact that we ultimately

do research to understand, and we try to understand, to make education *'better places for those who live their lives there*' (Eisner, 1993:10).

This research attempts to make the learning and the lives of the teachers and the students who engage in formative assessment in the FE College where I am currently employed better. As I have previously explained, this thesis does not set out in the pursuit of objective 'detached' knowledge or a quest for certainty. Instead, its purpose is to allow and encourage teachers to improve educational practice. This research attempts to deepen understanding of how teachers and learners learn from each other and to understand we are not on our own when we find learning (and life) difficult. Biesta (2018) reminds us of the centrality of the human condition in understanding educational research which aims to report human experience:

> "*The middle ground between world-destruction and self-destruction is therefore a thoroughly worldly space. It is also, then, a thoroughly educational space, not because there may be all kind of things one can learn there, but because there is a space that teaches you something that is fundamental about human existence, namely, that you are not alone."*
>
> (Biesta 2018:16)

Given the current global pandemic and the impact this is still having, together with the long-term impact upon teaching and learning yet to unfold, (including lost learning), the imperative to improve the use of formative assessment and the deepening of our understanding of how education can develop '*qualities of mind and character*' (Dunne, 1993:6) takes on a whole new level of significance.

What is becoming apparent, however from the data analysis process and through the triangulation of data derived from each collection method, is a pattern of inter-connected themes. It seems pertinent therefore at this juncture in relation to reporting how these themes were arrived at in the process of Data Analysis. Analysis of emerging themes in this study bring to light themes which relate specifically to the role of the practice of education in relation to techniques (or in Aristotelian terms, *techné*) and its place in assessment theory and practice. These are then linked to a discussion of the development of oracy and pedagogy, subject relevance, self-confidence, the role development qualities of mind and character and the pursuit of an education worthy of the name. These issues are then examined in relation to experiences of learning from formative assessment interventions and student engagement in contexts surrounding the study of GCSE resit English for post-16 learners and their teachers.

Engagement with both the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and the analysis of the data in Chapter 4, bring to the fore important aspects of the human condition regarding lived experiences of assessment in education in general, and in GCSE resit English contexts in particular. This level of refinement as Braun and Clarke (2006) note, helps to strengthen the trustworthiness, transparency, authenticity and credibility qualitative research such as his study and reinforces the warrant of the interpretation processes involved in educational research.

We can see from the data that lived experiences of assessment are clearly having an impact on students' future learning and this is prevalent throughout the data. Data generated in this study, suggest that past experiences of education can, not only shape students' future learning, but also influence their subsequent engagement and achievement in particular subjects and disciplines.

The final chapter of this thesis offers some personal reflections of my experiences of conducting this research. I also draw attention to how the focus of the thesis sharpened as the research progressed and how this research has uncovered and challenged, the taken for granted aspects of educational research that I had previously overlooked. The key findings in Chapter 6 are shaped by the emerging themes detailed and reported here. The closing chapter also summarises, and shares recommendations drawn from the findings of this study.

Theme 1: Policy Implementation and Assessment in Practice

Data from this study indicate that the first principle of formative assessment, active learning, is being unintentionally sidestepped and diverted by the albeit well-intended assessment policy and the implementation strategy currently being applied by the College which forms the site of this study.

Instrumental and technical preoccupations in FE Colleges with the provision of written feedback in ways neither encourage, nor support the first principle of formative assessment which is active learning.

What the data sets are telling us is that making changes in educational practice in general and in this case assessment practice in education is far more complicated than it might at first be appear. Data from this study suggest that current assessment policies, although well-intended, are not being implemented successfully in practice in ways which encourage/require active learning. What the data underscore is the formative assessment policy for GCSE resit

English is being implemented in an instrumental and mechanical way which elevates assessment technique over-active learning and other aspects of educational practice. A consequence of this is that preoccupations with technique are overriding pedagogic principles at the heart of formative assessment namely active learning.

Data also tells us that the written feedback, albeit time-consuming, detailed and constructive, is being largely provided in order to meet the imperatives of performativity, compliance and quality audits and that this is doing little to enhance student learning or improve student performance in retaking GCSE English re-examinations. I have witnessed this instrumentalism first-hand in my own professional experience. I have also observed the same instrumentalism at work many times in the classroom, my own, as well as those of my colleagues. Teachers in this study can clearly see that most students do not act upon the formative assessment feedback they receive. Their well-intended efforts to close the gap between their students' current performance and their students' potential attainment are proving to have little, or no impact upon the learning of the students reported in this study. Somehow, the college's policy and strategy for formative assessment in GCSE English (and potentially other subjects across the curriculum) is working against it and has lost its way. As discussed in the early chapters of this thesis, not only did we not know why this was happening, our taken-for-granted assumptions about formative assessment prevented us from even noticing *that* it was happening in the first place.

What the data from this study show is that preoccupations with the techniques of formative assessment driven by imperatives of performativity and compliance aspects of formative assessment – influenced by what I have now come to understand as a technical-rational world view shaping is education leaders' and teachers' understanding of the theory and practice of Assessment for Learning. We found ourselves moving further away from pedagogical approaches which both allow and encourage teachers to realise active learning in the classroom and in the other educational contexts in which they work. In other words, a *technique* of Assessment for Learning had come to dominate our assessment practice, inadvertently pushing active learning to the edge of our pedagogic practice.

I position this as a first and central finding of the thesis. This finding leads us to question how, as teachers, we can begin to resist the lure of (*techné*) in assessment theory and practice and avoid the temptation to overly simplify educational problems in order to arrive at over simplistic and ultimately unhelpful 'quick-fix' solutions. As discussed above, these quick-fix solutions are often based upon approaches to the practice of education derived from the Behavioural Objectives model of education – itself a derivative of a limited technical-rational solution to a

questionable framing of pedagogic problems in educational practice, distorting what we mean when we talk about and try to pursue good practice in education (Dunne, 1993).

What has been uncovered in the conduct of this thesis is that good ideas and guiding principles surrounding formative assessment are not being realised in good ways in the practice of education as there is too much emphasis on the technique of formative assessment and not enough emphasis of pedagogy and assessment practices which encourage, require and demand active learning. As Dunne (1993) suggests it is possible that teachers and education leaders have become seduced by the lure of the quick-fix techniques of formative assessment and that this is having an adverse influence upon good educational practice and the foregrounding of active learning in practice.

It is troubling and deeply ironic that as teachers and education leaders we were oblivious to and did not have the confidence to stop what we are doing. Despite widespread evidence to the contrary, and in the knowledge that our policy and strategy surrounding our use of a formative assessment technique was locked into failure in a cycle of disappointment for teachers and their students producing the same feelings of let-down for all concerned over and over again. This lends support to Dunne's (1993) assertion that technique has a powerful grip on teachers in education which is proving difficult to loosen and this is potentially preventing the practical wisdom of teachers (phronesis) and good judgement of teachers to be exercised in practice in FE contexts. The same phenomenon upholds the work of Sarason, (1993) where he argues that technical-rational approaches to educational reform and models of educational improvement are serving to lock this distorted construal of the theory and practice of formative assessment into an expensive and damaging cycle of predictable failure.

It is equally troubling that in the early stages of this study, the grip of the technical-rational world view proved to be so strong and intuitively appealing to me that I found it too compelling and alluring to resist. For example, I initially turned to a technical-rational solution to the 'problem' of formative assessment in my own practice, myself during the development of the Outcome Star. I can now understand and better appreciate, from first-hand experience, the appeal of how over-simplistic, technical-rational solutions to complex education problems can influence the direction of travel of overstretched and hard-working teachers when developing educational practice in difficult, high stakes circumstances. My idea of the Outcome Start was indeed, well intended. However, upon reflection, the strong hold and pull of technique had focused and diverted my attention and my energies more upon the creation of the 'quick-fix' Outcome Star. I did not notice that it was our implementation of the first principles of

formative assessment in educational practice in genuinely authentic ways in which active learning is not only embedded but also required of students that was the source of the problem.

I am reasonably sure that I am not the only teacher to experience and be deceived by the lure of *techné* and its potentially negative consequences in educational practice. What is perhaps most troubling to find is that as teachers we sadly find ourselves ignoring the obvious and missing the point even when we are confronted with evidence to the contrary in our practice on an almost daily basis.

The pedagogical point I want to make here is that important contributions from rigorous, robust, peer-reviewed educational research are being, at best missed, at worst completely lost, misunderstood or misapplied because of political and organisational preoccupations with technical-rational 'quick fixes' in educational practice coupled one size fits all solutions. Fuelled by the *lure of techné* education leaders' and teachers' attempts to address difficult, complex and enduring educational problems are, as Sarason (1993) cautioned locked into predictable failure.

In simply employing the techniques of formative assessment, in the absence of a deeper understanding of the pedagogic principles which underpin the realisation of formative assessment in practice, data from this study lend support to the claim that 'quick-fix' solutions to complex and enduring educational issues are locking FE teachers, and their students, into predictable and repeated failure. This bleak reality is unfolding in GCSE English resit and other classrooms in the FE sector on a daily basis.

Theme 2: Formative Assessment in Human Form

What is also becoming also apparent from the data is the necessity to draw upon measures of student progress and development which are not solely linked to cognitive and academic aspects of achievement.

As already illustrated and discussed in this thesis, critiques of technical-rational, outcome-based approaches to curriculum design, pedagogy and assessment education are widely documented in literatures from the fields of, philosophy of education, sociology, education policy, psychology and anthropology. This thesis suggests that this is a much deeper problem in education than we might first imagine. This deeper challenge here is how to respond to the symptomatic and strengthening of the rise of the technical-rational approach to educational evaluation and improvement in vocational education England and elsewhere. A further consequence of this could mean that educational practice and teaching as a profession is

becoming reduced to a technical-rational, clockwork-mechanical universe in which teachers are cast as biddable and mindless foot soldiers simply implementing, 'just add water' techniques devised by others to passive recipients of knowledge – their students. It does not take much of an imagination to grasp the less-than-optimal educational consequences of this for teachers and for their learners.

Data from this study point to the need for there to be more to our education system than the simple transmission of knowledge and the rote acquisition and application of information and knowledge which can be easily measured in examinations. Students have shared with me during the Narrative Inquiry strand of this research, that their teachers (past and present) tend to focus too heavily on what students do not know and that the lessons and their delivery are very much dictated by the teachers' mechanical ticking of checklist in order to ensure that all topics are covered for the purposes of compliance rather than for educational purposes.

A clear focus on the broader educational development of learners is both necessary and welcome and should therefore rightly reside at the heart of any institution's educational intentions. This is a theme that now runs concurrently through the new Ofsted Inspection Framework. Pervading the discussion surrounding a richer educational diet and the need to enhance the existing GCSE English curriculum, can also be seen in the influence of Ofsted inspection regimes upon educational practice. Ofsted's new Educational Inspection Framework might be argued to signal a shift in the right direction in relation to the increased importance it places on the quality of the establishment's educational practices and the overarching intention of curriculum design, not overly focused on pure exam performance and the unintentional, unhelpful and unrealistic restriction measured of student progress and achievement to only the cognitive domain of learning.

Callon (1986), is critical of the narrowed diet of education, a diet focused solely on quantitative outcomes. He calls for a more balanced approach to avoid the potential danger of overly narrowing what we mean by good education and missing the opportunities to add educational value to approaches to assessment. He draws attention to the extent students' qualities of mind and character are being diminished and not enhanced by their experiences of education. Data from this study lend support to the work of Callon (1986) where he points to the need to promote a more balanced approach to the relationship between, educational research, theory and practice in the pedagogy and assessment. Although the work of Callon (1986) is not cited in Chapter 2, its relevance at this stage in the study warrants inclusion here.

Data from this study support this view, as we can see from the various students' comments that the traditional goals of simplified versions of forms of knowledge and understanding also need to make way for the development of other human qualities of mind and character, including the enhancement of the confidence and self-esteem of learners. These are important and recurring themes running throughout the data analysed in this research.

Data from this study also point to the need for an exploration of the importance of offering a more holistic education experience for all learners. This takes us back to the work of Giroux (2001) who argues that attending to the educational needs of the whole human being nurtures the interrelated aspects of the physical, spiritual and cultural life of human beings.

There is also a clear suggestion in data derived from this study, and in other research studies, that formative assessment currently focuses too heavily on the cognitive development of learners while neglecting affective and psychomotor dimensions of learning. The neglect of the affective and psychomotor domains is discussed in some detail in Chapter 2 and the work of Hyland is central to this discussion. Hyland (2018) argues that equal recognition needs to be given the affective and psychomotor domains of learning as is currently given to learning in the cognitive domain on the grounds that human learning is integrated three-dimensional and dynamic, and not an isolated or one-dimensional process.

Data from this study also support Hyland's (2010) argument, where he urges educators to recognise that cognate concepts and the therapeutic function of the affective domain of learning are just as valuable and significant as the cognitive and the also, so often neglected, psychomotor domains of learning. The development of the affective and psychomotor domains of learning have already been discussed as being of equal importance to the development of subject knowledge including of qualities of mind and character. In particular, the need to nurture virtuous qualities of mind in order to remedy destructive mind sets and vices that inhibit the positive development of the human condition is vital in this endeavour. For example, an understanding and concern for the development of confidence and self-esteem of learners against the more traditional goals of subject knowledge is underscored in the work of Hyland (2010).

Data from this study indicate that written feedback continues to be very much focused on what students do not know about English and is also very heavy in its focus on deficits in subject knowledge. Data from this study suggest that more attention needs to be placed on the formative assessment of the affective domain. This domain concerns itself with the emotional learning and its associated behaviours, together with some admission of the importance of the

psychomotor domain which concerns itself with the speed, accuracy and dexterity of skills (including handwriting) and the nurturing of the virtue of perseverance.

To ignore the importance and need for any end point assessment, would of course be unrealistic. However, interpretation of the data in this study makes it clear that preoccupations with cognitive development and the memorisation and regurgitation of facts and knowledge which are overly focused on a regime of summative assessment are not educational in any authentic sense of the word.

As previously discussed, it is widely acknowledged that academic and vocational performance are justifiable and relevant to professional standards for educational establishments and for the professionals who work in them alike. It is also widely accepted that academic and vocational performance in all forms of life are the universal aim and currency of education and a necessary requirement in order to ensure accountability in a state funded system of education.

It is also worth reiterating through the data presented in this study, that students accept and understand the necessity to measure competence by means of summative external examinations. Data from this study also indicate, however, that for many students this journey to the end point assessment in examinations is too heavily focused on the end product and not the process of education, i.e., the emphasis is placed final external examination and its outcomes, with an imbalance in its focus upon measuring only progress in the achievement of cognitive outcomes in the provision of formative assessment feedback.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the necessity to equip students with the feedback they need to progress in more holistic ways makes a great deal of sense in principle. Literature from the field of Assessment for Learning (Black and Wiliam, 1998, and Clarke 2001) shows that multimodal impactful written formative feedback to learners makes a great deal of sense when coupled with strategies which ensure active learning takes place. Data from this study repeatedly remind us of the persistent challenges and difficulties faced in putting the first principles of formative assessment into practice in educationally sound ways.

Data from this study draw our attention to the need to explore the possibility of more holistic multimodal approaches to formative assessment that admit and address all domains of human learning. It also requires us to focus upon further considerations which need to be given to the realities and importance of learners' experiences and journeys in the study of GCSE English and in other subjects.

Theme 3: The Relationship between Assessment and Success in Education - Seeing the Bigger Picture

In a clockwork, technical-rational universe, educational change and improvement are simply construed as an inhuman and mechanical process which is solely focused on students 'churning' out of outputs and outcomes of the easily measured, quantifiable examination criteria. This supports Wilkinson's (2007) critique of determining an educational establishment's effectiveness in terms of league tables and examination outputs and outcomes founded upon questionably overcrowded curricula and crude easily quantifiable measures of educational success.

The adverse impact of an overcrowded curriculum where the focus is solely on examination outcomes is a recurring theme in the data derived from the students' comments on past experiences of the teaching, learning and assessment of GCSE resit English. The full impact of the students' experiences of failure in examinations is repeatedly evident within the data presented in Chapter 4.

As a practitioner-researcher, I am aware of the realities and questionable consequences of the notion of educational 'effectiveness' and exam 'success'. This issue is also discussed in the work of Wilkinson (2007) who suggests that as a society we view an educational institution's success in the main, by the academic achievements of its students. Wilkinson (2007) also notes that parents review an educational institutions performance and suitability of their children based on the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework Grading, as well as the school's position within league performance tables.

Data from this study also indicate that as educators we are potentially running the risk of ignoring the social, democratic and inclusive functions of education in civil society and that we should be taking more seriously the lived experiences of our learners. We are reminded of this risk to our profession if our primary concern for student experiences of education is the work of teachers is reduced to mindless foot soldiers simply following orders and uncritically applying the ideas of others in the relentless and sole pursuit of higher scores and examination outcomes as reported in the work of Trainer (2012).

Students' comments in the data analysed in this study, repeatedly reveal how vividly they recall negative experiences of tests and examinations, particularly spelling tests from when they were at school. The students consistently report that there was always a clear focus on what they scored in examinations and particularly what they got wrong. This was not viewed

by the students as a positive experience. Indeed, this was referred to by nearly half of the students involved in the Narrative Inquiry intervention cited within the study. When students recalled their negative experiences of English, a number comment on experiences from primary school and the constant testing regime, particularly spelling tests. Students repeatedly note how they felt the focus of the feedback they received was purely on what they got wrong, ignoring what they got right. Nor indeed, was consideration given to the amount of effort they put into completing an assessment task.

As human beings we can connect with personal experiences of how a constant focus on our shortcomings or failings, does little to enhance, motivate and encourage us and build our confidence. They do the opposite.

Data from this study surrounding exam resilience and the burden of failure shared by students also raise concerns. This is related to the point that as educators are we unintentionally encouraging and supporting a negative belief system and the destructive acceptance of a 'can't do' mindset among our students. In this, we are possibly inadvertently compounding the problem of promoting a technical-rational view of the world and the human beings who inhabit it, which frames educational improvement as a straightforward, mechanical process which can and should be evaluated in terms of blunt and easily measurable outcomes.

Staying with the discussion of success and assessment regimes in practice, data from this study demonstrate that, students understand assessment and its purpose only too well. In-fact, students recognise and accept the need for an exam-based assessment to provide evidence of their competence in English Language and the requirement to demonstrate that they can meet a national standard. They also openly share their frustrations and disappointment in the findings generated in the Narrative Inquiry strand of this study, where they report how they were unable to participate in their GCSE English resit examinations due to the global pandemic.

Data from this study show that students themselves are aware of this complex notion. As discussed above, the students involved in this study recognise the need for summative assessment and accept is as a quantifiable outcome is part of their education, and indeed a part of life. There is also a detectable sense in the data of the recognition of the need for these students to be assessed in the same way as their peers before them (with reference to COVID-19 restrictions and the introduction of the Government's tutor assessed grade (TAG), and centre assessed grade (CAG) assessment systems.

This is borne out further when we consider that overwhelmingly students report that they understand and accept the need to sit an external examination and in fact are frustrated that the global pandemic had prevented them from sitting the final exam in the summer series of examinations. One student commented that they need to pass or fail by their own efforts and not by the opinion of another.

However, as discussed above, regardless of our best efforts as teachers to support our students with their GCSE English examinations, history continues to repeat itself in a system driven and pre-occupied with a culture where continual focus is upon exam outcomes. On a more positive note, data from this study however do offer glimpses into potential opportunities for us to begin to do things differently.

Data from students regarding their lived experiences of examinations and failure in GCSE English, highlight the need to explore further how a sense of balance could be achieved between formative and summative assessment approaches to assessment. Current formative assessment practices focus too heavily on measuring progress against target grade and assessment predominately attaches itself to examination performance. The possibility also exists to strike a balance within the formative assessment schedule to add greater nourishment to what can all too easily become an educational diet of *"ashes, sawdust and potato peelings"* (Pullman, 2003) for GCSE resit English students and of the need to offer them a more interesting and holistic learning experience of an education worthy of the name.

As discussed above, data from this research also suggest that preoccupations with these quantifiable measures of success are potentially damaging the lived educational experiences of our students, locking many of them into a continual cycle of failure and diminishing, rather than enhancing their encounters with education.

What we also know from the data, however, that students approach the summative assessment examination very differently. There are groups of students who demonstrate high levels of perseverance, confidence and tenacity. Conversely, there are students who fall into negative mindsets, as a consequence of repeated experiences of failure, feelings of despondency, a sense of despair, coupled with the belief and conviction that history is going to endlessly repeat itself in their future.

Data from this study suggest that there needs to be a revision of the education system in England across all sectors of education in relation to assessment and testing regimes. Data from this study also point to the need for the development of pedagogical approaches that

support the broader educational development of students rather than simply measuring success in the form of crude measures of success in examinations and blunt and mechanical educational outcomes. The formative assessment pedagogical approaches employed in this study focus on lived experience and involve students in a rescuing and emancipatory pedagogy which has uncovered the importance of the development of aspects of qualities of mind and character in the teaching and learning of both GCSE English students and their teachers.

Theme 4: Bringing Literacy to Life and Life to Literacy

Data from the Student Questionnaire, Literacy Storyboard and Teacher's Interview strands of this study all underscore the general theme of relevance, currency and literacy linked to real life experience in education.

Students particularly comment on how their experience of the teaching of English is not relevant to real life. This in itself, is worrying for me as teacher of English. As discussed in Chapter 1, the view that English Language is not relevant to life is both profound and shocking as the English Language is our principle form of communication as human beings! As a teacher of English, it is still sad and frustrating for me to hear and read comments from the Student Questionnaire and Narrative Inquiry strands of this study that students do not see English Language and literacy as being relevant to real life. What is perhaps even more disturbing is that they do not perceive literacy to be relevant to their lives and their future life chances.

Here in the data, we can also see how learners' qualities of mind and character can unfortunately be dominated by the high levels of despondency and destructive voices and devices which serve only to convince students that past experience predicts and determines their future and in doing so diminish them as human beings and compound their sense of failure even further.

Data from this study remind us that many students currently do not see the relevance of their GCSE English lessons and how their experiences from school have made them feel that the acquisition and development of English Language was more about satisfying a teacher's checklist and not about them. According to Barton (1996) teaching literacy within the guiding principles of a social practice involves educational inclusion and enhancement (Bernstein, 1996), particularly for the most marginalised individuals.

If we accept the argument that teaching English is a social practice, then there are consequences not only for curriculum design but also for pedagogic practice. For example, in the context of an FE college, literacy practices will in the future need to be more associated with broader social goals and not overly focused on narrow and quantifiable assessment outcomes.

The theme of teaching as a social practice is discussed in some depth in Chapter 2. The work of Lee (1996) and Street (1993) draw attention to how the development of the literacy of everyday life is an essential part of any learning and it should not be taught in isolation. Adding further weight to this is the assertion by Lee (1996), that teaching literacy skills in separation is hotly contestable and widely questioned. Data reported in this study support the view that teaching, learning and assessment of GCSE resit English, needs to demonstrate greater relevance and bear more resemblance to concepts of teaching and literacy acquisition and development as a social practice.

It would, however as discussed above, be unrealistic and inadvisable to ignore the need to meet external examination requirements and supports learners to achieve their qualification. It is also recognised that students' GCSE English sessions are discrete timetabled sessions which are often separate from the students' experiences of learning other vocational and technical curricula. It would also be naïve of me as a beginning researcher not to recognise that the way in which English Language is currently taught at GCSE level does not naturally lend itself to this approach to curriculum design and pedagogy.

It is not hard therefore to see why this could be a potential challenge to any teacher of English. What does need to be considered is that continuing to teach English Language as a subject in isolation from the real world and the students' lived experiences of that world could potentially exacerbate the problem even further.

As educators we cannot deny that the subject of English Language is a fundamental skill for life and a core skill needed for any curriculum subject available at any educational establishment. However, in this study, students comment that they do not practise their English skills outside of their discrete GCSE English resit classes. This leads us to questions whether students do not fully understand the importance and relevancy of Literacy to their future lives and life chances or whether the teaching GCSE English needs to reflect students' lives more?

Theme 5: Oracy and Pedagogy and the Connection Between Talking, Reading and Writing:

As already discussed, data from this study indicate that assessment practices in FE Colleges regarding the provision of written feedback are being reduced to expensive time-consuming and potentially empty rituals both for teachers and their students. Teachers' accounts repeatedly underline how many students do not even read, let alone act upon the written feedback provided by their tutors and this serves to compound the problems of the provision of formative assessment even further.

Moving the concept of formative assessment forward, it is openly acknowledged in this thesis, that current delivery methods for all formative and summative GCSE English feedback to students included in the site of this study is almost invariably offered only in written format and that both formative and summative written feedback tend to concern themselves with students' progress against target grade.

What is also becoming apparent in the data is that when discussing feedback, is the students, repeatedly report that the focus of assessment was always on the learners' mistakes and what they "got wrong". Students repeatedly report that there was little discussion with their teacher around what the feedback told them about their strengths and what they need to do to improve in the future. Student 'Z' comments about having the sense that the teacher was always mentally/physically ticking off a checklist of what needed to be completed, while rushing through to make sure it *was* completed.

This also calls into question whether there should be more time afforded in the curriculum to celebrate areas of strength in student learning in a more holistic way without the over-reliance on a focus upon progress against target grade. Clarke (2001) points to the need to ensure that students receive a more balanced approach to formative assessment, and it is not simply limited to its technique (*techné*) nor overly rely on its provision in a written format. Lending further support to the work of Clarke (2001, 2006), data from this study suggest that students need to have more time in class to make improvements to their work and that there appears to be a need to look at how other multimodal forms of assessment can be harnessed in the provision of formative assessment feedback to students other than in the current written format.

What we do know is that the amount of time consumed in the provision of written feedback is currently not having the desired, positive effect upon student learning and achievement, let alone having a commensurate impact on the examination outcomes in relation to the amount

of time and resources that teachers expend providing this feedback. Evidence from this study points to the need to explore the use of alternative formative assessment techniques and the potential use of oracy as well as dialogical approaches to formative feedback.

The use of oracy and social-cultural pedagogic approaches to formative assessment and feedback has many advocates, (see for example, Vygotsky 1978). The main suggestion here is that talking is critical in clarifying and thinking about learning needs and intentions as well as in supporting meaning-making. Vygotsky (1978) places enormous emphasis on interaction and dialogue in the development of thinking. This form of socio-cultural approaches cognitive development indicates that pedagogical approaches to oracy development could be a helpful precursor of literacy development across a wide range of academic and vocational subjects and curricula.

Data also suggest that the power of talking and dialogue in the process, particularly in relation to the use of oracy and dialogical approaches to formative assessment methods, could be a potentially powerful catalyst for change in assessment practices in the future.

Building upon the issues in the field of formative assessment and the potential use of oracy as a pedagogical approach to the acquisition and development of literacy, this study reports how comments from students who acknowledge that through dialogue they continue to access the lesson outside of the classroom. This level of accessibility and revisiting learning now takes on a whole new meaning, particularly as we are yet to see the full educational cost of the global pandemic on students' lost learning.

Data in the study also point to students' lack of engagement in reading. Better engagement with reading and more memorable experiences of reading occurs, when reading is a more multimodal and immersive experience. We can see the students' memories of experiences of learning to read and their reading material, which engaged them in the process, are shared in their Literacy Storyboards. Books and the reading contained within the literature are used to bring the story and the words to life. Students appear to recall the book and its contents much more vividly when engaged in discussion, together with their more positive experiences of learning.

We can see from the data that students are reluctant to engage in reading activities which bear little or no relevance to their lives. It is therefore more than reasonable to assume that this lack of engagement could extend to reading assessment in written format. The problem

is further compounded by the fact that currently all formative assessments are submitted to students in written format only.

When we triangulate this finding with the findings from the Teacher Interview, we can see how students engaged more with reading when the oracy recorded podcasts were used and when these were introduced to support reading tasks. In the Teacher Interview, the teacher reflects on the students' constant reluctance to read and as a result how multimodal, dialogical approaches to reading were explored. This includes students having access to an aid/focusing device to assist them with their reading using the podcasts. Data from this study lend support to the claim that the interventions employed here, based upon oracy, story and dialogue, enabled students to recall and talk about their enjoyment of stories and reading by using dialogue with their teacher. Data also suggest that these activities provide powerful insights into how students, in the study, engaged with story individually in written form and in films and popular culture in deeply meaningful and personally active ways.

Data from this study support this view and point to the students' reluctance and also lack of engagement with the physicality of handwriting. This is evident in data from this study generated in discussions and shared in the Narrative Inquiry (using the Literacy Storyboard) strand of the research and a key characteristic in the use of the Outcome Star. This finding has even more relevance given the impact that COVID-19 has had on education. Students have been faced with over 18 months of remote learning where most teaching and learning has been accessed remotely using technology and typing skills as employed on a keyboard.

However, data also reveal how the art, craft and use of physical (psychomotor) handwriting skills combined with the development of the dexterity of writing has been significantly reduced in this process. It could therefore be argued that as a result of the changes to classroom delivery and as a result of the global pandemic that the skill and dexterity of handwriting has been weakened and diminished during the COVID pandemic. Data from this study suggest that the art of handwriting, i.e., physically writing a piece of text (psychomotor domain of learning) has somewhat been neglected in preparing students for contemporary examinations in GCSE resit English. This has important implications for pedagogical approaches which aim to combat lost learning and revive the skill of handwriting within the curriculum.

Data from this study also point to the real and pressing need to explore pedagogic approaches that engage students in educational activities which involve *speaking and sharing accounts of their experience of education and their feelings* towards it before we invite them to engage in writing.

Siegel (2002) makes the case for the teachable capacity for the development of reflection, while also pointing to the increasingly important recognition of the role of experience and the development of qualities of mind, character, virtues and in the acquisition in the development of English Language. What is also central here is that, for Siegel, the development of virtuous qualities of mind and character including perseverance; independence of thought and reflection; a habit of truthfulness and a care for the clarity and expressiveness in writing and speech (Dunne 1993) can be learned and developed in and through educational experience.

When discussing the merits or oracy and its connection to the acquisition and development of written language we return to the work of Williams and Roberts (2011), where they argue that conversation is the connection between oral verbalisation of thought and meaning making and a forerunner in the pre-requisite to the development of writing skills.

It is also important to note here that the connection between *speaking and writing* which is not sufficiently, widely or routinely accepted at present, as is the (in contrast to perhaps all to readily accepted) connections between the often pairings of 'speaking and listening' and 'reading and writing'. As Carter (2000) reminds us, as human beings we learn to talk before we write, we think, and we feel well before we speak.

Theme 6: Do Not Assume - Right Time, Right Place

At the beginning of this research, I made the naïve assumption that all learners would be comfortable engaging in verbal discussions regarding their past experiences of studying English. I was wrong. The reality was very different. The realities of using oracy and narrative inquiry as data collection methods are documented and discussed in Chapter 4. This unexpected outcome in itself is worthy of further exploration and interpretation, and this is another finding within this study.

The global pandemic made all face-to-face communication almost impossible, and this presented real challenges to me in the conduct of this research. This initially meant that my first forays into the field of narrative inquiry yielded little in terms of meaningful data.

Data indicate that students' ease of spoken language in conversation with a tutor cannot be underestimated or presumed. It soon became apparent that students were not automatically comfortable with me engaging them in conversation at the start of this research. It took the use of the Literacy Storyboard as a focusing device to help them (and me) to be more relaxed in our discussions. The Literacy Storyboard strand of this study was designed to give students

time to reflect and think about what was going to be discussed in their conversation with me. This multimodal approach proved to be more successful.

What is also found in the data is using the verbal feedback gained from the Literacy Storyboard, is the importance of students' recollections surrounding their own positive experiences of learning English. These include several examples of the use of music, films, videos and materials which are relatable and part of the fabric of students' everyday lives.

Data from this study provide evidence that simply 'dropping' oracy into lessons without looking at the bigger picture is a naïve assumption, and a big pedagogic mistake. Data from this study also support the view that the Literacy Storyboard provided a multimodal stimulus to support meaningful discussions between myself and the learners who contributed to this study which yielded more insightful findings.

Data from dialogical strands of this study remind us of the need to attend to the quality of the feedback we offer our students as well as to the use of oracy in the development of narrative inquiry with our students. In this case, 6 students from two different technical areas, in order to deepen our understanding of students' experiences of learning English.

Data suggest that teachers of GCSE resit English in FE Colleges might find pedagogic devices such as the Literacy Storyboard useful at both an individual and group levels. In addition, data from this study lend support to the idea that these multimodal devices can be used in the early stages of a GCSE English resit course in order to enable students to recall and engage in dialogue, stories and accounts of positive/negative experiences of learning English which they have encountered in the past and in the present.

Data in this study suggest that if teachers of GCSE English are to take oracy seriously as a pedagogic principle/device then its development needs to be carefully, sensitively and creatively planned, designed, modelled, structured and sequenced in all teaching, learning and assessment activities related to GCSE English. Data from this study also suggest that both curriculum design and lesson planning in GCSE English need to be adapted in future to ensure that oracy becomes an integral forerunner of the development of literacy and embedded part of curriculum in a more structured and systematic way. This planning and sequencing of learning activities based upon oracy strategies therefore need to be built across the curriculum to enable students and their teachers to talk more in order to help them to learn more. Data also suggest that these oracy strategies may be useful in ensuring that students

are equipped with the necessary skills and the confidence to enable and encourage them to learn how to engage in collaborative dialogue with their tutors and with each other.

Findings from this study relating to the theme of oracy and dialogue encourage us to focus on the developmental nature of learning and language development in collaborative dialogue. The introduction of the Outcome Star was initially intended to promote dialogic discussion and the tracking of behaviours and attitudes as well as normal progress measures of progress and performance against target grade.

An important difference to note here in this intervention is that dialogue and spoken interactions between student and teacher can be employed as a means of gathering both formative and summative assessment data.

What is also interesting in exploring is the relationship between dialogue, oracy and the acquisition and development of language as powerful pedagogic approaches. Evidence of this can be found in the feedback from the students derived from the Teacher Interview strand of the research. This suggests that the use of podcasts and oracy recordings and other multimodal pedagogic devices may have potential to alleviate elements of stress and anxiety regarding the acquisition and development of language, text and vocabulary.

The Literacy Storyboard strand of this research was designed to promote and support learning conversations surrounding lived experiences of the development of literacy. What the data suggest is that the potential of spoken language as a pedagogic device helps to uncover different more in-depth, personal narrative accounts from learners than the use of questions, questionnaires and written responses alone.

The necessity for a flexible curriculum that can be used on different platforms and accessed at different times could not be more relevant. We are yet to fully uncover the true and complete impact of lost learning from the global pandemic and as we continue to navigate this educational climate, adopting a more flexible approach to learning seems sensible. Data suggest that the utilisation of dialogue and oracy as pedagogical forerunners of literacy appears to have even more relevance today than ever.

Theme 7: Reflection and Dialogue

Data in this research reveal how students did engage in more meaningful reflective conversations about their English studies using the Outcome Star. Data from the teachers' Case Studies lend support to the claim that these conversations provided students with safe

spaces and multimodal ways in which they could share their experiences of language acquisition and development. It also illustrates how these gave the teacher opportunities to uncover and discuss during these conversations, characteristics and behaviours that they have already developed or required as part of each students' overall progress.

An important finding which emerges from both the Student Questionnaire, Narrative Inquiry (using the Literacy Storyboard) strand of the study is how students engage in reflection. Students reveal through their engagement in oracy activities, their lived experiences of literacy. They disclose how they repeatedly make links between their development of language and increases in their levels of confidence, sense of self-worth and perseverance. This is once again linking back to their development of virtuous qualities of mind through their experiences of education.

When discussing feedback, the data from the Teacher Interview strand also points to the importance of reflection for the students, who when discussing the use of the podcasts, see the benefits of being able to reflect on the session at a later point and also revisit the session at will, as there is a permanent recording of past learning. Students comment that they now have a new way of re-visiting the session and this in turn presents an opportunity for active, further reflection. The work of Clarke (2001) discussed in detail in Chapter 2 is particularly helpful in understanding the importance of making active learning unavoidable through purposeful pedagogic approaches and by making time in the classroom for active reflection from feedback received in a variety of formats as well as the space (and the requirement) to act upon that feedback in class.

The opportunity for students to reflect and act brings us back to the discussion by Freire (1970), where he notes that in order for the spoken word to realise its full power, there must be two dimensions, reflection and action. What we can interpret from the data presented in this study that there is evidence to suggest that students are engaging in active reflection when they are engaged in dialogic formative assessment.

From engaging with spoken language and dialogue in the session and using the student feedback, data from this study point to a need to consider a more immersive experience of the development of English Language at GCSE Level. A more immersive experience of language and literacy development which attends to and reflects students' lives and their world in storied situations. Storied situations where they can discuss and see for themselves how this learning will benefit them is of particular pedagogic significance here.

From the data gathered from the Teacher Interview we can also see repeated reference to self-reflection from students. The teacher's recorded lessons, including the use of formative assessment during the session reveal how students are able and disposed to access this outside of the session. Data from the Teacher Interview demonstrate that students found the use of podcasts, books and films useful pedagogic devices in supporting reflection and re-visiting their previous experiences of learning.

Theme 8: Living with the Burden of Failure and Breaking Cycles of Failure

The data from this study indicate that the burdens of fear and past experiences of failure in a subject only serve to influence, diminish and crush the growth of virtuous qualities of mind and character, such as confidence, perseverance, and self-esteem in GCSE English students pushing them even further in a downward spiral of diminished confidence and self-belief. Recurring themes in the data draw us back, once again to the work of Freire (1970) as discussed in Chapter 2, where he notes the interplay between experience of failure and deeply ingrained negative learned behaviour. Data from this study in the context of post-16 students, support Freire's observation that negative experiences of education create and recreate patterns of oppression, negative behaviour and cycles of disadvantage and failure encountered in and through education by the disadvantaged and oppressed.

Past learning experiences are in turn, increasing the students' expectations of future failure. This expectation of future failure is in turn diminishing the future growth of students' engagement in the study of GCSE English. This pernicious cycle of failure subsequently impacts on their future levels of engagement in a subject in which they have already and very publicly, been 'found wanting' and in which they feel inadequate. This burden of failure would also appear to correlate with the data found in this study. For example, the comment - 'I always find new ways to fail'. Here we can see how this student is locked into a pernicious cycle of failure. What is more worrying, is that under the constant weight of the burden of this failure, they cannot see a way out!

These patterns of behaviour are evidenced by the students' comments generated by each data collection method employed in this study. These negative experiences are found to ultimately play a part in the inhibition of the growth of virtuous qualities of mind. Freire (1970) also reminds us how difficult it is to break free from this continual cycle of failure. It cuts deep. This learned negative behaviour Freire (1970) argues creates expectations and increases the burden of future failure and disappointment. Power relations between the student and the acquisition and development of English Language at GCSE level becomes systematically and damagingly locked. On a broader level, this serves to reduce the prospects and life chances

of these students (who are often from already disadvantaged backgrounds) thereby reinforcing existing social stratifications and economic inequalities and contributing to the restriction of social mobility. Such preoccupations with failure and diminished prospect of success linked to the damaging effects of negative summative assessment, denote the rise of a less than emancipatory culture in systems of education.

This rise in a performative culture among both staff and students in post compulsory education is persuasively described by Ball (2010) in the English system of education. Ball (2010) locates the roots and the terror of this culture of performativity for teachers in outcome-based measures of educational assessment and neo-liberal approaches to educational evaluation and improvement. Data from this study indicate that the same rise of a managerialist culture and mode of regulation that Ball (2010) brings to light could also be argued to be controlling the field of teacher judgements for student success. This field of judgement, it could be argued, is in turn, ultimately demeaning and determining what is also considered to be effective performance for and by students themselves, (Ball, 2010).

Data from this study support Ball's (2010) claim that these constant recording instruments used to measure and micro-manage teachers' performance are bringing about a high degree of uncertainty and instability for both teachers and learners alike. Smyth (2000) also discusses the consequences of constant levels of surveillance, thereby lending further weight to this argument by pointing out how such performative policies in education and assessment can generate high levels of self-doubt and personal anxiety for both teachers and their students.

Following these experiences, many students in this study developed deeply entrenched and negative mindsets or qualities of mind and character regarding their prospects and capabilities relating to their success regarding the study of GCE English. Data from this study suggest that these negative perspectives appear to be locking students into cycles of failure regarding their future success in their subsequent GCSE English studies at college. Distilling aspects of the development of qualities of mind and character through the repeated analyses of the data is a prevalent theme in this study and brings to the fore the importance of the recognition of how education can develop not only virtues but also vices and negative mindsets in learners.

Interpretation of the data in this study concerns itself with the development of the consciousness of a person and how their experience of learning enhances or inhibits the development of the human condition on an individual and collective level. Not only in terms of the growth of human virtues (or human qualities of mind and character but also) in regard to the students' lived experience of assessment in education and the impact of these

experiences upon their confidence and capacities to learn and develop in the subject in the future.

Data from this study suggest that a key to unlocking student capacities relates to releasing the potential of helping students to reflect upon talk about past learning experiences. Data suggest that many GCSE English students encountered negative experiences of learning English at school in situations in which they repeatedly felt deeply isolated, embarrassed and diminished as human beings, leading them to a state of considerable anxiety and self-doubt.

Data from the study support the view that their lived experience of summative assessment in relation to their GCSE English examinations are inhibiting the development and diminishing the acquisition of virtuous qualities of mind in the future. Damage has been done. This is evident for many of the GCSE English resit students with a few notable exceptions. This finding presents an opportunity for teachers of GCSE English students working in FE colleges to begin to do things differently.

These virtues and vices manifest themselves are in the processes through which qualities of mind and character are enhanced or inhibited by students' past and present lived experiences of education.

We are reminded of the depth of this intrinsic link by both Freire (1970) and Dewey (1933) who point out that lived experience cannot be removed from education, indeed they argue that lived experience should be the very starting point and bedrock for all education. Data from this study also point to the developments of qualities of mind and character surrounding levels of perseverance regarding students' negative responses to summative assessments. The students' levels of perseverance appear to be tested to the upmost when they are navigating the rapids of experience of assessment and studying a subject in which they have been publicly labelled or have labelled themselves and/or others as failures for simply, not being 'good enough' to pass a GCSE English exam as a child.

Students' comments taken from the Student Questionnaire offer insights into the importance of learners' lived experiences and perceptions of assessment in education, particularly linked to experiences of failure in examinations. As discussed above and in Chapter 4, one learner talked about 'finding new ways to fail' while another acknowledged the need to accept failure more and not to be afraid to fail. This exception lends support to Freire's (1970) claim that it is only when the oppressed take part in developing the pedagogy of their own liberation and

discover that they themselves are the host of their own oppression, that they can effectively contribute to the birth of their rescuing pedagogy.

This key finding surrounding the burden of fear, invites us to further consider whether teachers' pedagogic approaches need to ensure that attitudes and behaviours towards GCSE resit English are articulated, shared, tracked and mitigated as a purposeful and integral part of the assessment experience of leaners.

It would be naïve of me as the author of this thesis to discount exam performance totally as it is already acknowledged that exam performance is a widely accepted currency for both Higher Education and employment. Furthermore, as a teacher, and like many other teaching professionals, I want my students to achieve and do well in their final examinations. What this finding is suggesting however, is that there is the possibility of introducing different pedagogic approaches which adopt a more balanced approach to student achievement and offer a more holistic approach to supporting student progress. This is discussed in more detail in the final chapter of this thesis.

Data suggest that teachers may also need to consider how this information is shared and understood among teachers. This includes the practicalities of how equal importance needs to be given to the improvement and development of both target grade performance and examination outcomes together with the pedagogy through which the acquisition and development of virtuous qualities of mind can release students from the repeated cycles of lack of progress and defeat brought about by the consequences of the burden of failure.

The original focus of the research is upon formative assessment in GCSE English. Data from this study point to the challenges of breaking students free from repeating their cycle of failure. The use of the formative assessment tools, including the Outcome Star and Literacy Storyboard in this study represent an attempt to do just that.

Theme 9: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly - Accounts of Experience

It is also important to note that data from this study highlight how not all GCSE English students who participated in this research had negative experiences of learning at school. Indeed, some had very positive experiences.

The findings in this study point to the students' recollections of studying English. When they recall their use of English they primarily focus on their English lessons and do not necessarily connect the subject of English with any other aspects or other subjects on their timetable.

Consequently, they see English as an isolated and separate skill only to be measured and engaged with during English lessons.

Data from the study bring into view a clearer understanding of how students' past experiences of learners have impacted on their feelings towards the subject together. This is evident where data reveal that in any given group, one third of the students have had a very poor experience of English and who potentially still cling to the 'ghost of literacy past.' It is, however, important to remember that the students who constitute the research population for this study, have already been found 'wanting' in a subject that is the main form of human interaction and communication as a human being in the world. Data from the Student Questionnaire indicate that in any group of students, one third of the sample had a negative experience with two thirds having a reasonable or good experience of studying English.

Data from the study point to the need to take the lived experiences of both learners and teachers much more seriously. However, what the data also indicate is that all too often, students hold tightly on to these negative accounts of experience. These negative accounts of education and examination failure can in turn lock them into a downward cycle which they find it difficult, if not impossible from which to break free.

We can also see from the data how students' behaviours and attitudes feature prominently in their experiences of learning English and the extent to which their previous experiences are having a powerful impact upon student attitudes and engagement in GCSE English in the present. It is also worth reminding ourselves, at this point, that to be found wanting in a subject or being regarded as a failure in any aspect of life is a hurtful, diminishing unpleasant experience for any human being.

This finding raises the question of the extent to which teachers need to focus on helping their students discuss and share their experiences and attitudes towards the learning of English rooted so deeply in students' past education and experiences of failure in examinations. Indeed, there is some evidence to support this from the tutors' accounts in this thesis of the conversations they have had with their students and in tutor assessments of categories related to the Outcome Star intervention.

Conversely students who have had positive experiences of learning GCSE English (the data suggest that two thirds of any given cohort had a positive experience as opposed to one third negative in GCSE resit English) can share their experiences with their fellow student group

and their teachers. This level of honesty and transparency in sharing both positive and negative experiences of learning GCSE English in this study could help to dispel and counteract the negative experiences of some students as well as offering teachers' insights into the needs of their students. Therefore, a finding from this thesis is that it cannot be assumed that all GCSE English resit students have all had negative experiences of learning GCSE English at school. Their lack of success in GCSE English examinations to data may be due to other factors of influence.

The data in this study indicate that opportunities exist to systematically respect the importance of lived experience in education more fully and to harness these experiences for positive pedagogical purposes. More engaging curriculum design and approaches to assessment may enhance the learning experience, rather than at worse diminish, or at best, have no impact at all on student learning. This finding underscores the recurring theme in the data that lived experience needs to be taken more seriously in language and literacy development as it impacts on students' perceptions and particularly their attitudes towards and engagement in the learning of English at GCSE level.

Data from this study suggest that there is a pressing need to explore the curriculum design and pedagogical implications of this in the GCSE English resit curricula. Data also suggest that alternative multimodal pedagogic approaches to assessment could enable tutors and students to move beyond narrow notions of language development and literacy. Curriculum design and pedagogical approaches that have narrowed notion of literacy in terms of the simple and instrumental acquisition of atomised and mechanical lists skills reduce language acquisition and development to perform in examinations to a mechanical process, instead of focusing on the ways that students use the English Language and literacy in their lives. Such mechanical approaches to language and literacy development have been measured in this research by me and by my students and have been found wanting.

Data in this study point to the need to develop pedagogical approaches and assessment strategies which nurture, enhance and track the development of virtuous qualities of mind and character and these need to be given greater priority in curriculum planning and design. Sharing positive and negative experiences of learning GCSE English might also help teachers to avoid the repetition of less than positive pedagogical approaches which may only serve to remind students of previous negative experiences of learning English.

Data from this study suggest that the growth of virtuous qualities of mind should be central to good education and therefore needs to become an integral part of the teaching, learning and assessment approaches adopted in practice by teachers of GCSE English in the site of this study and elsewhere.

Chapter Summary

To bring this chapter to a close I find myself reflecting on past events more than ever. As the last 36 months have unfolded, we are seeing, and we will yet see, the impact of the global pandemic has had, and will continue to have, on both our personal and professional lives.

As a result of COVID-19 our education system in the United Kingdom finds itself in an unprecedented situation. More than ever, we have seen the changing face of our education system, with traditional classroom delivery cancelled, remote delivery and its challenges becoming the new way of working and the demand for more innovative approaches to classroom delivery now necessary.

I hope that other teachers who may have encountered similar problems with the implementation of formative assessment strategies in practice in the teaching of GCSE English Language contexts and in other subjects and disciplines, may also find resonances in my work with theirs.

Chapter 6: Key Findings, Recommendation and Insights

Where it Began

Chapter One begins with my account of my experiences of offering written formative assessment to my GCSE English resit students. It describes in some detail how my own time-consuming and expensive efforts, and those of my colleagues, in providing useful formative assessment to our students proved to be yielding little, if any fruit in practice in relation to actual increases in student learning and improved levels of achievement.

This thesis describes how myself and my colleagues found to our disappointment that the widely acclaimed formative assessment practices that we had taken-for-granted would work and that we had implemented in such good faith, enthusiasm and with the best of intentions, in the confident assumption that they would 'work', were, to our great puzzlement and disappointment, having little or no impact upon the learning, progress and achievements of our students in practice.

I also discuss in the first chapter, how I found this particularly troubling, bearing in mind that the College's policy on the provision of formative assessment to GCSE English resit students in my department is based upon widely respected, peer-reviewed, published robust and systematic educational research.

The significant body of research published by Black and Wiliam (1998) and their associates among others, was widely accepted as being firmly grounded in well-respected, systematic, robust and peer-reviewed empirical evidence generated over decades of educational research. What was particularly troubling was that the same research conducted by highly regarded educational researchers, internationally renowned in this field of study (see for example, Black and Wiliam 1998 and Clarke 1998, 2001, 2003, 2005) did not appear to be living up to their promises in the arena of practice.

In Chapter 1, I also describe how the research problem, which forms the central focus of this thesis, was both puzzling and perplexing, not only to me personally but also to a significant number of my colleagues.

I discuss how we realised that something was going wrong in our practice as we attempted to implement the findings of widely acclaimed and peer-reviewed published research conducted in the field of the theory and practice of formative assessment. However, we did not know what the problem was, let alone how we might begin to address it. This concerned me to the

extent that I decided to conduct an investigation at PhD level to deepen my own understanding of the nature and source of the problem with which we were persistently confronted with in our everyday practice.

I then explain how, in the course of conducting this thesis, I have come to realise that despite our good intentions and best efforts (and they were many and expensive), our limited understanding of the pedagogic principles of formative assessment (including its first and most important principle of active learning) has led us to its inadvertent neglect.

The key point to note here is that by simply focusing upon the *techniques* of formative assessment (in this case, written formative assessment) we had ignored the obvious and missed the point - that the very pedagogic purpose of formative assessment is to keep the learner active. As teachers, we found that we had inadvertently created learning conditions in which our students were able to and allowed to experience formative assessment in disengaged and passive ways. We had unintentionally allowed our students to deftly side-step engaging with the feedback we had provided. We had also inadvertently allowed our students to avoid accepting any responsibility for engaging with our formative assessment or for accepting their responsibility and accountability for their own improvement or lack of it.

In other words, we had unintentionally removed the pedagogic imperative as well as any incentives to engage in active learning from our formative assessment policy, our practice and our pedagogy. Paradoxically, the very strategy we were employing to implement formative assessment with the intention of putting it into action in practice in our classrooms had ironically subverted it.

A further consequence of this was that students responded (and responded may be too strong a word here) to their written feedback from teachers with little interest or enthusiasm. At best, they read it, at worst they placed the written feedback in their bags or folders never to read it, revisit it, let alone act upon it again. In other words, in practice, our formative assessment policy became meaningless and even redundant, an empty *technical-mechanical* ritual (all jazz-hands and razzamatazz**)** with little, if any, positive educational value to staff or students.

In view of the above, it will not come as a surprise that the impetus for this research study and subsequent thesis is essentially pragmatic. It is pragmatic in that it is grounded in an initial ‘disturbance’ in my experience and a troubling puzzle in educational practice (Dewey, 1933). In particular, this conundrum concerns itself with the amount of time and energy taken by teachers to supply quality written formative assessment feedback to students, in comparison

and stark contrast to the amount of time spent by students reading, engaging with, learning from and acting upon it.

Our students were offered written formative assessment feedback with the intention of helping them to 'close the gap' (Clarke 1998) between their current and potential levels of achievement. In theory, they should have been making the necessary improvements to their learning. However, what we should be seeing was not and is still not happening in reality. To reiterate, we know that the students were doing very little with the written feedback provided. We were witnessing, at first hand, that the first and most important principle of Assessment for Learning, active learning, had been neglected by us - albeit, unintentionally.

What is surprising perhaps is how long it took for us to notice this!

This thesis draws attention to a possible disconnect between the theory of formative assessment and the reality of its implementation in practice in the many contexts in which the FE sector operates. This thesis brings to light how, unintentionally, it is possible that the formative assessment *techniques* employed in the process of providing formative assessment to GCSE English resit students in my college and perhaps, more widely, are not only encouraging but also allowing learners to become and to remain passive in their learning. This problem is however not peculiar to the teaching, learning and assessment of GCSE English Language. Assessment theory and practice in any subject can fall into this trap.

This problem is potentially leading to situations where learners are able to accept no responsibility whatsoever for their own improvement. There were no tangible or immediate consequences for students for not engaging with the feedback in ways which required/demanded active learning. Such consequences for our students did not completely disappear, however. They simply lay in wait further down the line for our students in the form of their future failure in their high-stakes GCSE English resit examinations later in their GCSE English course.

The main point I want to make here is that precious opportunities for active learning in my FE college and perhaps in many other colleges in England are being unintentionally squandered – or even lost. Once again, the deep irony here is that as teachers we *know* that active learning is the essence and imperative of Assessment for Learning (AfL). We value all that this body of work stands for in educational practice. However, our practices at the time belie this and suggest that we do not. The burning question is why?

The Focus of the Final Chapter

This closing chapter draws attention to the importance of supporting young people with GCSE English, literacy and language development as an integral aspect of their vocational and technical education. Providing detailed formative feedback which supports, encourages and indeed, nurtures the active learning of these students is therefore vital.

The research suggest oracy might be usefully employed purposively as a pedagogic approach to support and encourage active learning in GCSE resit English contexts in FE. It also points to how the use of oracy and story can be harnessed as multimodal approaches to assessment as well as methods of data collection. Data capable of offering insights into students' previous and current experiences of learning GCSE English and other subjects are offered in this thesis in the spirit of providing a resource/potential source of insight for other teachers across the sector and beyond.

The study opens with learners and therefore this closing chapter ends with the learners and their experiences of resitting GCSE resit English examinations. The insights and subsequent recommendations offered here are also informed by my own experiences of teaching and learning, my experiences of conducting this research as well as by my interpretations of the learning experiences of my students.

This thesis argues that current approaches to the provision of formative assessment solely based upon written modes of communication are diverting the attention and energies of teachers' resources away from pedagogic principles which are not only capable of supporting active learning but also make room for (and indeed insist upon it) in practice.

This research leads us to question whether teachers in the FAVE sector, understand the guiding principles of Assessment for Learning well enough and whether their grasp of its underpinning guiding principles is strong enough to enable teachers across the sector to enact the principles of AfL in practice in coherent, meaningful and educationally sound ways. This also raises the question of the extent to which the recording of feedback in written form has become more of a mechanical instrumental (albeit well intended) – but at best an empty and at worst, pointless and paradoxical pedagogic and assessment strategy.

To say that our experiences of and approaches to the provision of formative assessment have had disappointing results in the theory and practice of assessment in FE is to understate and underestimate the educational issues at stake here. This is important not just in relation to the theory and practice of (formative and summative) assessment in FE colleges but also in

relation to how any idea from educational theory and research becomes realised, enacted, misunderstood and distorted in educational practice.

A Sharpened Focus

An original intention of this thesis was to explore dialogue and the use of oracy as a pedagogic device in the teaching and learning of GCSE English as well as the formative assessment of progress and achievement in the subject. However, having made the observations discussed above, I want to explore and discuss the use of a wider range of multimodal formative assessment techniques which are more coherently and closely aligned with the pedagogic principles of active learning.

As the research has progressed the focus of the study has sharpened. What began as a study into oracy, dialogue and story as pedagogic approaches to the provision of formative assessment has now developed and deepened to include how good ideas from educational research can successfully find/make their way into good educational practice.

As my knowledge grows, I have developed a clearer understanding and deeper recognition that despite our early good intentions, myself and my colleagues, had unconsciously created a disconnect between the theory and practice of Assessment for Learning.

This importance of this new knowledge cannot be underestimated or easily over-looked. The recommendations contained within this thesis highlight the need for further exploration in this field of study. This includes extending our understanding not only of multimodal, dialogical and pedagogical approaches to formative assessment that might contribute to students' experiences of feedback becoming a more active learning experience, but also of how ideas and findings from educational research are implemented and supported in practice, through the creation of shared collaborative and cooperative CPD opportunities for teachers more generally. Teachers are expected to make ideas and theories from research good in practice. As Fielding *et al* (2005) remind us, teachers need time, space and support to develop their practice together.

We are not Alone

As a practitioner-researcher, I purposefully, tentatively and incrementally move from particular cases towards what may be plausibly inferred to be general. It is possible that what is reported in this thesis is not happening in isolation. It is possible that the challenges I have encountered in the implementation of the *techniques* of formative assessment in practice may resonate with

the experiences of other teachers who find themselves locked in the situations in similar FE contexts to my own.

Data from this study reveal that these preoccupations with written formative assessment coupled with continued imperatives for 'quick fixes' to complex and enduring educational issues in FAVE contexts today can serve to distort the implementation of seminal concepts and ideas from peer-reviewed, published and rigorous educational research in less than helpful ways. In this case in the assessment techniques currently employed to support learning and achievement in the GCSE English resit curriculum.

The strength and the lure of technique has now become a key part of this concluding chapter. The work of Dunne (1993) is particularly helpful in offering insights into inherent problems in the uncritical acceptance of technical-rational world views which currently populate and dominate the landscapes of educational improvement and educational practice in England.

As discussed in the introduction to the thesis, with reference to his own lived experiences of a teacher-educator in Dublin, Dunne chronicles the rise of the use of the Behaviour Objectives Model based upon educational outcomes in the form of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (1956). He notes that while intuitively appealing these proved to be deeply problematic in practice.

Dunne notes how the introduction of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives signalled a movement towards a 'scientific' technicisation of education – a blueprint in planning and conducting lessons….

> *'a royal road to efficiency in teaching, to provide a proper basis on which teachers could be made accountable for their performance, and more fundamentally, to open up the possibility of rescuing teachers from woolly-mindedness and muddle and of constituting it as a truly rational practice'*.
>
> (Dunne, 1993:1-2).

From here, it is not difficult to see how the 'lure of technique' (techné) as Dunne puts it, can be so intuitively appealing. Overly simplistic techniques (in this case, written formative assessment) in the teaching, learning. and assessment of any subject can present themselves as 'quick-fixes' in practice, which almost inevitably prove to be disappointing, deeply unbeguiling and in the long run profoundly unhelpful.

Dunne (1993) notes how preoccupations with the elevation of technique (*techné*) as evidenced in the introduction of Bloom's Taxonomy, have overtaken concerns with long-standing educational values and pedagogic approaches. He argues that the elevation of *techné* over phronesis in education is both misguided and short-lived in promoting and securing good education practice. To reiterate Dunne:

> *'… atomised approaches to objectives may seem worthwhile, however, only if they aggregate over time into qualities of mind, and character such as an ability for independent thought and reflection, a habit of truthfulness, a sense of justice, a care for clarity and expressiveness in writing and speech.'*
>
> (Dunne, 1993:6)

In view of the above, the work of Dearden (1972), lends support to the work of Dunne where he also points to the need for educational values to be balanced against other ends which are constitutive of the internal goods of education, linked to a concern and a care for the greater common good of mankind and the enhancement of the human condition, including the development of character and qualities of mind.

This brings us back to the work of Sennett (2008) where he compares and contrasts the rationality of the pursuit of perfection with the rationale of functionality. Here he is drawing our attention to the conflict between getting something perfect and getting something done in a good way. The findings and subsequent recommendations from this study support Sennett's (2008) view of the potential tensions that can arise and the difference between the pursuit of perfection, the pursuit of a job well done in context and the internal 'goods of education' (Dunne, 1993).

This thesis traces and critically discusses how the theory of formative assessment is inadvertently being distorted and disconnected from the realities of formative assessment practices in an FE college in England. Specifically, this study foregrounds the ways in which written formative assessment feedback, far from encouraging active learning, is leading to at best, passive approaches to learning, and at worst, no active learning at all.

The study set out to contribute to knowledge of research in the field of the theory and practice of formative assessment. Ultimately, however, it has also come to be about building the capacity for other GCSE English teachers in FE to conduct research into their own practice as they try to make ideas from good educational research good in educational practice. An intention of this thesis is that in turn, the findings of this study might enable and encourage other teachers to conduct research into and make improvements to their practice in research-

informed (in every sense of the phrase) ways, rather than unquestioningly accepting ideas from theory and published peer-review and published research conducted by others including how to avoid and/or implementing the findings from these studies in quick-fix, superficial, mechanical, unthinking, uncritical or educationally unsound ways.

It therefore seems fitting that in this closing chapter I offer insights into my own experiences as an educational practitioner and a beginning researcher. I hope that my work will be of interest and use to other teachers who like me, share responsibility for the realisation of research-informed formative assessment theory in practice in educationally sound ways in the contexts of their work. In addition, I also hope that the insights derived from my own work, may be shared with and of use to other educational professionals. This is particularly pertinent to how front-line teachers might use formative assessment and related pedagogic approaches to keep learners engaged and active in their learning in order to improve their further educational achievements.

In the course of conducting this study, I have developed a much deeper understanding of the role and potential of accounts of experiences of learning, teaching and assessment in education. Alongside this, my thesis stands for the recognition of the need to take lived experience (my own, as well as those of my colleagues and my students) seriously in improving the pedagogical processes underpinning the use of formative assessment and the impact this can have on students' and teachers' ways of thinking and the development of their qualities of mind and character.

In this final Chapter, it is also worth remembering and reflecting upon the stark realities of life for the vast majority of these post-16 learners. As discussed in the opening chapters of this thesis, having to retake a subject in which a person has already been labelled a 'failure' and in which they already been (often publicly and embarrassingly been) found wanting is a diminishing experience for any human being. It is in light of these insights that I continue to drive my research forward in tandem with my commitment to secure access to a good education and a sound command of the English Language for all of my student in ways which enhance and not diminish in a future in which every one of them can lead a fulfilled life,

A Moment of Clarity

As a practising teacher and education leader, experience has taught me that the pursuit of perfection, blueprints and recipes for ensuring good education can be dangerous and misleading. Instead as Sennett, (2008) and Dunne (1993) urge, as teachers, we must

recognise, respect, value and pursue our commitments to the protection of the 'internal goods of education'.

The recommendations made is this chapter are not intended or offered as 'recipes of success', nor in any pretence to suggest that this small-scale study can offer an ideal way to implement any pedagogic approach in the teaching, learning and assessment of GCSE English. Far from it. Education is too important and too complex for that. Good education always requires the exercise of good judgement, praxis and phronesis in context on the part of the teacher.

As a practitioner-researcher, I do not therefore claim that there is one perfect way to do anything in the world. There are however many ways to embody, defend and protect the internal values of good education. These recommendations are based upon observations and analysis of data drawn from my own experiences before and during the conduct of this research as well as those of other teachers and students with whom I work. It also hope that the recommendations offered in the closing chapter of this thesis may also prove to be helpful to other teachers working in similar settings to my own.

As discussed above, I have attempted to ensure that my report of the findings of this thesis is as trustworthy, authentic and credible as it can be. I also readily and openly acknowledge the limitations of this small-scale, practitioner- research study and the restricted extent to which its findings may be generalisable.

Good narratives offer us windows on the world. They extend an invitation to us to participate vicariously in an account of the lived experience of another. As discussed earlier, Peshkin (1985) puts this aptly where he says:

> *"When I disclose what I have seen, my results invite other researchers to look where I did and to see what I saw. My ideas are candidates for others to entertain not necessarily as truth, let alone Truth, but as positions about the nature and meaning of a phenomenon that may fit their own sensibility and shape their thinking about their own inquires".*
>
> Peshkin (1985), cited in Connelly and Clandinin (1990:8)

Key Findings

Data distilled from data in this thesis are presented and discussed as key themes in Chapter 5. In this concluding chapter, I focus on the key findings that have emerged from this study. I now connect them with several key recommendations and insights that may be drawn from data generated in this thesis.

The subsequent recommendations discussed in this final chapter, are derived and flow from the key themes in Chapter 5. They are presented and discussed in this final chapter in relation to ways in which they may be taken forward in the teaching, learning and assessment of GCSE English in FAVE contexts.

An important aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the importance of practitioner-research in the implementation of systematic, research-informed, evidence-based, robust and peer-reviewed pedagogic intervention involving the testing out ideas from theory and research in the arena of practice in the FAVE sector. A further aim is to offer a practical example of how systematic, research-informed, evidence-based, collaborative and cooperative practitioner-research can operate as a model of CPD in securing improvements in educational practice leading to increased levels of student engagement and higher levels of attainment in the future.

My aspiration in this closing Chapter is that the key findings and subsequent recommendations may be of interest, and perhaps as importantly, of use to, GCSE English teachers and other teachers. The recommendations discussed in here are offered with a care and concern and for transparency, honesty, authenticity and trustworthiness in conducting and presenting qualitative, practice-focused, practitioner-research of this nature.

It is prudent, therefore, at this point in the thesis, to discuss the key findings of the study before embarking upon the subsequent discussion of recommendations. Key findings of this study and the subsequent recommendations are as follows:

Key Finding 1: Technique. A Necessary but Insufficient Condition for the Effective Implementation of Educational Policy in Practice

A superficial awareness of *technique*, together with the narrow preoccupations with 'quick-fixes' to difficult, complex and enduring educational problems currently dominates the model of educational change and improvement in England and elsewhere. This model of educational change and improvement, is in turn, framing and diluting the quality and value of educational evaluation, improvement and CPD in the FAVE sector across England. However, this thesis argues that a tentative grasp of technique alone is not, and never can be, sufficient in ensuring that an idea from educational theory and research is implemented in an educationally sound way in practice.

Other forms of knowledge (first identified in the work of Aristotle) including *techné*, *poieisis, phronesis, theoria and praxis* contribute to a coherent, underpinning conceptual framework of different forms of knowledge and their importance to educational practice indeed practice in

any walk of life. An underpinning framework regarding what we mean when we talk and write about good education and good educational 'practice', including the processes through, and stages in which practice develops and improves, what makes a practice 'good' and what makes a practice educational, are of central importance here.

Recommendation 1: Beware the Lure of Technique (Techné)

This thesis reveals how the implementation of approaches to formative assessment as an approach to AfL are potentially becoming increasingly mechanical, instrumental, ritualistic and redundant technical processes. We find ourselves as teachers being drawn into a world which consists solely of preoccupations with technique (techné). Dunne (1993) cautions us to beware. Theories and ideas from research conducted by others need to be securely grasped by teachers (insider practitioner-researchers) in order to ensure that all of the above forms of knowledge are embraced in order to enable teachers in the sector to put ideas from research and theory into practice (implemented) in educationally sound ways in context.

Mindful of the strength of the grip of Behavioural Objectives Model which preceded this thesis and discussed in Chapter 2, I argue that current approaches to formative assessment practices, which overly rely on the techniques of written feedback, are inadvertently and unintentionally becoming instrumental, empty, labour-intensive, expensive and unhelpful empty rituals.

Looking back, it is difficult to imagine how myself and my colleagues neither felt or recognised our own 'flat-footedness' (Newman, 1985) as we mechanically and persistently tried to put technique (*techné)* of formative assessment and AfL into practice. Even though we could see that the consequences of putting written formative assessment into action in our practice in the way that we were doing was having little if any (let alone a positive) impact upon the learning and achievements of our students! As noted in the title of this thesis, it seems therefore the '*lure of techné*' is not only strong but also very difficult to shake off…. in the face of, or even despite our abundance of evidence to the contrary!

Put simply, the current model of change and improvement in FAVE which relies upon merely telling teachers about the 'good practice' of others and expecting them to simply do what they are told and make the ideas of others 'work' in different contexts is not fit for purpose. This is largely due, as Carr (2005:352) argues that '*our contemporary concept of educational practice is the end product of a historical process through which an older, more comprehensive and more coherent concept has been gradually transformed and changed in ways which are ill-conceived and deeply flawed and only serve to obscure its inherent weaknesses'*.

Carr (1995) locates difficulties in our repeatedly failed efforts in 'making education theory practically relevant in our modern but misguided concepts of practice, where the 'gap' between theory and practice stubbornly remains. He goes on to point out that a philosophy of education committed to our ahistorical modern concept of practice offers us, '*nothing but an empty silence towards the numerous philosophical puzzles to which our ambiguous and incoherent understanding gave rise*' (ibid,:61). It is for this reason, among others, that Stenhouse (1975:143) reminds us that, *'it is not enough that teachers' work should be studied, they need to study it for themselves'*. The first recommendation of this thesis therefore is that teachers need more support during the implementation stages of a policy or a theory from educational research. This is necessary if we are to ensure that good ideas from educational research or policy make it into and become good in practice.

Technique (*techné*) exists for a purpose, and it does, of course, play an important part in the development of practice, not only in curriculum design but also in relation to the development and advancement of teaching, learning and assessment. However, as Dunne (1993) points out, technical reason (*techné*) is not the only form of knowledge that guides human activity and as such cannot and should not be allowed to reign supreme to the detriment of the exercise by the teacher of other forms of knowledge including practical reasoning and the exercise of practical wisdom in context (*phronesis*) and *praxis* doing the right thing, at the right time for the right reasons and in the interests of the wider, common good.

It is possible that the lure of technique (*techné*) as discussed in Recommendation 1 has reduced educational teaching practice into a strategic game of chess, where technique, gaming strategies and top-down policy are valued above good judgement involving local knowledge and human experience in context. We appear to have inadvertently forgotten about the living breathing sentient human beings who populate the landscape in which arbitrary separations and putative dichotomies have been falsely erected between educational practice, theory and research.

To sum up, a superficial awareness of *technique* is not and never can be enough to ensure that these arbitrary separations and falsely erected dichotomies are dismantled. A key recommendation from this thesis is that teachers need to have a sound and secure grasp and practical understanding of educational research and of how and why the pedagogic principles underpinning a technique emerging from educational theory or research can be realised in context in order to help them to translate, challenge or adapt that theory or idea into practice in educationally sound ways.

In short, educational practice, which inevitably has a much bigger and broader purpose than an approach to teaching which involves the simple application of technique. Good educational practice always involves the exercise of wise judgement in context. Judgements by the teacher in often difficult, complex and unfolding educational contexts - are not made for instrumental purposes by mechanical robots or human 'machines'. To reiterate, teachers are not the mindless foot soldiers of educational theory and research, simply following the orders of others. Nor are teachers, mere technicians operating in the service of theory. Teachers can and do make wise educational judgements in practice and are capable of contributing to theory (Kemmis in Carr, 1995).

In the interests of the development of a pedagogy which is both educational and in the interests of the pursuit of the wider common good, this thesis foregrounds the right of all human beings to have an education worthy of the name. It argues that a push towards the reduction of knowledge simply to technique must be challenged and resisted. Forms of knowledge which recognise and include the right of all human beings to have a good education which enhances, encourages and enables them to lead fulfilled lives are not compatible with a clockwork mechanical universe in which all forms of knowledge are simply reduced to technique. This study highlights how a recognition of these limitations is largely absent from the discourse. It offers some potential reasons why the current situation might be so, as well as the consequences of the uncritical acceptance of a technical-rational world view in educational practice and in models of change and improvement.

Teachers in the FAVE sector (me included), are currently inadvertently placing technique at the forefront of our minds and at the forefront of our practice. As a result, technique has become the central function of how we embody and enact Assessment for Learning and formative assessment through the medium of written formative assessment in our classrooms. It is therefore possible that as teachers, we have unconsciously neglected the importance of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) in the development of pedagogy and are thereby overlooking the first principle of AfL, active learning, which is becoming diluted and diminished, or worse still, non-existent in our practice.

Key Finding 2: Not Supernatural Bits of Lego but Sentient Human Beings

Data from this study also bring to light a preoccupation with learning in the cognitive domain in assessment theory and practice in vocational education together with a long-standing and deep neglect of affective and psychomotor aspects of human learning. The work of Midgley (1996) as discussed in Chapter 2 clearly resonates with this recommendation. We are

reminded that we must take into account and consider ourselves and our learners as *whole* people not disembodied minds and not as computers:

The second key finding of this thesis, underscores the importance of ensuring that all 3 domains (cognitive, affective and psychomotor) of human learning are attended to and engaged in assessment theory, practice and pedagogy in FAVE contexts in order to contribute to a deepening understanding to ensure a more holistic learning experience for students. As Hyland (2018) notes, the affective and psychomotor domains are currently being seriously neglected and underdeveloped during the assessment process to the detriment of good educational practice and optimal achievement in vocational education.

Recommendation 2: A Call for the Return of Multimodal Assessment in FAVE Contexts

If practice requires different forms of knowledge, then so must its assessment. Assessment, theory and practice in FAVE contexts urgently need to be diversified and extended to include more multimodal methods of assessment and approaches to pedagogy which go beyond current preoccupations with pen and paper examinations as the measurement of cognition.

Data from this study raise the possibility that teachers in the FAVE sector may have become entrenched or even brainwashed with technical-rational instrumentalist logic in curriculum design and pedagogical development including approaches to assessment and pedagogy which focus purely on 'teaching to the test' and recording progress against objectives – driven, target grade and qualification outcomes.

Interpretation of data generated in this study suggests that while exam outputs and accountability for examination results cannot, and should not be ignored, there are points for reflection and possibilities for change in the current teaching assessment practices surrounding the teaching, leaning and assessment of GCSE English. In FE colleges in England.

A sole focus upon approaches to assessment which only measure progress against target grade, (something which the students alluded to in their comments regarding teachers always having a checklist), can pressurise teachers into becoming '*imprisoned in routine*' (Dewey, 1938:112). This in turn, runs the risk of passing this rigid and regimented focus on outcomes onto the students and their approaches to learning, reducing students to a constant state of anxiety and this can unintentionally promote and support a culture of performativity and the subsequent terrors of performativity that Ball (2010) alerts us to and discusses in some detail.

An assessment process which is only focused on the assessment of examination outcomes maybe narrowing the learning experience for learners. As a result, this may also be narrowing the pedagogic approaches that teachers are using. Similarly, there is the danger of becoming dogmatic, '*lacking critical examination of the underlying principles*' (Dewey 1938:22). Crooks (1988) comes to the conclusion that there is too much emphasis placed on the grading function and too little attention placed on the role of assisting students to learn.

With this in mind, this recommendation also relates to the use of formative assessment which involves the use of oracy and dialogue, together with multimodal supported discussions surrounding the 3 domains of learning and their relevance to teachers and students.
I do understand that is it is important, however, to balance this recommendation with the understanding that as educators in a state funded system of vocational education we are professionally bound by public accountability and responsibility. This level of professional accountability is inextricably linked to student performance and issues of teacher efficacy (Cochran-Smith et al., 2021).

On a personal, note, I am committed to enabling my students to achieve their GCSE English qualifications. I know from experience that this qualification is often the gateway to progression in their vocational subjects and into future employment opportunities and higher education. What I see in the findings and recommendations of this thesis are opportunities for us to begin to do things differently.

Data from this study point to the recommendation that as teachers there is a need to navigate a delicate balance between measurable quantifiable outcomes, and also, the professional responsibility of educators to nourish the underlying educational and pedagogic principles of active learning through formative assessment.

Based on this key finding from the study, it is recommended that there is a need to recognise the importance of viewing the holistic performance of students in the assessment process through multimodal approaches to assessment beyond the marking of written scripts from students**.** An assessment schedule which takes into consideration all three of the domains of learning, i.e., cognitive, affective and psychomotor, may prove helpful here.

The recommendation invites us to reimagine assessment. Student progress in GSCE English Language need to be balanced through a number of media and a variety of sources of evidence. In other words, measures of student progress in English Language need to be

weighed against the need to measure the acquisition of different forms of knowledge, not only the cognitive but also the affective and the psychomotor (including the dexterity and muscle memory involved in writing), together with the tracking of progress of behaviours, attitudes and feelings.

When giving consideration to the development of the psychomotor domain of formative assessment for GCSE English resit students, attention need to be given to the development of the dexterity involved in literacy development, particularly the physicality of writing.

Re-uniting the 3 domains (Hyland, 2010), in relation to formative assessment gives students and teachers a more balanced account of personal development goals, knowledge and skill transfer as well as a more coherent and authentic summative assessment of student outcomes. This more balanced approach appears to be even more pressing when considering the needs of students who have already very publicly failed a subject, often more than once and are faced with the prospect of having to retake this in yet another demeaning experience in a written examination.

As already discussed, as professional teachers we accept that the overarching aim of education is to support achievement and to certify that qualifications are at an appropriate level, measurable success criteria. As discussed above, I am reminded however, through the work of Hyland (2010), that it could also be considered remiss of teachers not to include the affective and psychomotor domains within the assessment and feedback cycle. The recommendation for a more balanced and holistic pedagogic approach to formative assessment which attempts to coalesce all 3 (or 4) domains of learning, offers some echoes and strong parallels in relation to the work of Biesta (2017) where he discusses the potential of the arts curriculum (indeed, any arts-informed curriculum) to steer students through the complex realities of becoming and being a fulfilled human being through contemporary education in a way which encourages them to develop their own ability to have a 'grown up' responsible relationship with the world, themselves, others and the planet.

Key Finding 3: Feedback. The Active Consequences of Passive Learning

Data from this study bring to light an over-reliance on written formative feedback in vocational education today in which learners seldom read, let alone act upon the feedback offered to them by their teachers. Far from encouraging active learning, this appears to do the opposite. Current approaches to written formative assessment appear to not only encourage learners to remain passive in their learning but also allow learners to avoid acceptance of their own responsibility or the development of their autonomy in relation to their own learning and

improvement. This contradicts the first and most important principle of formative assessment which is to encourage and ensure that the learner remains active.

Recommendation 3: Active Learning

Approaches to written formative assessment need to be developed which ensure that learners are encouraged/obliged to accept responsibility for improvements in their learning and that they understand the consequences of the acceptance/rejection of this responsibility to their learning in relation to assessment outcomes/examination achievements in the future if they do not.

We can also see, from the students' experiences of feedback and the observations from myself and other FE teachers, that current approaches to the formative assessment process are lacking in their encouragement of and in their capacity to open up times and spaces which allow and encourage active learning to take place.

What this thesis also reveals however, is that there are new opportunities to do things (assessment) differently.

There is therefore a need to explore pedagogic approaches which build 'time and space' into the formative feedback process - in their classrooms with their peers and their tutor (Clarke 2001), in order for students to be able to make immediate improvements based on the feedback that they receive from their GCSE English teachers.

By allowing this time and space in class and by giving priority time for students to make 'immediate' improvements to feedback, they cannot dodge the active learning bullet, nor can they side-step the issue and potential consequences of having a passive relationship with assessment and the feedback they receive. The concept of 'time' in class as active learning approach is widely discussed and acknowledged in Black and Wiliam (1998, 2001, 2009) who argue that students' engagement in active learning should be considered non-negotiable and that clear expectations of this approach need to be shared with the learners. Black and Wiliam make no apologies when they share that active learning is neither a soft nor an easy option.

Moving this discussion forward, it is also recommended that some key adjustments be made to the current GCSE English assessment and feedback schedule. One practical strategy that appears to continually over-looked is the employment of a range of approaches adapted in context in relation to 'closing the gap' – once again, opening up space and time for students

to make improvements to their work based on feedback from their teacher. Closing the gap between current performance and desired attainment is well documented throughout the work of Clarke (2005, 2003, 2001, 1998) who unpicks and explores how the elements of assessment in action can be weaved together to support active learning.

The works of Clarke (2001, 2003, 2005) have been extremely informative surrounding this approach in *Assessment for Learning* which attempts to narrow the distance between current performance and potential progress and achievement. As discussed above, data from this thesis point to the current passive nature of the provision of very time-consuming written feedback processes which have little impact on student progress.

Using the core principles of Clarke's (1998) work, 'Targeting Assessment in Primary Classrooms' formative assessment could introduce codes (coloured highlighters) to indicate success and improvement needs. Further exploration of the work of Clarke (2005, 2003, 2001, 1998), recommends that a piece of marked worked will show distinctly 3 places within the written text where the best aspects of the students' work meet the learning intentions. These 3 successes should be clearly highlighted and identifiable on the students' written piece of work.

Areas for immediate improvement are indicated with an arrow which points to the nearest white space on the paper where the teacher offers a prompt to help the student close the gap and make a small improvement to the written piece in real time is of central importance here.

Although I recognise that this is in essence a technique, I am not arguing that technique is in itself a bad thing. I am simply arguing that technique on its own is not enough. Technique is also a starting point for but not the only form of knowledge we need in order to be able to do something well in the world. I now also understand that different forms of knowledge can be in operation together and at more than one time. Data from this study suggest that the approaches advocated in this thesis might help us to ensure that the students are active participants in the feedback process and this technique opens up time and space for improvements to be made, thus supporting active learning.

Once again, this recommendation openly acknowledges that it is in limiting discussion to considerations of technique (in this case the techniques of formative assessment) is likely to continue and perpetuate preoccupations with instrumental learning outcomes, based approaches to assessment and strategies which focus solely on topics that are included only in the summative examination of learning.

I do understand when making this recommendation and it is also vitally important that when introducing this holistic, active and multisensory and multimodal way of assessment it is important to ensure that these are planned into classroom delivery, with sufficient clarity and care, collaboratively involving tutors who will be expected to use these pedagogic principles and techniques in practice and their learners to work together to continually develop and improve their practice. .

It is also recommended that CPD time and support needs to be given to explain the changes being made to the marking and feedback process and more importantly, how this new way of understanding active learning and formative assessment is implemented in a manner which helps students to make progress. As this approach develops and becomes more established as part of the students' learning routine opportunities it may open up spaces and possibilities in which to explore more dialogical and multimodal approaches to literacy development. In effect, a spin-off of this approach might emerge which explores the merits of oracy and dialogue as a multimodal medium for formative assessment feedback.

Key Finding 4: The Detached Learner

Students who have failed GCSE English in the past tend to increasingly detach themselves from how relevant and important literacy is in everyday life. It is also possible that students only perceive their development of these skills, in terms of their experiences and language learning during their designated GCSE English classes.

Recommendation 4: Creative, Multimodal Pedagogy

Data from this study suggest that there appears to be an opportunity to bring Literacy to Life in the teaching, learning and assessment of GCSE English in more creative and multimodal ways and this needs to be developed in much more systematic approaches which heighten the vitality of students' by developing pedagogies which encourage learning through the arts rather than pedagogies diminish that students' vitality through irrelevant or meaningless activities. Teachers therefore need to be supported in developing and using more creative multimodal pedagogies in their teaching, learning and assessment of GCSE English. For example, students should be encouraged to share their storied experiences of learning English with their teacher and with each other. Teachers' CPD presents opportunities to develop more creative multimodal ways to encourage students to think, talk, read and write out-loud and together, in private dialogue with their tutor as well as when they are with their friends or on their own.

It is now clearer to me that past learning experiences do impact on learners' feelings towards GCSE English and how their levels of subsequent disappointment and despondency can lead to students questioning how relevant the study of English Language is to them. This recommendation foregrounds the importance of experience and of taking experience as a starting point in education.

Throughout this thesis the view has been shared between the inter-relationship between experience and education and yet, this draws us to question whether there are enough multimodal pedagogic approaches in the acquisition and development of English language which both recognise and celebrate this. Data in this study demonstrate that students have become slightly detached in their understanding of Literacy as a holistic, meaningful and useful way of thinking and communication. The data point to students' acknowledgement that they currently see Literacy development more within the parameters of their GCSE English classes and not within the wider curriculum.

Staying with the discussion surrounding relevance, data from this study show that students currently do not see GCSE English literacy as relevant to real life. Furthermore, the same data also suggest that the development of students' English skills should not be isolated to the GCSE English curriculum but also connected to other vocational curricula. This study has uncovered that students currently see English development purely as an instrumental or mechanical skill developed within (but not beyond) their GCSE English classes.

To counteract these assumptions, we are drawn back to the work of Gregory (2009) from Chapter 2, who reminds us that as human beings we are shaped by stories and that we are indeed the subject of our story. It is recommended that in order to make a subject meaningful and relevant to students then we should start with the student. Marshall Gregory's (2009) work also reminds us that stories are a vitally important component of the ethical development, qualities of mind and character of all human beings. All human beings encounter and engage in stories as they are an important component of every human being's education about the world.

Brining Literacy to life must therefore start with experience. The students' experiences of Literacy and the impact that this had upon them to date is now calling them to question the relevance of Literacy to their lives. This should of course be the starting point. Negative experiences of learning English pepper the landscape of the lives of many of my students and diminished them as human beings in the process. We know, through the work of (Dewey,

1934) that when you talk or share your own lived experience to the degree in which the experience reaches a state of heightened vitality, in which you are, as a human being, fully and authentically present in the moment. Dewey's work in this respect may be helpful to teachers in reimagining new, multimodal approaches to Literacy development for students.

Furthermore, students in this study were critical of teachers' 'checklists' of topics as opposed being given reasons as to why learning particular forms of knowledge and skills and how these will benefit them in the future. It would not be unreasonable therefore to infer that students see these checklists as being more about what the teacher/audit trail values and believes that the student needs, thus further separating the student from an authentic learning experience.

Again, there appears to be an opportunity here to begin do things differently and to be more creative in their pedagogic approaches to Literacy development. A more multimodal and creative approach to literacy development might reside in the implementation of more problem project-based learning in vocational education. This pedagogic approach is set around challenges that students may face in the real world and focuses on the purposes and processes rather than the content of a curriculum. This approach could be helpful in counteracting the students' beliefs that teachers are merely focused on 'ticking off topics' from their audit trail list of things students are expected to do.

By exploring the possibilities of more integrated and multimodal curriculum design and the potential of employing more Problem and Project Based Learning and multi modal assessment teachers in FE might be able to open up opportunities for students to engage in more student-centred, active learning pedagogic experiences.

Problem and Project Based Learning and multimodal assessment could actively encourage cross curriculum planning and increased collaboration (Wurdinger, 2016), potentially bringing English specialist staff and technical curriculum staff together to develop a relevant and literacy rich and engaging English GCSE curriculum project for students. By bringing curriculum staff from different subjects and disciplines together we may also be able to support student learning and student life more productively in its fullest educational sense.

Problem and Project Based Learning (PBL) and multimodal assessment give students an opportunity to acquire deeper knowledge and skills through active exploration of real-world challenges based upon problem-finding, problem-solving and critique (Stenhouse 1975, Sennett 2008). As a pedagogic approach PBL has the potential to explore the relationship

between talking, thinking, reading and writing. Data from this study suggest that this is an area which is ripe for future development.

The view that literacy Is not a skill but as a social practice needs to be further developed in the context of an individual's everyday life, appears to resonate with the embodiment of the educational values of teaching Literacy as a social practice (Barton 1996, Smith and Mannion, 2006).

Research from the field of Problem and Project Based Learning suggests that this approach to the teaching and learning of GCSE English may offer a way of moving beyond the notion of literacy as an atomised and instrumental acquisition of skills, to meet the pre-requisite and predetermined assessment outcomes and examination requirements. A focus on the broader social goals of literacy development as opposed to a sole focus on the quantifiable assessment outcomes of the GCSE curriculum is also worthy of further exploration.

Most importantly, the study of formative and summative assessment stages of Problem and Project Based Learning also present opportunities for the inclusion of the wider teaching community and support a professional community of literacy development including vocational tutors. This could mitigate the students' view that literacy is not relevant to vocational education and the students' silo belief that English development is purely for their timetabled GCSE English classes.

Problem and Project Based Learning offer a more educationally sound and holistic pedagogic approach to develop knowledge and skills through an engaging and more immersive learning experience. Data from this study suggest that this could help to build bridges between phenomena in the classroom and real-life experiences, thus adding the much- needed sense of English being relevant and keeping active learning at its heart. Problem and Project Based Learning can help students learn how to learn and this may be a more active pedagogic approach which is not merely about the teacher imparting knowledge, but one which acknowledges and accepts that the centrality of the teacher's role is to guide a spirit of inquiry and learning forward.

We know from the findings of this thesis and other AfL research studies that active learning is something that appears to be lacking from the current formative assessment practice.

The content of the Problem and Project Based Learning and multimodal assessment approaches could potentially develop reading, writing and spoken language skills of students,

coherently ensuring that the curriculum content is relevant to both life, progression and employability. It may also give students the opportunity to investigate and respond to questions, challenges and problems in real life and real-world contexts.

From this standpoint, literacy development through Problem and Project Based Learning and multimodal assessment are seen not as the acquisition and development of a set of disembodied skills which can be learnt in isolation, but socially practised literacy skills which are being developed as part of a meaningful and purposeful activities.

This recommendation is not a naïve one. It does not presume to discount or remove quantifiable measures of achievement for Literacy development. The importance of recognised qualifications in English cannot be, or indeed, should not be ignored. It has been acknowledged throughout this thesis that this is important, and students should be able to obtain nationally recognised qualifications, particularly in generic core subjects such as English and Maths.

Key Finding 5: Oracy and Dialogue

Data from the study also reveal the necessity to carefully plan and develop oracy as a precursory pedagogic device in the formative assessment of GCSE English in FE contexts. It is clear from the data that the use of oracy cannot simply be 'dropped' or mechanically inserted into a curriculum. We cannot, as practitioner-researchers, make the naïve assumption that learners (or teachers) will automatically welcome and engage with spoken language as either an instrument of assessment tool or as a pedagogic device.

Recommendation 5: Oracy, Dialogue, Pedagogy and Curriculum Design

There is a need to ensure that the use of oracy and dialogic pedagogic approaches to the development and use of formative assessment are carefully and (where possible, co-operatively) planned. These need to be introduced through purposeful, research-informed and collaborative approaches to the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers.

We can also see from the data in this study that there is a need to distinguish between, and nurture the skills and confidence needed for students to '*talk to learn'* and '*learn to talk'*. The potential of pedagogic approaches to formative assessment based upon oracy, story and accounts of lived experience and dialogue in improving the teaching and learning of GCSE English in FAVE contexts appear to have considerable potential and may therefore be worthy of wider pursuit on a larger scale. Pedagogic approaches which position oracy at the heart of

curriculum design could potentially be a ‘golden thread’ that brings greater coherence, energy, relevance and meaning to the curriculum.

What my colleagues and I have found, however is that it is possible that there is an imbalance in our current formative assessment strategies which overly rely upon written feedback. The study shows that this well-intended approach is doing little, if anything to positively impact on students closing the gap between their current levels of performance and their potential achievements in the future.

It is therefore recommended that utilising dialogic approaches to formative assessment supporting all 3 domains of learning, could redress the over-reliance of written formative assessment and strike a balance between reviewing exam performance and the wider skills development.

The seminal work of Vygotsky cited in this thesis and his insights into links between oracy, dialogue and thinking, reveal that talking out loud and together and sharing our stories, experiences and feelings, help us, as human beings think better and live more cooperatively together.

When we think better, we in turn, write better.

As we develop from young children to adults, we learn to talk and develop our oracy and dialogical skills before we can read and write. It is this fundamental human development advancement that could be nurtured more as a pedagogic approach. Stories are aesthetic experiences, and as human beings we are ‘moved’ by stories. They place us, as human beings, in a state of heightened vitality (Dewey 1938, Uhrmacher and Moroye 2013), stories are evocative and moving and could be the catalyst to a more creative pedagogic approaches to the teaching of literacy.

Students themselves, also recognise the benefits of oracy. During their feedback regarding the podcasts used in GCSE English lessons, the students comment on the benefits on having access to a recording of the session. The students repeatedly make reference to how the recording of the lesson made it possible to reflect upon the session frequently at a later date. They can playback aspects of the lesson for clarification and reinforcement, thus keeping them active in their reflection of learning.

What has become very evident though, through my own experiences of this study, is the distinct difference between **'***learn to talk*' and '*talk to learn'*. These two paths have become clearer and more evident by my own experience of this study. As a researcher I made an innocent, inadvertent mistake, and assumed, when introducing the Narrative Inquiry, the students would be comfortable sharing and expressing their views using spoken language. I quickly discovered this was not the case.

This recommendation demonstrates the interplay between technique and pedagogy. We can see here how the technique of *'learn to talk'* has emerged and how pedagogic approaches to '*talk to learn'* underpin this recommendation. The '*learn to talk'* and '*talk to learn'* approaches are discussed below as part of this recommendation.

Learn to Talk - Students did not have the confidence to articulate or share their views using spoken language. It was quickly, and clearly evident, that students were not equipped with the skills-set to use spoken dialogue to effectively communicate. They had an important message and valued experiences to share but felt ill-equipped to do this through the medium of spoken language.

The ability to formulate an opinion and be able to confidently articulate and express an individual view through spoken language is a fundamental and key transferrable skill in language development and communication. The ability to use oracy to question, to be curious, to reflect, to self-assess, to challenge, to defend and critique are all key skills for any human being.

It was not until a focusing device was introduced as a technique in the form of the Literacy Storyboard that the students were able to collate and formulate written responses with prompts. These prompts helped them share their views and express their opinions through spoken language. Students needed the stimulus of the Literacy Storyboard as a catalyst to drive forward meaningful discussions as without it, students felt unable to articulate their views.

The introduction of a focusing device as a recognised technique of teaching and using this from the beginning of the learners' journey offers teachers and students an opportunity to discuss past experiences and to make meaning from them together. This invaluable insight can be used to support lesson planning and help students to share experiences through talking.

Furthermore, the use of techniques such as the Literacy Storyboard can to help students frame their ideas and express their views and opinions more confidently.

This unintended finding clearly highlights that as teachers we cannot simply 'drop' oracy into a curriculum as a pedagogic approach if we haven't first of all addressed and supported students' confidence and ability to, actually talk. Based on this understanding and new awareness, incorporating oracy as a pedagogic approach from the beginning of the students' learning journey is worthy of further exploration.

Talk to Learn - Findings from this study suggests that there appears to be a lack of focus on oracy in teacher development across curriculum. It is the responsibility of all teachers to seek to understand how we can best enable every student to benefit from an education which values and employs oracy and offers forms of language in the development of literacy.

Adopting the use of oracy as a means of capturing, tracking and mitigating behaviours and negative attitudes towards the learning of English can be explored and this forms part of this recommendation. A focusing device, similar to the Outcome Star (although moving forward, this would benefit from some refinement) can support learning conversations between teacher and student.

A focus device surrounding oracy as a pedagogic approach can open up spaces for self-assessment, student/teacher collaboration and reflection through dialogue in key points in the students' learning journey.

The current assessment schedule for GCSE English could be re-visited and opportunities to explore how dialogic feedback could be included.

Currently all feedback on key formative assessments is written and as already discussed, this over dependence of written feedback is not having the desired impact on closing the gap between the students current and future progress or in improving their achievement. What is more important is the opportunity for students to reflect on the verbal and dialogical feedback and use oracy as a pedagogic approach to support and promote active learning.

I do not assume, nor do I recommend that formative assessment and written feedback should be abandoned immediately. I am, however, suggesting that pedagogic approaches need to be carefully planned to ensure that when feedback is used, either written, verbal, dialogic, visual or aural, it is done so alongside other active pedagogic approaches.

Continuing with the discussion surrounding the deployment of oracy as an active pedagogic device, it is also recommendation of this thesis that dialogical approaches could be adopted within classroom delivery. It is also recommendation of this thesis that planned 'no pen' sessions are included with the existing Scheme of Learning for GCSE English. The concept of 'no pen' lessons is not a new approach, indeed 'no pen Wednesday' is derived from an idea shared by the charity, The Communication Trust. The Communication Trust is a non-profit coalition of around 50 organisations.

These organisations all work together to raise awareness and they all share a common interest and passion to support speech, dialogue, language and communication needs. This talk to learn approach is however found more predominately active in primary schools.

Taking this concept into a FE setting, this recommendation is highlighting that a no pen sessions could benefit GCSE resit English students. Scheduled 'no pen' sessions could be identified within the current Scheme of Learning to encourage talking as an active pedagogic learning approach with a focus on questioning and measuring the impact of learning and progress through a medium of talk.

Talk to learn is very much an established pedagogic approach in teaching English as a second language. Talk to learn is a fundamental active learning pedagogy used by second language teachers as a way of demonstrating student progress in real time.

Strong oracy skills and the art of speaking can have a profound and potentially positive impact on all our thinking and our lives and strong and effective communication skills can not only support cognitive development but also help develop self-confidence, self-esteem and other virtuous qualities of mind.

The importance of having the ability to communicate and articulate viewpoints confidently should not be underestimated. As discussed earlier in this thesis, Wittengstein (1921), upholds such concerns when he makes the influential observation that the limits of our language are the limits of our world.

Key Finding 6: Sharing Stories of Lived Experiences of Learning GCSE English

Recalling and sharing stories of lived experience of learning GCSE English and the impact this has on students future learning and levels of engagement cannot and should not be undervalued. There is a growing realisation of the differential impact of the virtues and vices

of various ways of thinking or qualities of mind and character which students experience and take forward into the lives they lead. Recognised in the data reported in this thesis is the potential and benefit of nurturing helpful ways of thinking or developing qualities of mind and character to enhance the learning experiences and achievements of students.

Recommendation 6: Experiential Learning in the Teaching, Learning and Assessment of GCSE English to Nurture Helpful Ways of Thinking

This recommendation brings us back to importance of the interplay, noted by Dewey (1938), between learning and experience and how the two cannot and should not be separated. Indeed, as argued above and as Dewey reminds us, experience should be the starting point for all educational endeavours. The potential of the research methods which include accounts of lived experience and story in supporting the conduct of systematic, research-informed, evidenced-based educational practitioner-research in the FAVE sector also appear to be worthy of wider pursuit on a larger scale.

Here we can see that GCSE English and its current formative assessment processes are not meeting the needs of the students and there are missed opportunities to enhance learners' experiences of education through assessment in practice to nurture helpful ways of thinking.

This recommendation of the thesis is derived from an imbalance in the current assessment practices of GCSE English to nurture more helpful ways of thinking. Helpful ways of thinking that foster virtuous qualities of mind and character and by the same token, approaches, which attempt to mitigate or halt the demeaning vices that also exist within qualities of mind and character. We have seen an assessment schedule which solely focuses on progress against target grade also points to the adverse influences of this imbalance.

An imbalance which is becoming counter-productive, this study finds unintentionally reduces motivation, heightens anxiety and reduces social relationships amongst students.

We have seen, through the analysis of the data, the impact and the vices of qualities of mind and character which come to the fore when teaching post-16 GCSE English resit students. Many students shared their negative experiences, experiences which have led to considerable anxiety, loss of confidence and self-doubt. This study finds that these negative beliefs are potentially locking students into continuous downward cycles of negative and dysfunctional student behaviour.

This recommendation focuses on raising the profile and importance of sharing lived experience and using this as a starting point for a pedagogic approach to support of tracking and mitigating the vices of negative mindsets and qualities of mind in an attempt to unlock the more virtuous characteristics.

It is recommended that the deployment of formative assessment focusing devices and instruments similar to those used in this study (Outcome Start and Literacy Storyboard) be deployed and developed in the future. These offer opportunities to explore and create educational encounters as they primarily concern themselves with the consciousness of a person and how their experience of learning enhances or inhibits the development of the human condition.

We talk about external researchers not seeing education from the inside, as Carr (1998:2) states *'many researchers still proceed to study practice from the outside'*. With this in mind, it is apparent that as teachers in this study we have unconsciously studied students from the outside, with an over reliance on measures academic, cognitive progress. Consequently, we have devoted less time seeing their experiences of education from the inside.

As teachers we appear to have become preoccupied with assessment in the cognitive domain, and it is recommended that we could add further nourishment to our current assessment practices which take seriously the multimodal lived experiences of students and give a more balanced and holistic approach to measures of student progress.

Recognising the challenge faced by education providers who are measured by quantifiable outcomes, we refer back to the work of Baldacchino (2012) discussed in Chapter 2 who identifies the need for a need for an exit pedagogy. An exit pedagogy which offers an opportunity to be freed from the capitalisation of education, or to refer back to Biesta (2017:12) '*exam factories'*. An exit pedagogy which supports an holistic approach to formative assessment is therefore overdue. It is argued that a formative assessment schedule which concerns itself with all 3 domains of learning may be capable of adding variety, depth and authenticity to current assessment practices.

Formative assessment surrounding the affective domain has already been attempted in the site of this research, with the deployment of the Outcome Star. The use of the Outcome Star is an attempt to begin to acknowledge the existence of the importance of multimodal assessment in order to track, monitor and harness the affective domain of learning. The affective domain pertains to the students' attitudes and behaviours towards learning GCSE

English through dialogical approaches between teacher and student. The use and development of the Outcome Star is now intended to be part of the GCSE English's assessment schedule at my college.

It is a recommendation of this thesis that measures of assessment in GSCE English should include measures in the psychomotor domain involving the development of dexterity of writing. We already know from the data analysis conducted in Chapter 4 that students struggle to engage with writing activities. This has been further compounded with Lockdown restrictions and remote delivery, whereby we have seen the majority of students' work to be submitted to teachers in electronic form using a keyboard.

We have recently seen since the Government's 'roadmap' out of lockdown, students starting to return to face-to-face delivery. As a front-line teacher, I find myself faced with the real challenge engaging students all over again with the skill of writing. From these observations, I believe that maintaining students' stamina for writing, concentration and the art of penmanship have all diminished during the lockdown period. Students are struggling to write for long periods of time, and this has potentially become a neglected skill during remote classroom delivery over the last 18 months. The dexterity of writing is ever more pressing when you consider that the two GCSE English examination papers require students to write intensively for over an hour, per examination paper.

It does seem fitting therefore that formative assessment should be centred in human form and by exploring assessment which underpins all 3 domains of learning I am attempting to do just that in collaboration with my colleagues. I am reminded of this important factor through the work of Clarke (2005) discussed in Chapter 2, where she advises us not to forget that at the centre of the assessment process is the learner.

Data from this study suggest that current formative assessment practices which solely focus on progress against target grade, framed by a technical-rational world view have unintentionally omitted the importance and unquestionable value of education and experience, which, through the work of Dewey (1938), we know cannot, and should not be separated from the practice of education. Essentially, my argument here is that experience is fundamentally woven into the narrative of education and should not be isolated nor neglected in pedagogic approaches to assessment.

Following students' past experiences, many in this study have developed negative mindsets or negative qualities of mind regarding the study of GCE English from their previous lived

experiences of education. The damaging effects of these past learning experiences of students are, in turn, increasing students' expectations of future failure, thus locking students into a continuous cycle of predictable failure.

It is recommended therefore, that more time is devoted to the development of pedagogic approaches which draw upon the lived experiences of students. This could give teachers a better understanding of the students' lived experience of assessment in education. It would also give teachers a better insight into the impact these experiences have upon the students' capacities to learn and develop in a subject in the future. More importantly, it would provide opportunities to mitigate negative vices or qualities of mind and character which support the promotion and development of the more virtuous mind sets and characteristics pertaining to more positive qualities of mind and character.

Clarke (2008) encourages us to remember that assessment techniques should not just focus on performance culture but effective assessment for learning techniques need to be punctuated with 'performance orientation'. She encourages teachers to explore more subtle comparative devices, such as positive body language, tone of voice and work ethic.

By adopting pedagogic approaches foregrounded in principles of active learning which can support and encourage the growth of human virtues with regard to the students' qualities of mind and character, teachers might contribute to helping students break free from cycles of failure. The deployment of the formative assessment tools which promote active learning, including the Outcome Star and Literacy Storyboard in this study represent an attempt to do just that.

Remaining with the concept of Assessment for Learning and the imperative to bring active learning back into the formative assessment process there appears to be a link between this and the lived experiences of students. Ultimately, formative assessment should concern itself with human experience and to ultimately help students make sense of the world through the integrative act of sharing their stories and experiences.

Active learning and assessment should do just that. Clandinin and Connelly remind us that:

> *'Humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives'.*
> (Clandinin and Connelly 2002:2)

Personal Reflections

Earlier in this thesis and in this final chapter I argue that as teachers in the FAVE sector we can find ourselves being pulled between two 'educational worlds.' The world of educational values and its associated practices and the world of quality assurance systems and the performative imperatives of both internal and external inspections.

In the context of this thesis, this tension manifests itself in the form of a well-intentioned FE College policy which requires staff to provide detailed, time-consuming and constructive written formative assessment feedback. I also explain in this thesis how despite the good intentions of this College's policy, students often neither read, nor act upon the detailed formative assessment feedback provided to them at such cost by their tutors.

The study began with a focus upon formative assessment feedback and the potential use of oracy and dialogic approaches to feedback that assist students to close the gap between their current performance and potential achievement in GCSE English examinations. What this research now brings to light is also the need to understand the difference between the *techniques* used in Assessment for Learning and the underpinning pedagogic principles which are educationally necessary in guiding and supporting active learning and improving achievement in GCSE English in FE contexts.

As I read and reread these recommendations, I am aware, and openly acknowledge, how it may be difficult to differentiate which recommendations are more focused on strategy, which are connected to technique and the implementation of policy and are related to more pedagogic concerns. What I have discovered however, as a direct result of this research, is that these three elements cannot be cleanly or easily separated and with any method of assessment these three approaches (strategy, technique/policy implementation and pedagogy) can become highly nuanced and interwoven.

What I understand better now, is that as practitioner-researchers and teachers we have become immersed and preoccupied in the implementation of *technique* to the extent that we have inadvertently elevated *technique* above the value of more coherent forms of knowledge and deeper understandings of the nature of educational practice.

I hope that this thesis will serve to sound a note of caution regarding the wisdom of dominant technical-rational assumptions which elevate technical reasoning above practical reasoning in context in vocational education. Technical-rational conventions surrounding how knowledge is acquired and developed in any practice or form of life and the value of 'quick-

fix', and 'one-size fits all' solutions to complex and unfolding educational problems in practice have not served vocational education well to date. They are therefore unlikely to do so in the future.

These reflections bring us back to the work of Biesta (2015), who invites us to consider where we stand on the proposition that if we accept that education is a process, and we speak about education as a process then we ultimately accept that the process will result in an end product then, by this definition, as educators, we are drawn to consider whether we are defining our students as products or things. Biesta reminds us that as human beings, we must understand the educational dilemma that is presented here, as students cannot be classified as a product.

Referring back to the work of Biesta (2015) as practitioner-researchers, it is possible that we are attempting to validate our existence as teachers by 'human doing' and therefore as a teacher I still find myself searching for that elusive technique that will miraculously 'fix' the problems and to create a pedagogy that will quickly produce the perfect outcome. The lure and the grip of *techné* remains strong in me and I will have to work hard to loosen its grip. The difference is that I am now aware of it. As a practitioner-researcher I can see that I have inadvertently become focused on the human doing with regard to the techniques of formative assessment and unintentionally, less focused on the active learning, education and flourishing of the human beings in my care, including their experiences of formative and summative assessment.

Although this study seeks to offer insights and make recommendations or suggestions about approaches which can support the development and enhancement of student confidence, engagement and hopefully student achievement, I now have a fuller appreciation for the acceptance of the importance of accounts of lived experience and the learners' journey in educational research. Peters (1963) summaries the point where he notes that:

> *'To be educated is not to have arrived at a destination, it is to travel with a different point of view.'*
>
> (Peters, 1963:110)

Lessons Learned

This study has afforded me the opportunity to think differently about my practice and my profession and this has contributed to, not only a better understanding of myself but also what I believe to be important and of value in my practice as well as the relationship between theory and practice in education.

As a result, drawing upon my own lived experiences as a teacher and a learner, this leads me, as an educational researcher to question whether I am still too preoccupied on the techniques of assessment and indeed, the techniques of teaching, in order to pursue (or worse still, produce) the perfect outcome.

The perfectly produced learner, or a fulfilled and educated person capable of thinking for themselves and capable of making wise judgements in the course of their lives in the interests of the advancement and the pursuit of the wider common good.

The pursuit of the perfect outcome continues to be framed in the dominant discourse in terms of the necessary examination success that politicians, the public, parents, educational leaders and teachers quite rightly demand for learners. However, as this research has brought to light in the findings of this study, there is, and should be, more to our educational practices than the crude instrumental measurement of easily quantifiable outcomes.

Reflecting on my own lived through experience as a practitioner-research, I can elaborate further in relation to the completion of my PhD, in particular the submission of Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. Chapters 5 and 6 were by far the most challenging Chapters for me as an educational researcher conducting a small-scale study in terms of analysing and presenting the emerging themes, key findings and subsequent recommendations from this research in written format. What makes it more difficult, is my discovery of my own constant preoccupation with the end outcome, i.e., completing the chapters of this thesis and submitting my work to my Director of Studies. This preoccupation with my aspirational academic destination prevented me, the student, from enjoying the research experience and the learning journey that was unfolding before me.

I found it very difficult to move the Chapters forward. Ironically, as a researcher I became too 'focused on the finish line' (a phrase used by one of my students during this research study) and ultimately this was reflected in the quality of my academic writing and subsequent analysis of the data. By situating myself in this piece of research I now have a deeper understanding of the '*dialogue between ourselves as researchers and the phenomenon which we are trying to understand'* (Usher in Scott and Usher, 1996:22).

As a result of this experience, I also find myself in a unique position. I now understand more about the role and importance of lived experience in educational research and how I can

attempt to bring lived experience to life together with the story it tells, to the fore in the form of this PhD thesis.

Staying with the subject of lived experience and as an early career practitioner-researcher, I now have a better understanding of how as human beings, we are all fragile and fallible. With this new awareness, I am drawn to the history of the arts and Kintsugi Ceramics. Kintsugi is a centuries-old Japanese art of repairing broken pottery and transforming it into a work of art using the precious metal, gold.

The scars and cracks become the focus of the broken ceramic and turn the object into something unique. Kintsugi pertains to the concept of embracing imperfections and value their blemishes as part of the uniqueness and beauty of the object. Its expression surrounds the ability of a person to free their mind from the pursuit of pure forms, acknowledge the existence of imperfection and accept change. Acknowledging and understanding that as human beings we are all, in some way flawed, and at the same time, wonderfully unique and that our educational journey, or any journey in life, is not about the pursuit of perfection but about learning to lead a fulfilled life and to help others to do the same. As discussed above, through the work of Dewey (1973) that we make sense of our world through experience.

As a practitioner-researcher, I am again drawn to the work of Sennett (2008) discussed in Chapter 1 where he highlights the limitations of the technical-rational ideal of excellence and perfection. I am reminded that the concept of perfection, is merely that, a concept, a static condition which removes any narrative of its becoming and being.

Considerations for Further Work

Bringing this thesis to a close, I call again upon the work again of Biesta (2015) where he advises us not to concern ourselves with what education produces, but more about what education means. Biesta (2015) asks educators to reflect further, upon what education means and to consider the question of what education makes and what education makes possible?

This debate could also be aligned to the subject of English. English, as the discipline and it's place within the National Curriculum and English as an art. This discussion could lead to future research.

The tradition that English is defined and measured by a determinable set of knowledge and skills which are quantifiably measured whereby students make linear progress and their proficiency is measured by an external exam. Conversely, there is the potential to unpick this further when we draw upon the work of Newbolt (1921) who reports that '*the writing of English is essentially an art, and the effect of English literature in education is effect of art upon the development of the human character*' (Newbolt, 1921:21).

This dichotomy has the potential to be researched further to uncover whether there is the potential to strike a balance or a need for compromise and as Sennett advises, to ask ourselves, '*what do we mean by good-quality work? One answer is how something should be done, the other is getting it to work. There is a difference between correctness and functionality. Ideally, there should be no conflict; in the real world, but there is*' (Sennett, 2008:45).

Further research could draw upon teachers own standards of what is meant by good quality work. These could include internalised standards that they have developed through collaboration with others, through experience and through the reflective lens of their practice.

As a new researcher I have also reflected on the methodology chapter and the constructivist-interpretivist-pragmatist paradigm and those that would critique this methodology with regard to its bias.

As a new practitioner- researcher I am also influenced by a hermeneutic phenomenology – a combination of theory, reflection and practice that interweaves vivid descriptions of lived experience (phenomenology) together with reflective interpretations of their meanings (hermeneutics). Indeed, this position now calls me, as a practitioner-researcher to question whether the pursuit of objectivity or a single truth is at all achievable, or even desirable as it is not possible to extrapolate human experience from either an deductive or inductive methodological approach.

Phenomenology as defined by Husserl (2017) and Heidegger (1927) is the philosophical study of objectivity and reality as subjectively lived experience. As a new researcher, I am now

professional, curious and find myself back to where I started, with a problem or as Dewey (1938) describes as a 'disturbance'. The disturbance being that if research is considered a social science, conducted by researchers, then any approach which involves interaction from human beings has the clear distinctiveness of the first-person, lived/lived through experience at its core (van Manen, 2014) and what cannot be removed are the fundamentals structures of the human 'being'.

Closing Comments

This study set out to explore the use of formative assessment and dialogical approaches to teaching GCSE English to post-16 students in a Further Education establishment in England. The insights shared in this Chapter comment upon pedagogical approaches which support educational change and improvement in my organisation as they attempt to mitigate negative perceptions or reluctance from learners in engaging in their GCSE English curriculum.

This concluding chapter considers and discusses perceptions and possible pedagogic approaches to formative assessment which support active learning. The recommendations draw upon suggested approaches that can be deployed within Assessment for Learning, but these are balanced against a deeper understanding of the relationship between technique, multimodal pedagogic approaches and the deeper purposes of education.

This final chapter offers other teachers' suggestions and observations which I hope will alert them to the dangers of uncritically accepting and employing a set of formative assessment techniques (*techné*) and assuming that the simple application of a technique in practice will fix the enduring educational problem.

A finding of this thesis is that this over reliance on written formative assessment is compounded by the need to constantly meet the imperatives of quality audits and inadvertently this well-intended process is not having the intended consequences of helping students to close the gap between their current performance and intended progress and future achievement.

Ultimately, this study set out to help teachers and students of GCSE English to learn from each other and to find some reassurance and solace that none of us are alone when we find something is difficult to learn or difficult to achieve in life. It is important therefore to remember that difficulties in life and in learning come to us and trouble all of us.

What the lived experience and data from the dialogic pedagogic interventions reported in this study reveal is that there are opportunities to do things differently in relation to our current

understanding and practices of formative assessment in FAVE contexts. Educational research helps teachers navigate through the complexities of our profession, the competing worlds of accountability, compliance and practice and educational research can be catalysts capable of freeing us from these constraints.

The work of T.S Eliot poetically depicts our reflective practice as teachers, and although more biblical in meaning it does highlight that as human beings, we have the desire to know, and be known, to reflect upon where we started from and what we have learned from the process:

> *'We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we began and to know the place for the first time.'*
>
> (T.S. Eliot, 1942)

In the course of this study, I have found that, practitioner-research allows teachers to really 'see' students and their experiences of learning from the inside, to give their experiences, my experiences and the experiences of my fellow teaching colleagues, a platform and a voice.

I have also found that practitioner-research provides teachers with a real opportunity to value all human experience and to use these differing accounts of our storied lives to explore alternative pedagogic approaches in the improvement of educational practice. In addition, I have found that, practitioner-research provides teachers with a unique opportunity to be 'really present' in the learning journey. It also provides teachers with an opportunity to shift our energy from the constant 'doing' to the promotion of a heightened sense of vitality in engaging with the arts and aesthetic experience in education (Dewey, 1934) both for our learners and for ourselves as insider practitioners of education and educational research.

For me, this piece of educational research has given me an opportunity to reconcile my teaching past with my unknown teaching future. It has given me the opportunity to hold up a mirror to my practice that gives me professional autonomy to see beyond the limits of my own experiences as a teacher.

As I draw this chapter to a close, I wonder what is next for me. I also know that I may not be the practitioner-researcher who will discover more seminal answers or insights into formative assessment. What I do hope, however, is that my work may be of interest and use to teachers of GCSE English and other subjects. I also hope that this thesis may heighten other practitioner-researchers' professional curiosity and present an opportunity for others to discover more.

From carrying out this study, I am encouraged to now know, without question or hesitation, that there will always be a place for curiosity, inquiry, craftmanship and *phronesis* in the development of good education for students and teachers of all subjects. I also suspect that there will always be more questions than answers regarding what we mean by good research and good practice in education…. perhaps that is the point and what ultimately drives practitioner-led research forward. As a practitioner-researcher I am, in some small way, handing over the baton to you and to others interested in moving educational practice forward in the future.

Finally, as educational researchers we merely stand on the shoulders of other academics and other practitioner-researchers who have gone before us. We are merely the keepers, the curators and custodians of educational practice until it is time to challenge the taken-for granted and take educational practice forward into the future.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to find out about your experience, feelings and attitudes towards GCSE English and to help the teachers develop a better understanding.

1. How important do you consider GCSE English to be?
   (grade the subject 1-10, 10 being the most important)

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please expand

……

……

……

……

2. How seriously do you feel YOU take the subject?
   (grade this using the 1-10 scale again)

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please give a little detail here

……

……

……

……

3. What do you feel are the major issues with studying GCSE English?

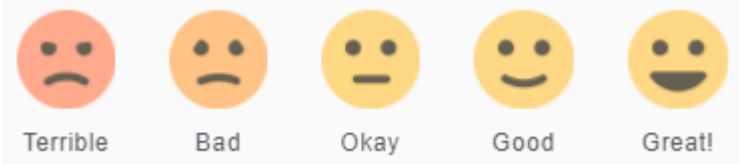
……

……

……

……

4. How enjoyable would you rate your study of English to be? (consider this across your study of English at school and college)



5. Think back to your experience of GCSE English at school. What were the issues you faced? What do you feel were the barriers to you achieving a grade 4 or higher?

   Please use the space below to write up a paragraph reflecting upon your previous experience.

   ……

   ……

   ……

   ……

   ……

   ……

   ……

   ……

6. What changes would you implement (put in place) to make your study of English more successful?

   ……

   ……

   ……

   ……

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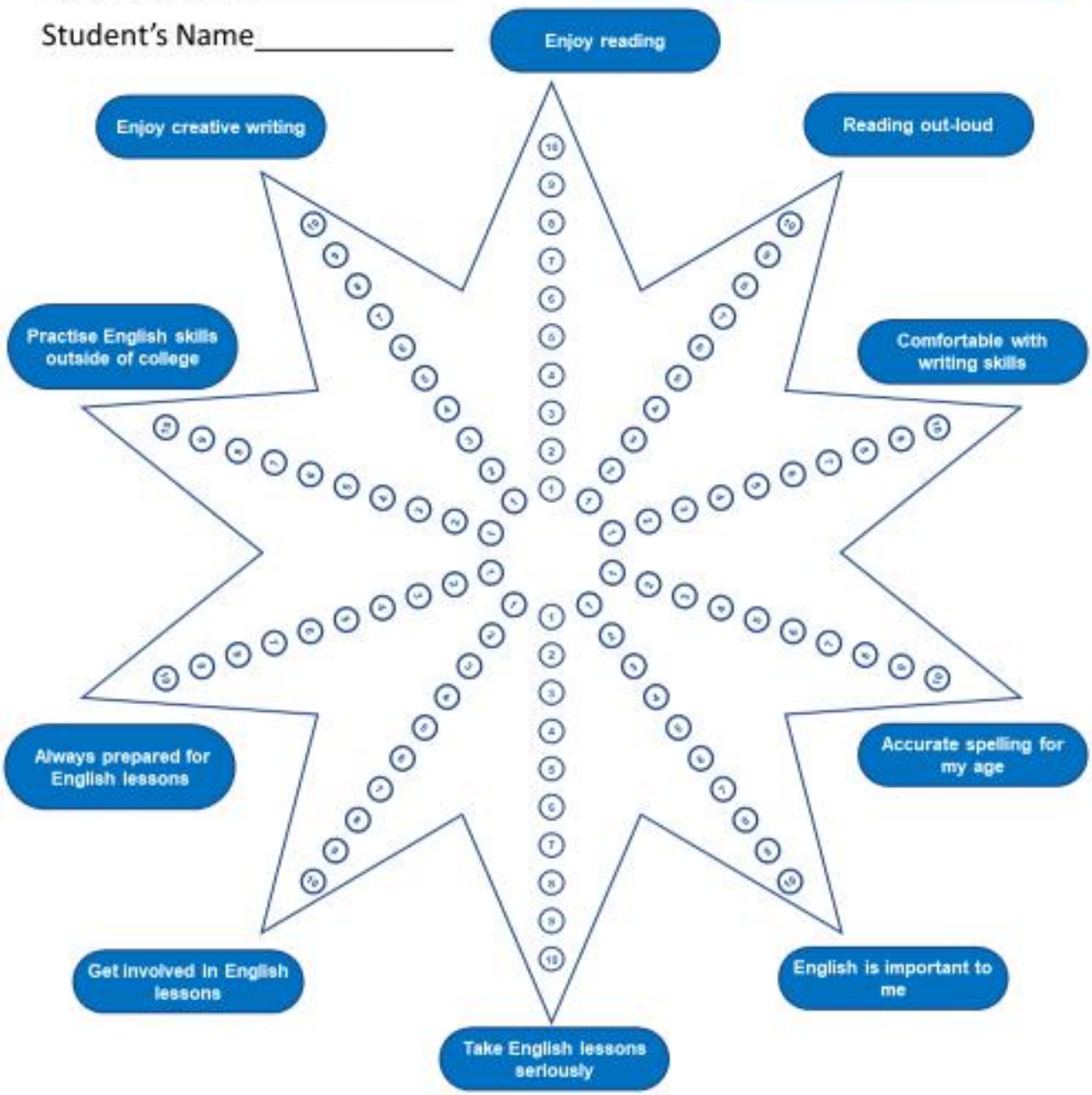
Appendix 2

OUTCOME STAR

GCSE English

Teacher's Name_____

Student's Name_____



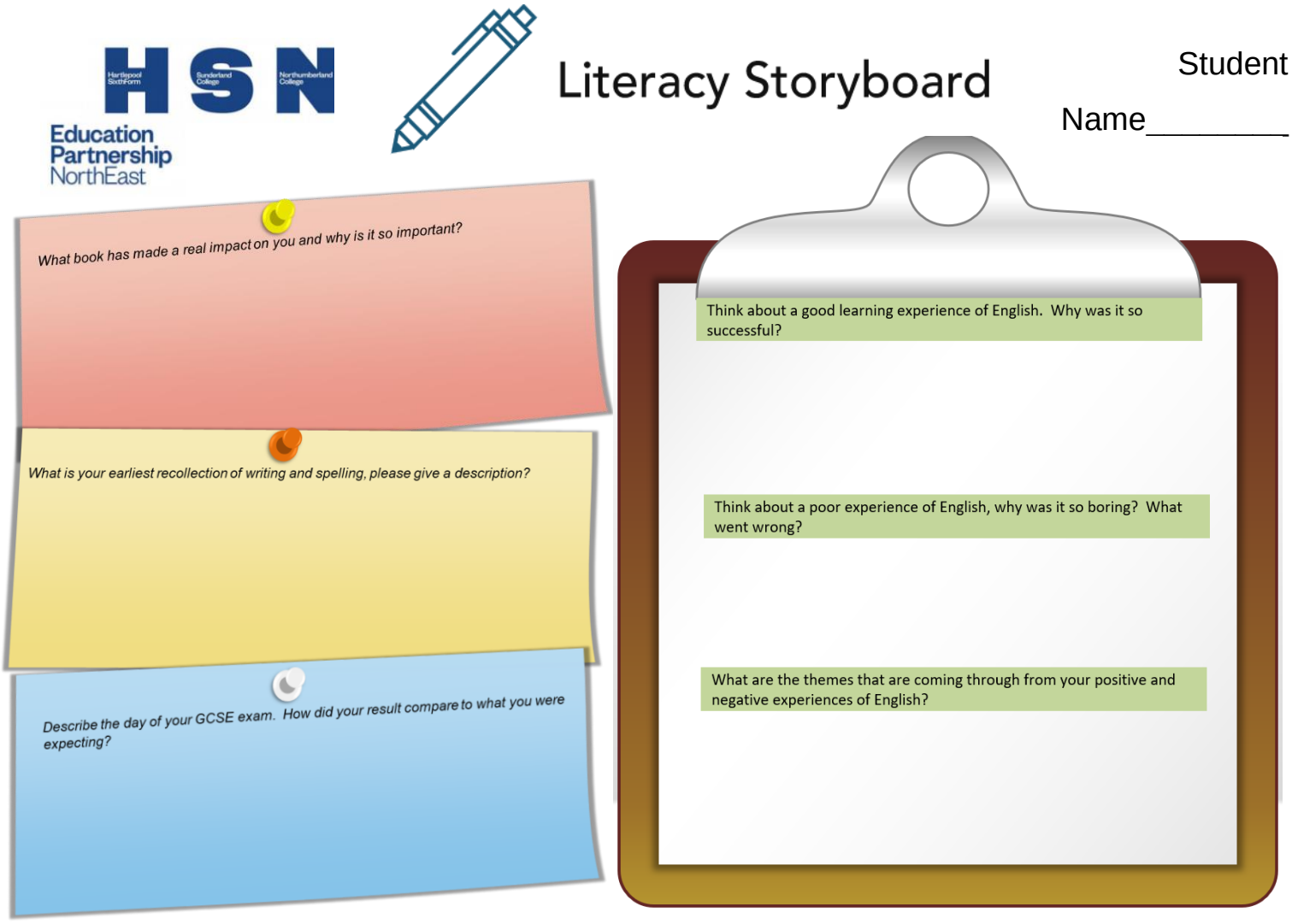
Stage	Date	Colour
Student self assessment		
Teacher feedback		
Meet & Exceed evaluation 1		
Meet & Exceed evaluation 2		

10 – Very Confident

5 – Slight Confidence

1 – Low Confidence

Appendix 3


HSN
Education Partnership NorthEast
Literacy Storyboard
Student Name_____
What book has made a real impact on you and why is it so important?
What is your earliest recollection of writing and spelling, please give a description?
Describe the day of your GCSE exam. How did your result compare to what you were expecting?
Think about a good learning experience of English. Why was it so successful?
Think about a poor experience of English, why was it so boring? What went wrong?
What are the themes that are coming through from your positive and negative experiences of English?

Appendix 4

Student Questionnaire.

Planned 35 Actual - ~~22~~ 30 = 88%.

Q1 - importance of English 1-10 (least → most important)
30 scored max = 300 score = 249 / avg = 8.3

Q2 Take Eng seriously 1-10
30 scored max = 300 score = 208 | avg = 6.93 (6.9).

(Think - if its important why not take it seriously)

Q.3 Feel - main issues about studying GCSE English
30 scored

issues.
- writing issues (24)
- bored / not interested (22)
- don't read (14)
- not real life/relevancy (24)
- teachers/boring/poor lessons/power (8)
- behaviour messing about (11)
- exam/always about exam/exam/pressure (26)

(lived experience)

Q4 Enjoy experience of English at school
30 responded
- terrible (4)
- bad (6)
- ok (14)
- good (7)
- great - zero students

10 - bad/terrible) 33.3% no great 70% good

Question - potentially a 1/3 of each cohort had a tarnished experience - think about pedagogical design think about - assessment. Take experience seriously

experience self reflection

Q5 Barriers to English

barriers
- don't like writing (18/19)
- phone (14)
- exam pressure/panic (14)
- remember recall topics (16)
- it's too hard, get stressed, worried
- exam stress, failure
- students messing about

finding new ways to - interesting

Appendix 4

Student Questionnaire

Q6 Changes/suggestions to improve English experience
poorer return - only 20 - 10 left blank

~~dose~~ what does this tell me?

Changes/ suggestions

writing practical (8)

exam prep not be afraid (14)

acceptance better + failing more (9) on

always will be always + failure (4)

possible/ mindset/ wellbeing (7)

why don't I like reading (6)

Key quotes

"Accept failure more not be scared of it"

"I always find new ways to fail"

"learn from failure"

Action Look at qualities of Mind

"gutted, I failed again"

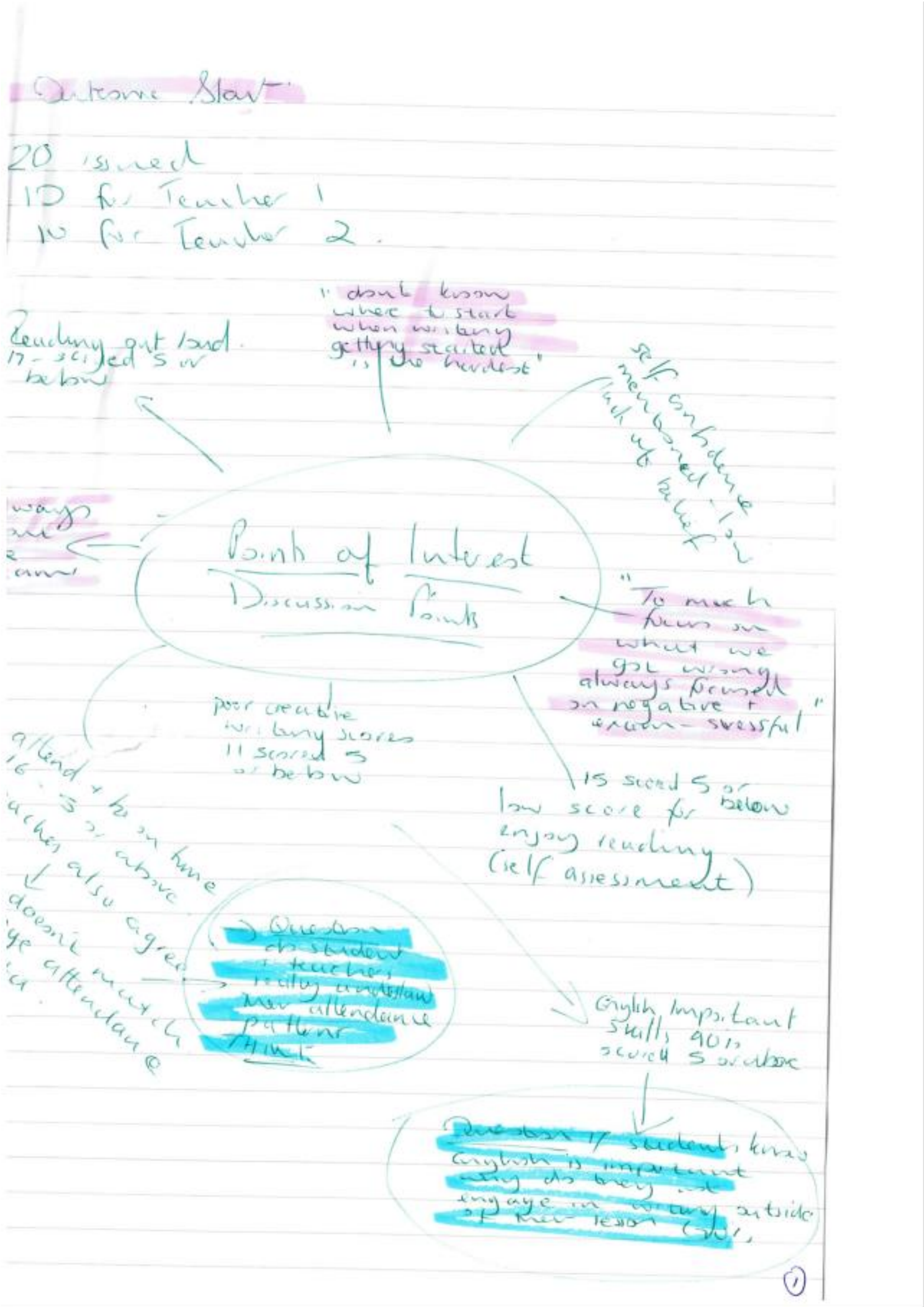
"The exam is nothing to do with life"

"Teachers are only interested in the exam"

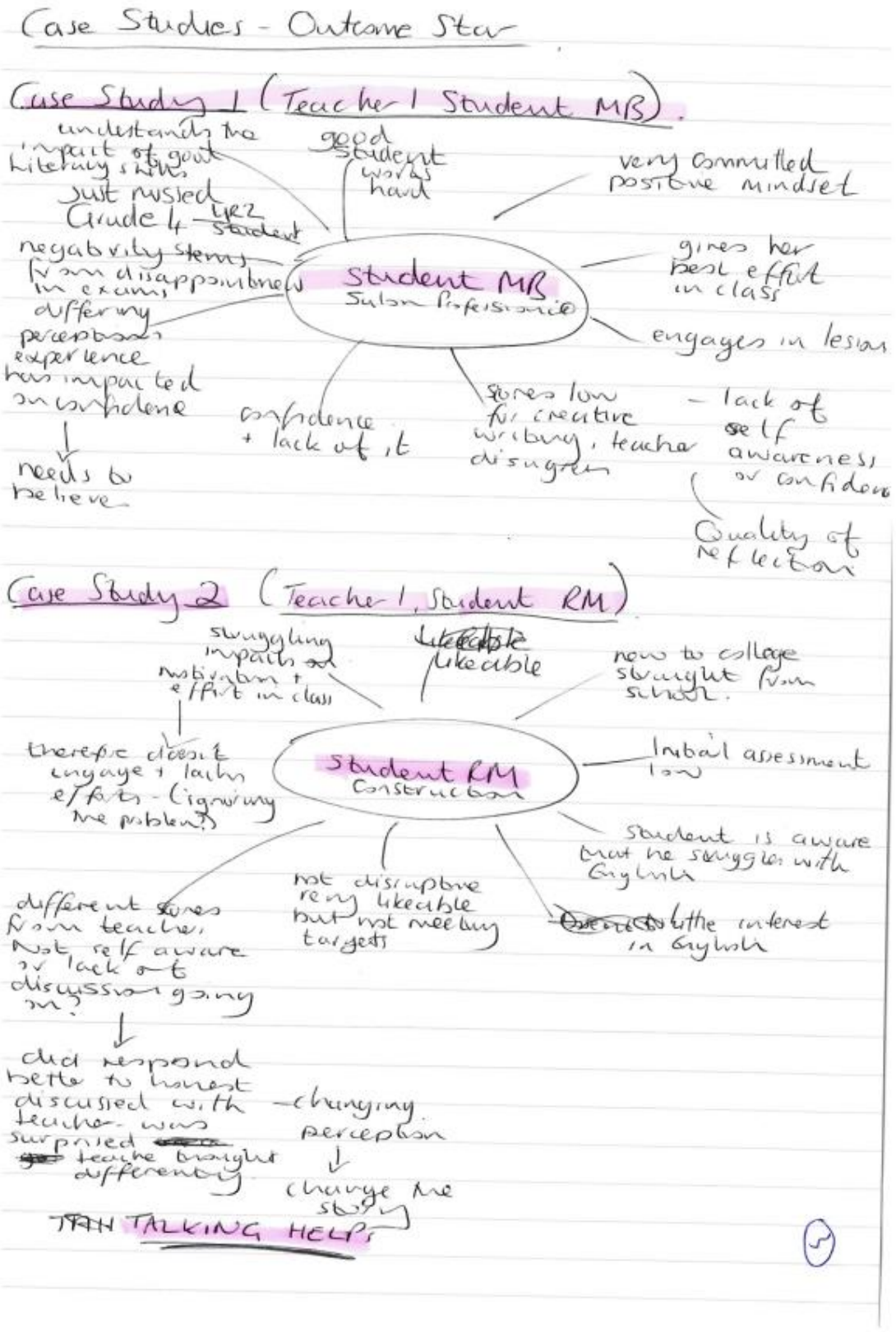
"it is all about tests, test + more test"

"Too much focus on the finish line"

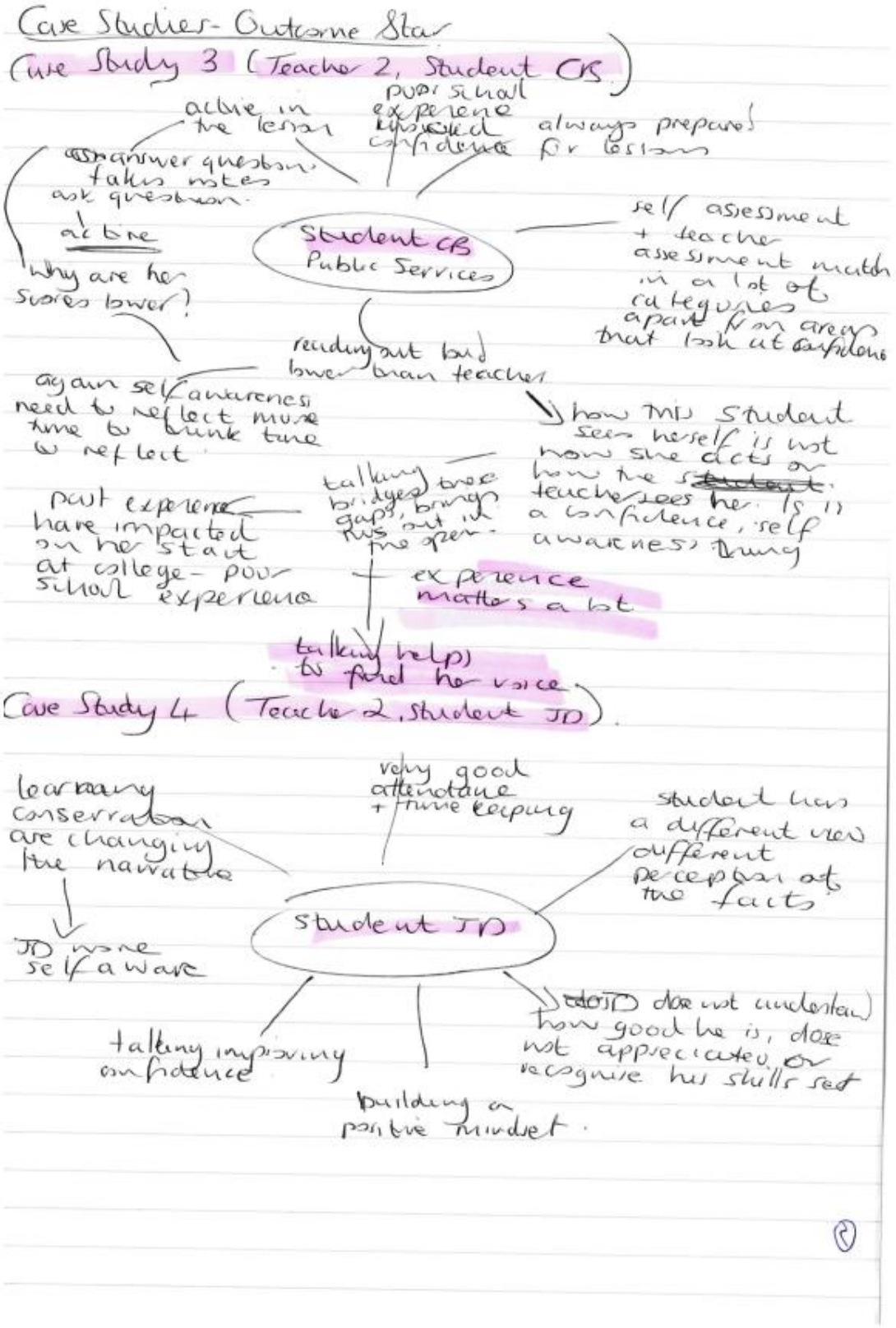
Appendix 5


Outcome Start
20 issued
10 for Teacher 1
10 for Teacher 2.
Reading out loud.
17 - scored 5 or below
" don't know where to start when writing getting started is the hardest"
self confidence mentioned - low
lack of belief
Point of Interest
Discussion Points
"To much focus on what we got wrong always focused on negative + exam - stressful"
poor creative writing scores
11 scored 5 or below
15 scored 5 or below
low score for enjoy reading (self assessment)
English important skill, 90% scored 5 or above

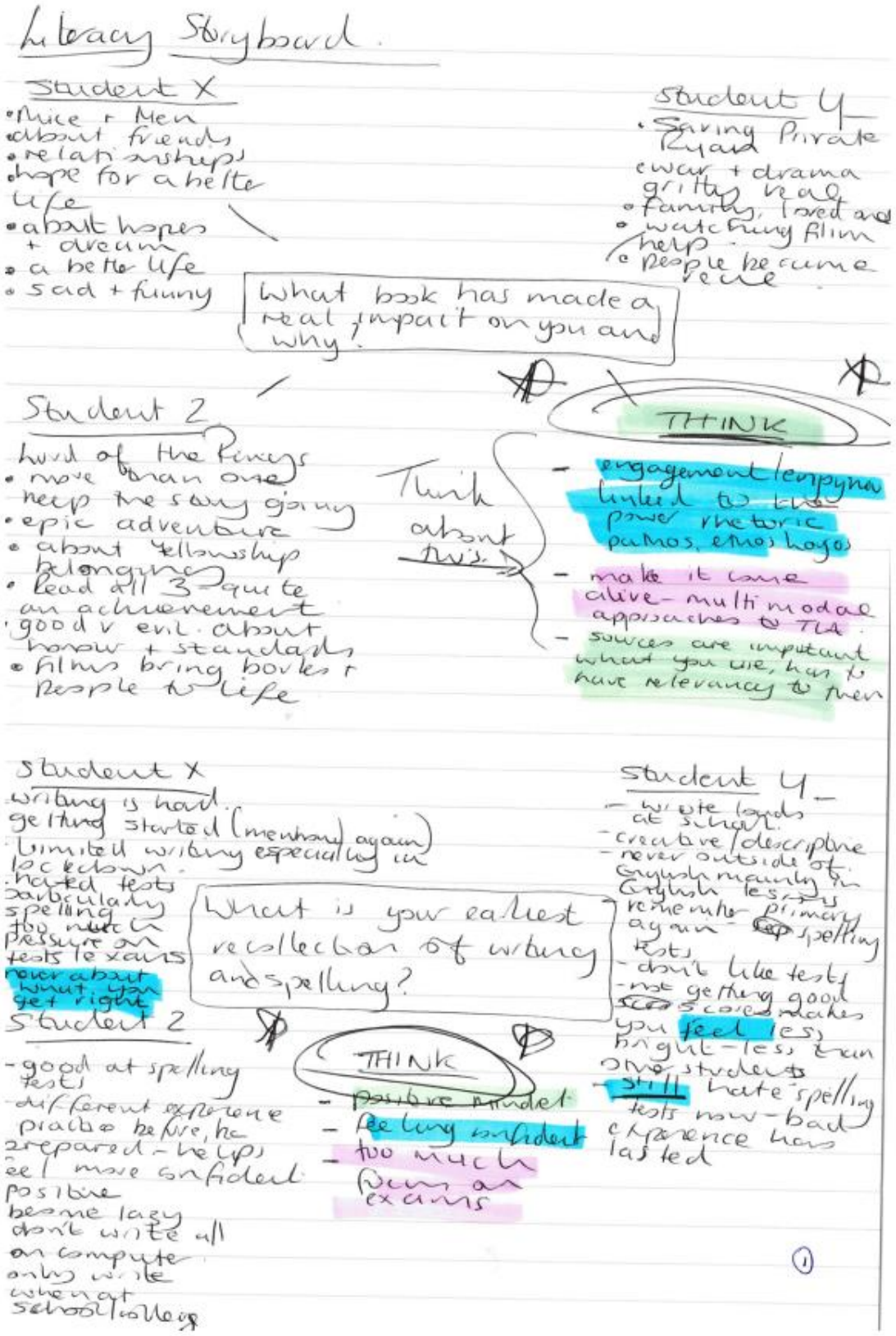
Appendix 5


Case Studies - Outcome Star
Case Study 1 (Teacher 1 Student MB).
understanding the impact of poor literacy skills
just missed Grade 4 – yr 2 student
good student works hard
very committed positive mindset
negativity stems from disappointment in exams
differing perceptions experience has impacted on confidence
needs to believe
Student MB
Sultan Professional
gives her best effort in class
engages in lesson
confidence + lack of it
scores low for creative writing, teacher disagrees
- lack of self awareness or confidence
Quality of reflection
Case Study 2 (Teacher 1, Student RM)
struggling impacts on motivation + effort in class
likeable
new to college straight from school.
therefore doesn't engage + lacks efforts - (ignoring the problem?)
Student RM
Construction
Initial assessment low
Student is aware that he struggles with English
not disruptive very likeable but not meeting targets
little interest in English
different scores from teacher. Not self aware or lack of discussion going on?
did respond better to honest discussion with teacher - was surprised teacher thought differently
changing perception
change the story
TALK TALKING HELPS

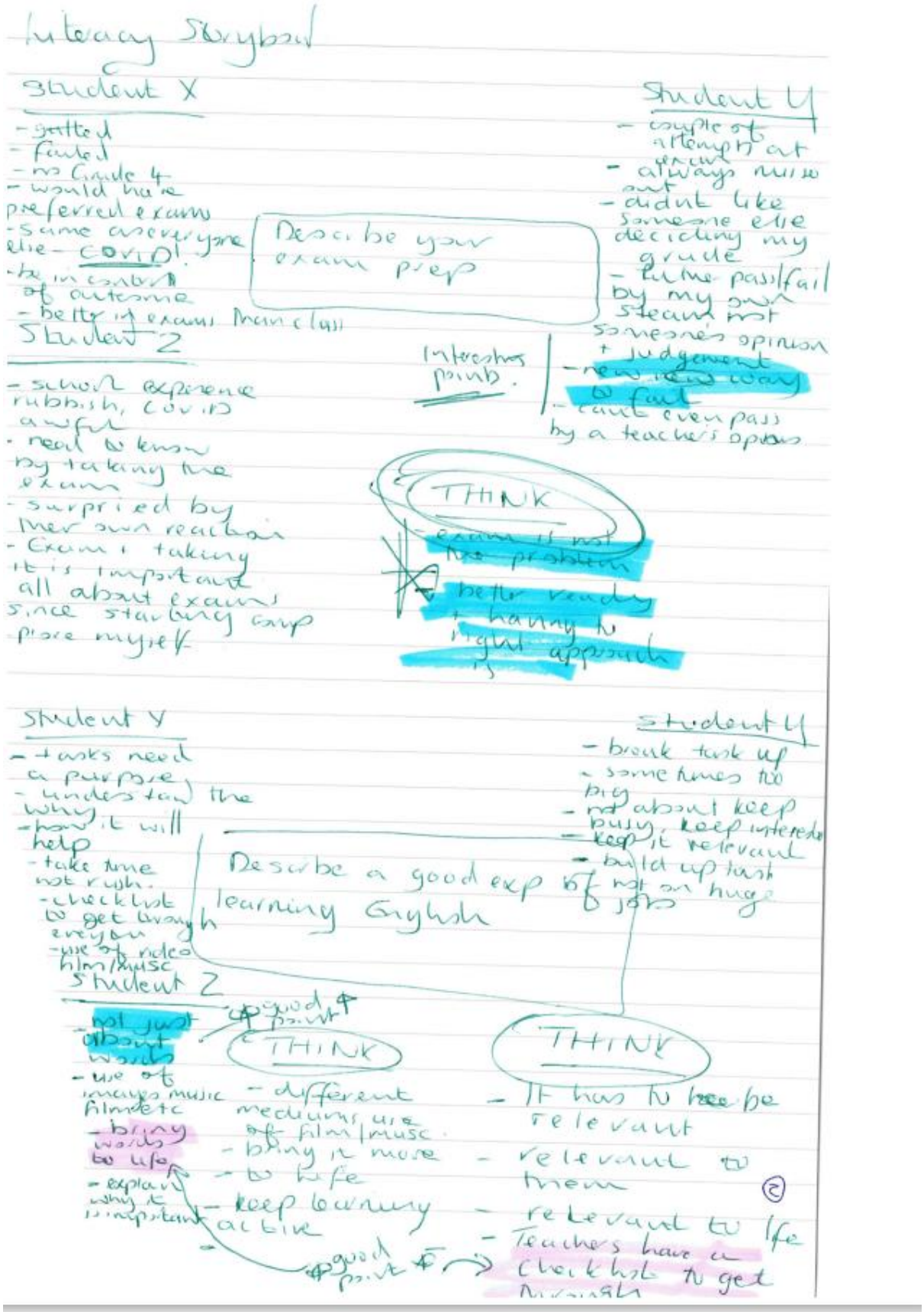
Appendix 5


Case Studies- Outcome Star
Case Study 3 (Teacher 2, Student CB)
active in the lesson
answer questions
takes notes
ask questions
always prepared for lessons
Student CB
Public Services
self assessment + teacher assessment match in a lot of categories apart from an area that lack confidence
why are her scores lower?
again self awareness need to reflect more time to think time to reflect
reading out but lower than teacher
how MD student sees herself is not how she acts or how the teacher sees her. Is it a confidence, self awareness thing
past experience have impacted on her start at college - poor school experience
talking bridges brings gaps, out in the open.
experience matters a lot
talking helps to find her voice
Case Study 4 (Teacher 2, Student JD)
learning conversation are changing the narrative
JD more self aware
very good attendance + time keeping
student has a different view different perception of the facts
Student JD
talking improving confidence
building a positive mindset.
JD does not understand how good he is, does not appreciate or recognise his skills set

Appendix 6


Literacy Storyboard.
Student X
Mice + Men
about friends
relationships
hope for a better life
about hopes + dream
a better life
sad + funny
Student 4
Saving Private Ryan
war + drama
gritty real
family, loved and watching film help
people become real
What book has made a real impact on you and why?
Student 2
Lord of the Rings
more than one
keep the story going
epic adventure
about fellowship belonging
read all 3 quite an achievement
good v evil about horror + standards
films bring books + people to life
Think about this:
THINK
- engagement/enjoyment linked to the power rhetoric pathos, ethos logos
- make it come alive - multimodal approaches to TLA
- sources are important what you use, has to have relevancy to them
Student X
writing is hard.
getting started (mentally again)
limited writing especially in lockdown.
hated tests particularly spelling too much pressure on tests le exams
never about what you get right
Student 4
- write loads at school.
- creative/descriptive
- never outside of English mainly in English lessons remember primary again - spelling tests
- don't like tests
- not getting good scores makes you feel less bright - less than other students
- still hate spelling tests now - bad experience has lasted
What is your earliest recollection of writing and spelling?
Student 2
- good at spelling tests
- different experience practice before, be prepared - helps feel more confident
positive
become lazy
don't write all on computer
only write when at school/college
THINK
- positive mindset
- feeling confident
- too much pressure exams
①

Appendix 6


literacy Storyboard
Student X
- gutted
- failed
- no Grade 4
- would have preferred exams
- same as everyone else - COVID
- be in control of outcome
- better in exams than class
Student Y
- couple of attempts at exam
- always nurse out
- didnt like someone else deciding my grade
- like pass/fail by my own stand not someones opinion + judgement
- can even pass by a teacher's opinion
Describe your exam prep
Interesting point.
THINK
exam is not the problem
better ready + having to right approach
Student Z
- school experience rubbish, covid awful
- real to know by taking the exam
- surprised by her own reaction
- Exam is taking it is important all about exams since starting camp prove myself
Student V
- tasks need a purpose
- understand the why
- how it will help
- take time not rush.
- checklist to get through everything
- use of video film/music
Student U
- break task up
- sometimes too big
- not about keep busy, keep interested
- keep it relevant
- build up task
- not on huge jobs
Describe a good exp of learning English
Student Z
- not just about words
- use of images music film etc
- bring words to life
- explain why it is important
good point
THINK
- different mediums use of film/music
- bring it more to life
- keep learning active
good point
THINK
- It has to be relevant
- relevant to them
- relevant to life
- Teachers have a checklist to get through

Appendix 6

Literacy Storyboard

Student X

- always rushing
- check list to get through
- no explanations
- not relevant
- I don't learn
- smaller activities
- build up
- teacher not interested

– there it is again

good point

Think about a poor experience of learning English

Student Y

- about the teacher
- need to connect
- not interested
- in me, I'm not interested in them or what they have to say
- no connection
- no talking
- no interest
- worksheet only

Student 2

- different teacher
- cover lessons
- same activities
- repeat repeat
- babysitting
- not interested

THINK

- take student's own experiences seriously
- can talking help build positive connections + relationships between students + teachers
- varied sources not just about writing + reading, what about speaking + talking

Student X

- bring to life – good
- story board
- break down tasks

What is coming through from positive + negative experiences of English

Student Y

Student 2

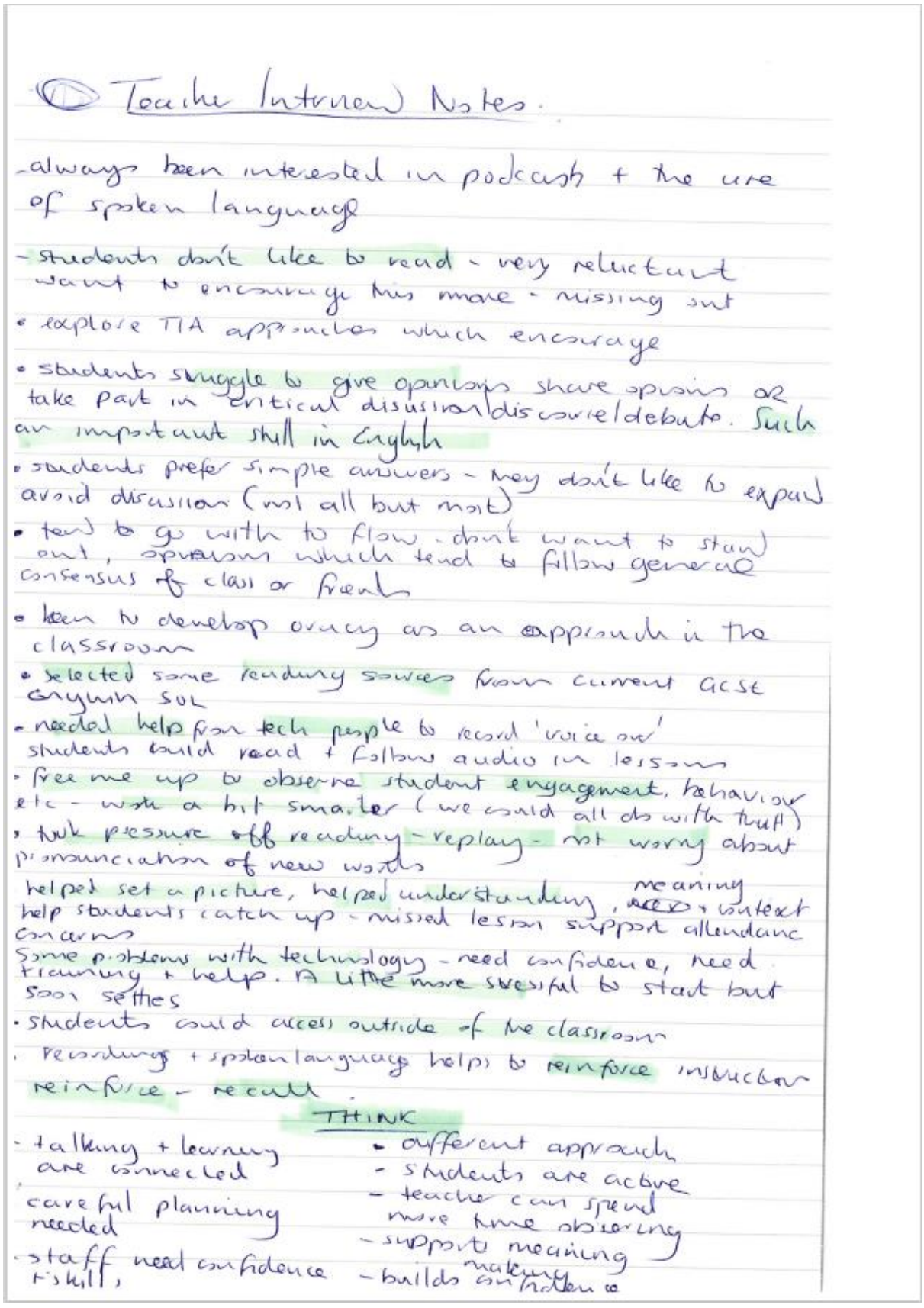
- different ways to read + write – good point
- not just words + paper – again talk is good in learning
- different media – music, films, videos
- images not just words
- something different

THINK

- Bring to life
- Narrative + story
- curriculum design think about sequence
- take experience seriously
- all experience matters – good + bad
- talk about learning
- talk about thinking
- all important
- multi modal approaches

(3)

Appendix 7



Teacher Interview Notes.

- always been interested in podcasts + the use of spoken language
- students don't like to read - very reluctant want to encourage this more - missing out
- explore TLA approaches which encourage
- students struggle to give opinions share opinions or take part in critical discussion/discourse/debate. Such an important skill in English
- students prefer simple answers - may don't like to expand avoid discussion (not all but most)
- tend to go with to flow - don't want to stand out, opinions which tend to follow general consensus of class or friends
- keen to develop oracy as an approach in the classroom
- selected some reading sources from current GCSE English SOL
- needed help from tech people to record 'voice over' students could read + follow audio in lessons
- free me up to observe student engagement, behaviour etc - work a bit smaller (we could all do with that!)
- took pressure off reading - replay - not worry about pronunciation of new words

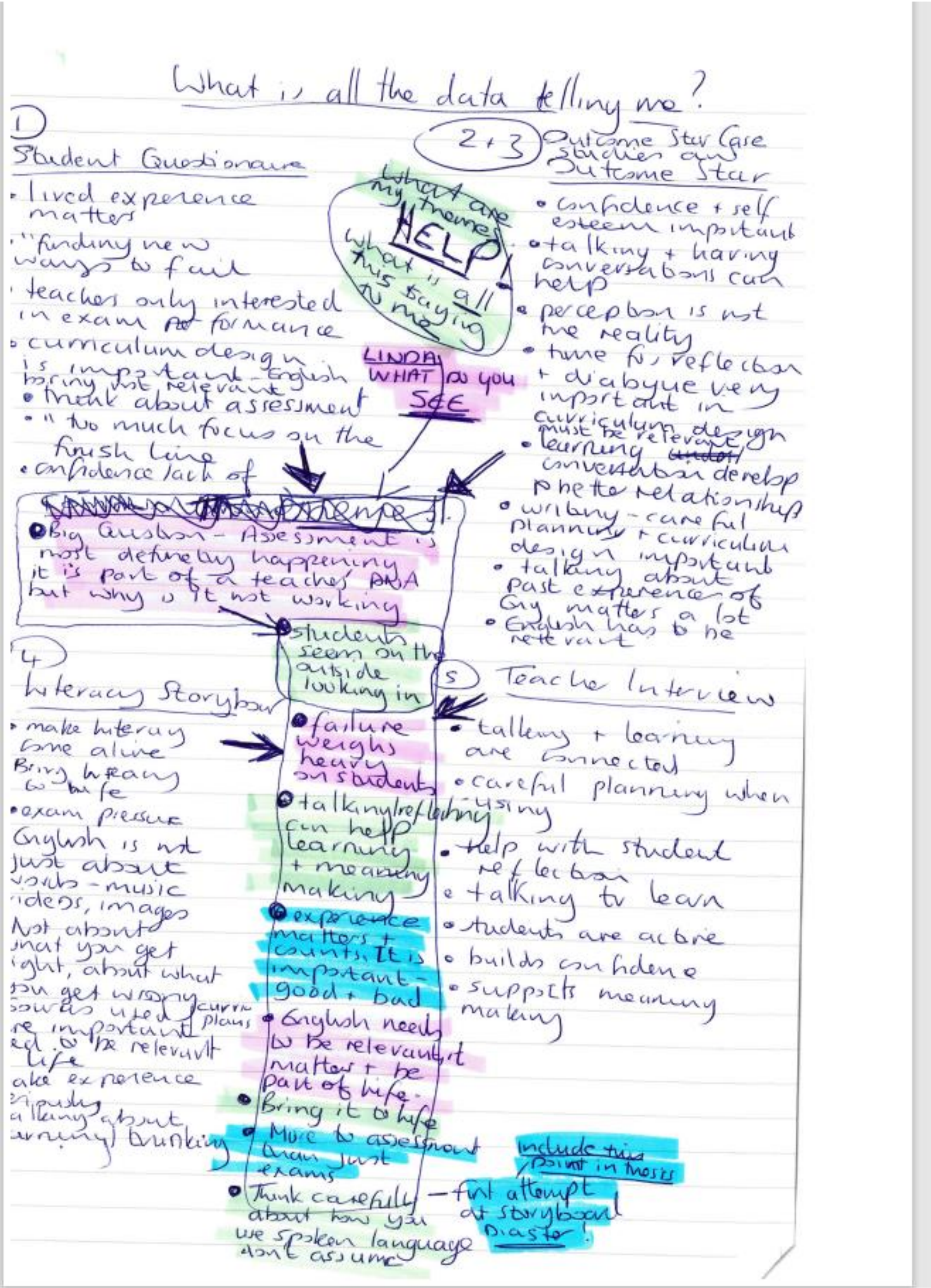
helped set a picture, helped understanding, meaning, ~~access~~ + context
help students catch up - missed lesson support attendance concerns
Some problems with technology - need confidence, need training + help. A little more stressful to start but soon settles

- students could access outside of the classroom
- Recordings + spoken language helps to reinforce instruction reinforce - recall

THINK

- talking + learning are connected
- careful planning needed
- staff need confidence + skill,
- different approach
- students are active
- teacher can spend more time observing
- supports meaning
- builds confidence making

Appendix 8


What is all the data telling me?
1
Student Questionnaire
• lived experience matters
• "finding new ways to fail"
• teachers only interested in exam performance
• curriculum design is important - English boring, not relevant
• think about assessment
• "too much focus on the finish line"
• confidence lack of
• Big Question - Assessment is most definitely happening, it is part of a teacher's DNA but why is it not working
2 + 3 Outcome Star Case Studies and Outcome Star
• confidence + self esteem important
• talking + having conversations can help
• perception is not the reality
• time for reflection + dialogue very important in curriculum design
• learning must be relevant
• conversation develop a better relationship
• writing - careful planning + curriculum design important
• talking about past experience of Eng matters a lot
• English has to be relevant
What are my themes
HELP!
What is all this saying to me
LINDA WHAT do you SEE
• students seem on the outside looking in
• failure weighs heavy on students
• talking/reflecting can help learning + meaning making
• experience matters + counts. It is important - good + bad
• English needs to be relevant, it matters + be part of life
• Bring it to life
• More to assessment than just exams
• Think carefully about how you use spoken language don't assume
4
Literacy Storyboard
• make literacy come alive
Bring literacy to life
• exam pressure
English is not just about words - music, ideas, images
5 Teacher Interview
• talking + learning are connected
• careful planning when using
• help with student reflection
• talking to learn
• students are active
• builds confidence
• supports meaning making
include this point in thesis
first attempt at storyboard Disaster!